

# Linguistic Strategies in the Representation of Sexual Violence: Norwegian Narrative Perspectives

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## Declaration

I, Steinvör Pálsson, declare that I am the author of this work, that it is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Edinburgh, January 2006



## Abstract

This thesis examines the subject of sexual violence in Norwegian-authored narratives. It explores ways in which the language of a text affects our reading of a narrative work that deals with rape and sexual abuse. Various linguistic techniques can serve to guide a reader's responses to the physical and emotional processes of the characters and to the events in which they are involved. My aim is to show that in a narrative concerning sexual violence, the identification of specific lexical choices, foregrounded syntactic features and manipulations in point of view, is central to the reader's interpretation of sexual abuse and its effects on the victim. Point of view is arguably of particular importance in the representation of sexual violence. Shifts in narrative viewpoint between the internal representation of a character's consciousness and the external treatment of her sexual violation can serve to deepen our understanding of the physical and emotional trauma of the sexually victimised child or woman, while at the same time raising our awareness of the social and ideological context of her abuse. Our reading of a text about sexual violence should ideally entail a process of linking sexual abuse internally to the agents and victims in the narrative and externally to society's attitudes towards sexual violence. The texts that I draw on deal specifically with the female victim of sexual violence and in the majority of these narratives, the protagonist is the victim of child sexual abuse. The focus is largely on fictional texts, but factually-based narratives are also included. Two primary texts are foregrounded: Christian Krohg's *Albertine* (1886) and Herbjørg Wassmo's *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* (1981). I analyse several linguistic features of the representation of rape in these two novels and examine their shared and distinct narrative aspects, particularly in relation to point of view. The function of point of view and other related narrative features are also analysed in the following texts: Mette Sundt's *Som igår, som imorgen* (1990); Hanne Dahl's *Vannliljen* (1999); Sverre Inge Apenes's *Fange hele livet* (1988); and Trine Kolberg's *Jenta bak den gule stolen* (1990).

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## Introduction

The ordinary or horrible is pushed by the will of the writer into grace or redemption, a prophetic wail, a screed for justice, an elegy of sadness or sorrow.<sup>1</sup>

The subject of sexual violence is currently very much in the public eye. The Michael Jackson trial has thrust the issue of child sexual abuse into the media spotlight, the singer's fame ensuring daily coverage. In this particular case, the blanket of secrecy that typically cloaks child sexual abuse has been dramatically lifted, exposing a situation where money, fame and exploitation are undoubtedly interwoven. Jackson's 'star' status will inevitably lead to his alleged victim being left on the sidelines of the singer's arena, whatever the final verdict of the jury. One British newspaper has described Jackson's trial as 'possibly the biggest showbiz trial this century.'<sup>2</sup> Through the deliberate omission of any reference to sexual abuse, and with the emphasis on Jackson's fame, the newspaper has succeeded in obfuscating the very serious nature of the crimes of which he stands accused. In yet another British newspaper, a journalist describes how 'the singer [...] had to endure his 15-year-old accuser describe in detail [...] how Jackson had allegedly abused him.'<sup>3</sup> The formulation presents Jackson in the rôle of victim, with the boy whom he has 'allegedly abused' as the cause of his 'hardship.' The point which I am making here is that in the above examples, specific linguistic choices serve almost to reverse the rôles of victim and perpetrator, playing down Jackson's involvement in the crimes which he is accused of committing. The formulation also projects, albeit subtly, the effect of presupposing Jackson's innocence and questioning his accuser's integrity. The language suggests that the writer is endeavouring to arouse the reader's empathy for the famous singer while playing down the victim status of the young boy.

Language choices can also however serve to project the voice of the sexual abuse victim, which is not always heard in the media. This, I would venture to suggest, is where literary texts play a crucial rôle. Narratives which focus on sexual violence from the victim's perspective go some way towards increasing public

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Life and Death*, London: Virago, 1997, p.15.

<sup>2</sup> *The Metro*. February 28, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> *The Scotsman*. March 11, 2005.

awareness of rape and child sexual abuse and in counteracting the sexually abusive representations - both narrative and visual - that are projected through pornography. For those of us who wish to protect our children from explicit images which portray human bodies as sex objects, a trip to the local newsagent can be a sobering experience. For the children who do not receive the adult protection they deserve, the world is a highly dangerous place. Hidden from the public eye, the sexual abuse and rape of children is easily accessible for those who are only too willing to seek it out. In this computer age in which we live, where information can be obtained at the click of a mouse, the Internet enables the sexual predators of children to access child pornography: now a global industry. For the child victims of pornography, and for countless other children, the home holds the greatest danger of all. It is in the narratives of these children and of their adult counterparts that this thesis finds its inspiration.

### *Background*

My introduction to Norwegian literature came when I was an undergraduate reading Norwegian, English Language and Linguistics at The University of Edinburgh in the mid '90s. Herbjørg Wassmo's novel *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* (1981) was the first Norwegian text I had read on the theme of child sexual abuse and I was deeply affected by its powerful narrative. My interest in the language of literary texts began around the same time during my English Language course. Throughout this period, I was also becoming increasingly concerned with the problem of sexual violence. Wanting to find out as much as I could about its possible causes, its prevalence and its emotional and physical effects on the victims, I began reading as much as I could on the subject. I regard my research on this thesis as having been an invaluable opportunity to apply my modest knowledge of the language of literary texts to Norwegian narratives that deal with a subject which has preoccupied me for a considerable number of years.

### *Aims and Approaches*

My primary objective in writing this thesis has been to show that textual strategies that are employed in the representation of sexual abuse and rape are crucial to our understanding of sexual violence. While not wishing to overlook the fact that men and male children are also victims of sexual violence, I have chosen to confine the scope of my study to the rape and sexual abuse of women and female children. The strategy of consciousness-raising by women survivors



writing about their experiences of sexual abuse is highlighted by Ellen Klosterman:

[...] the heart of the concept of breaking silence really seems to be illuminating community denial and creating a context of true freedom of speech for women, of true self-presentation.<sup>4</sup>

Narratives about rape and sexual abuse which are written from the perspective of those victimised by sexual violence thus function not only to educate and enlighten readers but also to allow victims to reclaim their self-identity. Sabine Smith articulates the transformative function of what she terms 'innovative' or 'alternative' rape narratives:

Their authors rewrite history from a female perspective, revisualising the image of women in the text and rearticulating the consequences of women's systematic oppression and victimization. In so doing, they seek to enlighten and provoke their audiences, encouraging them to intervene against sexual violence in our culture. Moreover, innovative rape narratives can help witnesses and survivors of sexual violence recover their past, acknowledging their experiences and their trauma.<sup>5</sup>

The concept of 'breaking silence' is not only central to the victim's processes of recovery but also to our understanding of sexual violence as individuals and as a society, regardless of whether or not we ourselves are victims. Through the writing of this thesis I have learned a great deal about the subject of sexual violence and also about the process of writing. I have read of the pain and trauma of countless women and children. I have studied personal accounts by rape victims of unimaginable depravity and cruelty. I have also discovered ways in which language can deepen our understanding of the victim's experiences and of the impact of those experiences on her world view. The way in which sexual violence is represented in a text is key to our understanding of sexual violence as it occurs in the outside world.

One of the principal aims of my thesis has been to highlight the representation of sexual violence as it is experienced by the female victim. A narrative that depicts rape and sexual abuse from the female victim's point of view has

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<sup>4</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears: Point of View and Technique in Women's Writing about Childhood Sexual Abuse*, Ohio: Bowling Green State University, 1997, p.247.

<sup>5</sup> Sabine Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture: Rereading and Rewriting the Tradition*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Laing, 1998, p.305.



positive implications for our awareness of the sexual victimisation of women and children. In my exploration of the selected narratives, I aim to present a textual analysis that is situated within a framework of linguistic theory from what I consider to be a feminist standpoint. My study is informed by feminist scholars in the field, most notably Andrea Dworkin, Sabine Smith, Ellen Klosterman and Sara Mills. Dworkin's writings in particular have alerted me to the pervasive and widespread nature of male sexual violence.

The theoretical approach to the thesis is primarily linguistic and I draw also on the findings of social scientists working in the field of sexual violence to provide a wider framework within which to explore questions regarding the narrative representation of rape and sexual abuse. I have chosen an approach to my analysis which aims to show that a close study of the language of a text can provide important clues to its meanings. I shall be arguing that in a text about sexual violence the manipulation of point of view, for example, can influence our attitudes towards both the victim and the perpetrator. I aim to show that the reader's interpretation of sexual violence as it is represented in literary texts may thus be identified through specific features in the language. I hope through doing this to bring fresh insights to the texts under discussion.

### *Choice of texts*

This project is not intended as an exhaustive study of Norwegian literary texts about sexual violence. My aim is not to present an overview of Norwegian rape narratives, but rather to explore a small corpus of selected texts through close linguistic analysis. My decision to include both fictional and factually-based narratives is justified by what I consider to be their shared characteristics. In my readings of fictional and non-fictional texts, I have discovered a number of parallels with relation to the depiction of sexual abuse. Many so-called 'fictional' works are arguably based on real experiences. Equally, certain texts that are considered to be non-fictional may resemble works of fiction, as for example in the use of metaphor and other literary devices. As Klosterman asserts, 'the line between fiction and non-fiction about child sexual abuse is very blurred.'<sup>6</sup>

In the texts I have selected all but one concern the sexual abuse of a child. I wish to stress here that these texts are not what I consider to be narratives about

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<sup>6</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.244.

‘incest.’ There are arguably cases of incest where the abusive element is missing, as for example in instances of sexual experimentation between siblings of similar age where both are mutually willing participants. Incest may also occur in cases where siblings who have been separated as babies form a sexual relationship in adulthood. In the text corpus each of the child protagonists is sexually abused by an adult member of her family. I therefore use the term ‘incestuous abuse’ or ‘child sexual abuse’ in my analysis of the texts to emphasise the power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator and which highlights also the extremely violent and coercive nature of the protagonist’s sexual victimisation. With the exception of Hanne Dahl’s *Vannliljen* (1999), where the abuse is frequently intrafamilial and is perpetrated by both sexes, the texts focus on male sexual violence.

With regard to a time frame I have chosen modern texts from the ’80s and ’90s, and one modern breakthrough novel: Christian Krohg’s *Albertine* (1886). My decision to include this 19th century text was not primarily guided by a consideration for its indisputable historical relevance (although I do consider its historical importance in my analysis of the text in Chapter 6) but was influenced by several other factors. Firstly, my choice was motivated by a wish to broaden the scope of my thesis by exploring a text which deals with the sexual victimisation of a female adult. Secondly, I was influenced by the novel’s literary merit and its rich linguistic detail. Thirdly, but of no less importance, I was motivated by the novel’s emphasis on the protagonist’s inner life. Although male-authored, *Albertine* - like the majority of the texts that I have chosen - is narrated mainly from the female protagonist’s point of view. The only other male-authored narrative, Sverre Inge Apenes’s *Fange hele livet* (1988), has been selected for what I consider to be its distinct treatment of sexual violence in relation to the other texts under discussion. With the exception of *Fange hele livet*, I have selected texts which I consider to be clearly non-objectifying to the victim and which represent rape and sexual abuse from the victim’s point of view.

### *Structure*

The structure of the thesis is organised around three main sections, each of which is divided into chapters. Each chapter incorporates a short introduction and summary to serve as ‘signposts’ that will hopefully clarify the main points covered in each chapter.

Part I addresses the subject of sexual violence from a sociological standpoint and is divided into three chapters. In Chapter 1 I look at issues concerning rape, specifically that of adult women. My focus in this chapter is centred around notions of responsibility and blame, most notably with regard to rape myths and their impact on society's attitudes towards both the perpetrators and their victims. Chapter 2 explores the rôle of pornography in sexually violent crimes against women and children. In this chapter I look at conflicting attitudes towards the influence of pornography on man's motivation to commit rape and touch also upon arguments concerning child pornography and the link between child sexual abuse and the consumption of pornography. The subject of child sexual abuse is continued in Chapter 3, where I look at several issues, particularly the dynamics which allow the abuse to occur and which cause the victim to maintain a silence over her victimisation. As a gendered crime, child sexual abuse - like the rape of adult women - is identified as a crime where the majority of its perpetrators are male. Although this project is primarily an exploration of the language of rape and sexual abuse narratives, I consider the sociological content of Part I to provide a crucial context for the analysis of these texts. By looking at some of the facts concerning sexual violence, I aim to present a broader framework within which to explore the subject as it is presented in a literary work.

Part II examines the representation of sexual violence in literary texts through an analysis of linguistic features. This central section of the thesis serves to highlight specific linguistic tools and to show ways in which these can be applied to texts about sexual violence. As Part III deals exclusively with two novels, the remaining texts (which include also factually-based narratives) are explored in Part II. The technique of narrative point of view is addressed in Chapter 4, where I discuss the various categories of point of view and analyse their function in the representation of sexual violence in the selected texts. The concept of focalization as an aspect of psychological point of view is recognised for its function in achieving a sense of closeness between the reader and the character through which the narration is focalized. In Chapter 5, I examine the concept of 'mind style' and attempt to identify its linguistic manifestations in the literary texts under discussion. I will be suggesting that through an analysis of grammatical and lexical features, the reader is given an insight into the individual conceptualisation of events which characterises the 'mind style' or world view of the character in question. The function of metaphor as an expression of mind style is discussed as a crucial aspect of the representation of

sexual abuse as experienced by the child victim in Mette Sundt's novel *Som igår, som imorgen* (1990).

In Part III I aim to show how the linguistic strategies explored in Part II may be applied to the representation of sexual violence in two further fictional texts. The analysis of the text corpus is thus divided between Part II and Part III. In this final section of the thesis I focus exclusively on two novels: *Albertine* and *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* (1981). Both of these works are canonical Norwegian texts. One is a male-authored, 19th-century novel which portrays the sexual victimisation of its adult protagonist. The other, written almost one hundred years later, is female-authored and concerns the sexual abuse of the child protagonist by her stepfather. Both texts provide the reader with frequent insights into the consciousness of the central character. Chapter 6 presents a discussion of *Albertine* which aims to cover several aspects of the text. I consider its historical background and examine also a number of thematic features, notably with relation to the notion of a male 'conspiracy' to entrap the protagonist. My linguistic analysis in this chapter focusses on what I refer to as the 'pre-rape scene,' where I explore the conflicting power rôles between the rapist and his chosen victim and how these are manifested in the text's patterns of focalization. Chapter 7 explores the distancing techniques employed by the protagonist of *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* throughout her experiences of sexual abuse and the extent to which these are conveyed through specific linguistic features. Chapter 8 offers a comparative analysis of both novels in which shared and distinct narrative strategies are discussed. This chapter examines the representation of the perpetrator and his commission of rape and explores also the rôle of setting in relation to the narrative representation of sexual violence. Chapters 7 and 8 are based on two papers, one of which has been published by *Northern Studies* ('Entrapment and Escape: Narrative Techniques in Representations of Sexual Abuse in Herbjørg Wassmo's *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*': 109-129). The other paper ('The Fragmented Body: Transgressing the Periphery. Two Novels by Herbjørg Wassmo and Christian Krohg') has been submitted for publication in *Centring on the Peripheries: Studies in Scandinavian, Scottish, Gælic and Greenlandic Literature*. I have been granted permission by Bjarne Thomsen, the editor of both publications, to include these papers in the thesis. They are reproduced in photocopied form as an appendix.

In my translations of the extracts from *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, I gratefully acknowledge Roseann Lloyd and Allen Simpson's translation of Wassmo's text, *The House with the Blind Glass Windows* (1987). With respect to the other texts under discussion the translations are my own.

**Part I:**  
**The Reality of Rape**

# Chapter 1

## Rape: Myths and Motives

There is nothing more reassuring than a locked door-  
unless you've locked the devil in with you.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Introduction

From an early age, women are taught to be wary of strangers. As we grow up, these fears are channelled into specific patterns of behaviour. We avoid unlit areas at night. We lock our windows and doors securely. We instinctively turn round if we hear footsteps behind us when we're out walking alone. We fit peep-holes and chains to our doors. We don't accept lifts from men we don't know. These are all measures that are motivated by a fear that concerns all women:

The fear of rape affects all women. [...] The fear is well founded, because no woman is immune from rape.<sup>2</sup>

It has been argued that women's fear of rape, in addition to the fear itself, is a means of social control, of keeping women isolated in their fear.<sup>3</sup> Rape can thus be understood as a process of victimisation, a view shared by many feminists. Nancy Matthews argues that men's power over women is at the root of sexual violence and stresses the need for a change in 'gender structures and consciousness' if men's sexually violent behaviour is to be stopped.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Venable Raine, *After Silence: Rape and my Journey Back*. London: Virago Press, 1999, p.8.

<sup>2</sup> Lorene M.G. Clark & Debra Lewis, *Rape: the price of coercive sexuality*. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1977, p.23.

<sup>3</sup> Cathy Roberts, *Women and Rape*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989, p.38.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy A. Matthews, *Confronting Rape: The Feminist Anti-Rape Movement and the State*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994, p.149.



As a society, we have a responsibility to dig out the roots of rape and to examine its causes, as Ray Wyre and Anthony Swift argue:

It cannot be said clearly enough that women and children are never responsible for being raped. Men must hold themselves responsible for their own violence. At the same time, there is a social responsibility to understand why so many men resort to violence, despite the punitive sanctions against it.<sup>5</sup>

Society's responsibility to accept the reality of rape entails the dispelling of popular rape myths and the study of sexual violence from the victim's perspective. In order to change the way we perceive rape, we need to look at the facts: its prevalence, its perpetrators and its causes. Notions of responsibility and blame are at the heart of sexual violence. Rapists often refuse to accept responsibility for their actions, thereby causing feelings of guilt and self-blame in their victims.<sup>6</sup> A lack of knowledge about the facts of rape is typically manifested in misguided attitudes towards both the victim and the perpetrator. In this chapter, I shall attempt to address these points by looking at popular rape myths and why they serve to transfer the onus of responsibility from the rapist onto his victim. I shall also consider the question of men's motivation to rape and the 'types' of rapist that have been identified by experts in the field. Firstly, we shall consider the prevalence of rape and issues relating to its reporting.

## 1.2 The Under-reported Crime

It is impossible to know the true prevalence of rape because it is such a heavily under-reported crime. Research in the United States indicates that less than 10% of rapes are reported.<sup>7</sup> Actual rape figures vary according to individual studies, but one US study revealed that 45% of women had been victims of rape or attempted rape in adulthood. In the United Kingdom, 75% of women who approach the London Rape Crisis Centre do not subsequently report their rape

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<sup>5</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.75.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Ronald M. Holmes & Stephen T. Holmes, *Profiling Violent Crimes: an Investigative Tool*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002, p.141.



to the police.<sup>8</sup> In 2004 rape cases in Scotland rose to 988, an increase of 8%, making this the highest recorded number in the country for rapes or attempted rapes. (These figures include assaults on children, so the figures for rapes specifically against women are not known.)<sup>9</sup> In Norway, 10,000 women contact the health service annually with injuries sustained from sexual violence and 30,000 approach crisis centres. Nevertheless, only a few hundred rapes are reported to the police every year. Gunnar Ringheim explains why rape victims in Norway are reluctant to contact the police:

Mangel på tillit er svaret som går igjen hos mange voldtektsog mishandlings ofre. Kvinner forteller om traumatiske opplevelser hos politiet når de er kommet for å anmelde. De føler seg mistrodd og trakasset.<sup>10</sup>

(A lack of trust is the reply that recurs from many rape and abuse victims. Women tell of traumatic experiences with the police when they have come to report. They feel they are distrusted and pestered.)

The brutality of police questioning is also observed by Nancy Matthews:

Victims of rape often said that police questioning was as brutal as the attack itself, with police asking questions like 'Did you enjoy it? Are you a virgin? What were you wearing?' Feminists in the anti-rape movement called it 'the second rape.'<sup>11</sup>

Similar questions to those quoted above are used in rape trials in an attempt to discredit the victim, thereby shifting the onus of responsibility from the rapist and onto the woman he has raped. The criminal barrister and journalist Helena Kennedy claims that in the eyes of the law, there is an 'ideal victim' of rape who should be 'sexually inexperienced or at least respectable.'<sup>12</sup> She argues that female rape victims are questioned about matters that are never directed at men, such as their reasons for walking alone late at night, their clothing and their use of contraception.<sup>13</sup> It is evident from the nature of the questioning,

<sup>8</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *ibid*, p.xi.

<sup>9</sup> *The Scotsman*. 16 November 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Gunnar Ringheim, *Hysteriske Kvinnfolk: Når kvinner anmelder vold*. Oslo: Cappelen, 1995, p.7.

<sup>12</sup> Nancy A. Matthews, *Confronting Rape: The Feminist Anti-Rape Movement and the State*, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Helena Kennedy, *Eve Was Framed: Women and British Justice*. London: Vintage, 1992, p.114.

<sup>13</sup> Helena Kennedy, *Eve Was Framed: Women and British Justice*. London: Vintage, 1992, p.114.

both by the police when the victim reports the rape, and by the defence barrister if the case reaches the courts, that the woman's sexuality becomes the focus of attention. The rapist's sexual history is not exposed, as it is in the case of his victim. Instead, she is burdened with the responsibility of justifying actions that would not be questioned if she were male. Helena Kennedy articulates the injustice of the double standard, which typifies the line of questioning in British rape trials:

In discrediting men, it is rare that an attack goes to the foundation of their manliness [...] We may impugn them for their violence, neglect or greed [...] but none of them would be reduced in the eyes of the court for an uncommitted sexual relationship, for choosing not to marry or for failing to fulfil domestic chores.<sup>14</sup>

It is hardly surprising that many women suffer from deep feelings of shame and a lack of trust in the criminal system when their sexual integrity is called into question. Kennedy points out that even in cases where a woman is raped by a stranger, the defence can attempt to prove that the accused believed the woman to have given her consent.<sup>15</sup> The victim is thus forced to take responsibility for her own rape, unless she can 'prove' that sex was not consensual.

If the victim of stranger-rape is not readily believed unless she conforms to a supposed 'ideal victim' rôle, the woman raped by a man known to her is taken even less seriously, as the legal activist Catherine MacKinnon asserts:

As to adult women, to the extent an accused knows a woman and they have sex, her consent is inferred.<sup>16</sup>

If a woman knows her assailant, even if only as a passing acquaintance, Helena Kennedy claims that she is far more likely to be exposed to a character assassination than if she had been raped by a complete stranger.

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p.109.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, p.114.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine A. MacKinnon, 'Rape: On Coercion and Consent,' in Conboy, Medina & Stanbury (eds) *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p.46.

Kennedy argues that this is particularly the case if there has ever been a sexual relationship between them:

If you have a nodding acquaintance with the penis in question, the whole business is considered to be altogether less serious.<sup>17</sup>

Research suggests that women are at most risk from men they know. Anna C. Salter, an expert on sexual offenders, gives the following figures which are based on U.S. studies:

According to Bureau of Justice statistics, approximately one-half of the victims of rape or attempted rape are attacked by a friend or acquaintance, and overall 62 percent are assaulted by someone they know, adding together friends, acquaintances, intimates, and family members. Only about one-third are victimized by a stranger.<sup>18</sup>

Although research shows that women are less at risk from strangers it is nevertheless this type of attacker who instils the greatest fear, probably, as Anna Salter observes, because we believe that we have some control over our friends, whereas all women feel vulnerable to the dangers of a knife-wielding loner.<sup>19</sup> The belief that women are at most risk from strangers is one of numerous myths concerning rape. We shall now consider a number of these misconceptions and examine their influence on society's attitudes towards rape victims.

### **1.3 Rape Myths**

We saw earlier that rape victims who know their rapists may be exposed to humiliating questioning if they report the rape. Cathy Roberts found from her interviews with over thirty rape victims that the responses of others greatly affected the woman's perception of her rape and of her self-image.<sup>20</sup> Malkah

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<sup>17</sup> Helena Kennedy, *Eve Was Framed*, p.124.

<sup>18</sup> Anna C. Salter, *Predators: Paedophiles, Rapists, and Other Sex Offenders*. New York: Basic Books, 2003, p.81.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p.82.

<sup>20</sup> Cathy Roberts, *Women and Rape*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989, p.102.

Notman and Carol Nadelson argue that if the victim is made to feel in some way responsible for her rape, or that she could have prevented it from happening, her sense of guilt will not only actively discourage her from reporting the crime, but will also affect her process of recovery.<sup>21</sup> A victim's feelings are thus dependent on public attitudes to rape, which may be examined in the light of rape myths which serve to perpetuate her victimisation. Her distrust of the police and the legal system may also be viewed in relation to fallacies regarding men's sexually violent behaviour towards women.

### *Victimology*

Nowhere is the rapist's absolution from responsibility for his crime more apparent than in the area of victimology, which was popular between the 40's and 70's, where women were seen to cause their own victimisation, whether consciously or subconsciously.<sup>22</sup> In the field of victimology the woman was regarded as precipitating the rape either through inappropriate dress or conduct, or by failing to ward off sexually aggressive behaviour on the part of the male.<sup>23</sup> Diane Scully cites the work of one of the first expounders on the theory of victimology, the criminologist Hans von Hentig, who argued for the existence of 'born victims.' He believed seduction to play a central rôle in rape and incest. According to his doctrine, it was the victim who incited the rapist to rape. This idea of the woman desiring her own violation is of course inherent in the psychoanalytic view of women. Scully discusses the influence of psychoanalytic theory on the disreputation of female rape victims:

In psychoanalytic terms, the core female personality consists of three characteristics: narcissism, masochism, and passivity. The masochistic element accounts for women's alleged unconscious desire to be raped.<sup>24</sup>

Scully argues that assumptions about female fantasies on rape can be traced back to Freud's assertions that women possess a 'masochistic need to be violated.'<sup>25</sup> Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray point out that the Freudian

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<sup>21</sup> Malkah T. Notman & Carol C. Nadelson, 'Psychodynamic and Life-Stage Considerations,' in Sharon L. McCombie (ed.) *The Rape Crisis Intervention Handbook*. New York: Plenum Press, 1980, p. 136.

<sup>22</sup> Diane Scully, *Understanding Sexual Violence: A Study of Convicted Rapists*. London: Routledge, 1994, p.45.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, p.42

<sup>24</sup> Diane Scully, *Understanding Sexual Violence*, p.42.

seduction theory not only obscured the experiences of victims of sexual abuse by labelling them as 'internal fantasies', but also served to transfer the responsibility for the abuse 'away from the perpetrator of the crime and onto the victim.'<sup>26</sup>

### *The Question of Consent*

In spite of a growing public awareness of sexual violence, the trend of victim blaming still exists in our society today and as we have seen, is largely motivated by myths and fallacies. Ray Wyre and Anthony Swift identify a number of rape myths that serve to perpetuate sexually abusive attitudes towards women and thereby detract from the reality of rape as a violent crime:

Society is dangerous for women when many people believe that nice girls don't get raped; women who do get raped must ask for it; that when women say 'no' they mean 'yes'; or they like to be manhandled; or you can't rape someone who doesn't want to be raped.<sup>27</sup>

According to these myths, the victim's behaviour is perceived as a justification for her rape. Instead of the rapist's actions being called into question, the victim's conduct is under scrutiny and she is held accountable for her rape. It is evident that the question of consent is negligible in these misconceptions about the behaviour of both the rapist and the victim. The rape victim finds herself in a no-win situation. If she says 'no' she is perceived to mean 'yes,' and will be raped regardless, because she is considered to have deserved it anyway. Whether or not she has consented to sex, in a situation of rape, the rapist chooses to believe that she has.

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, p.150.

<sup>26</sup> Linda Alcoff & Laura Gray, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?' in *Signs*, Winter 1993, p.273.

<sup>27</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.75.

The myth that a woman really means 'yes' when she says 'no' is also addressed by Helena Kennedy:

In the view of some men, any woman's 'no' is covered in ambiguity, not to be taken seriously if she is vivacious and friendly, if she dresses provocatively, if she goes out late at night or has had sex with others before.<sup>28</sup>

At the heart of rape myths such as these, flourishes the sexual double standard, where a man can exercise his power to subject a woman to sex whenever it pleases him, while a woman is not permitted to control her own sexuality by challenging that male power and saying 'No' to unwanted sex. Equally, if she adopts codes of behaviour that are unquestioned when performed by men, such as drinking unaccompanied in pubs, or walking alone late at night, her conduct is perceived as a transgression of acceptable female behaviour and may be used to justify the rapist's actions.

The unequal power relations that exist between men and women may explain *how* rape is made possible, but it does not provide an answer to the question of *why* rape occurs. We shall now look at a number of theories regarding the possible causes of sexually violent behaviour.

### **1.4 Theories on the Causes of Rape**

In the last section we looked at a number of myths concerning the victim of rape, but myths and fallacies are also in abundance when it comes to a rapist's motives. From his studies of convicted sex offenders, Nicholas Groth has identified one of the most prevailing misconceptions about rape as the view that it is as a crime motivated by sexual desire. He refutes this notion, arguing

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<sup>28</sup> Helena Kennedy, *Eve Was Framed*, p.112.



that rape is 'the sexual expression of power and anger.'<sup>29</sup> Malkah Notman and Carol Nadelson also share this view:

The profound impact of rape is best understood when it is seen as a violent crime against the person and not as a specifically sexual encounter.<sup>30</sup>

Although the research on rape indicates that it is not a sexually motivated crime, there is nevertheless no escaping the fact that the expression of rape is sexual. When a man rapes a woman, his assault is specifically aimed at her sexuality. As Catherine Mackinnon argues:

Rape is not less sexual for being violent. To the extent that coercion has become integral to male sexuality, rape may even be sexual to the degree that, and because, it is violent.<sup>31</sup>

Mackinnon claims that sex and violence should be understood as 'mutually definitive' instead of 'mutually exclusive' and that only then will the real violation of rape as experienced by victims be recognised.<sup>32</sup> She points out that there is a question mark over what is regarded as force, and therefore violence, in sexual relations. The relationship between sex and violence is central to existing theories on the possible causes of rape, but as we shall see, there are conflicting arguments regarding the extent to which sexual desire, evolution and power relations are responsible for sexual violence.

### *Social Science Theory*

According to the Social Science theory, rape should be recognised as a crime motivated by power and anger. Ronald Holmes and Stephen Holmes are experts on criminal behaviour and they specialise in the psychological profiling

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<sup>29</sup> Nicholas Groth, *Men Who Rape: The Psychology of the Offender*. New York: Plenum Press, 1979, p.2.

<sup>30</sup> Malkah T. Notman & Carol C. Nadelson, 'Psychodynamic and Life-Stage Considerations,' p. 135.

<sup>31</sup> Catherine A. Mackinnon, 'Rape: On Coercion and Consent', p.44

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, p.45.

of rapists and other serious offenders. They explain the complexity inherent in any attempt to identify possible reasons why some men become rapists:

No simple way explains why anyone becomes a rapist. Certainly, not all rapists are alike and rapists' motives, anticipations and expectations vary.<sup>33</sup>

These highly experienced researchers do, however, give a very definite view regarding the nature of rape as a crime:

'[...] rape is a crime of *power* and *violence* in which sex is the weapon.'<sup>34</sup>

In the authors' opinion, the view of sex as the primary motive for rape is a damaging myth which transfers the responsibility of the rape from the perpetrator to his victim. In their view rape compensates for the rapist's feelings of inadequacy and sex is used as an outlet for his frustration, anger and sense of powerlessness.

### *Evolutionary Theory*

The social science explanation of rape as an act motivated primarily by an urge for control and power is disputed by evolutionary scientists. Randy Thornhill and Craig T. Palmer claim that the motivation for rape lies in the 'differences between male and female sexuality.'<sup>35</sup> Their central argument is the contention that, contrary to the social science view (which presents rape as primarily a crime of violence), rape is a sexually motivated act. In their view, rape is not a 'cultural' phenomenon, occurring as it does in many animal species.<sup>36</sup> The evolutionary theory of rape is regarded by social scientists and feminists in

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<sup>33</sup> Ronald M. Holmes & Stephen T. Holmes, *Profiling Violent Crimes: An Investigative Tool*. Thousand Oaks : Sage, 2002, p.143.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, p.139.

<sup>35</sup> Randy Thornhill & Craig T. Palmer, *A Natural History of Rape*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000, p.171.

<sup>36</sup> Randy Thornhill & Craig T. Palmer, *A Natural History of Rape*, p.198



particular, as a means of justifying sexual violence. Elizabeth Wilson is cynically dismissive of an evolutionary approach to male aggressive behaviour:

Biology becomes a gigantic moral let-out. [...] After all, to change one's behavior involves effort and pain. It's much easier to pretend to be a baboon.<sup>37</sup>

Wilson argues that reasons are being found in order to justify men's violence because it is regarded as biologically determined and therefore 'natural.' She claims that there is a tendency to view sexuality in the same way: as an irrepressible energy over which we have no control. The evolutionary theorists' view of human nature as something which is unalterable, detracts from the rapist's responsibility for his sexually violent behaviour.

### *Feminist Theory*

Feminists view rape as a process of victimisation. Cathy Roberts argues that it is crucial to recognise that rape is not an isolated act, 'sudden and contained,' but that the process of victimisation can begin before the act itself, and as we have seen, may continue well after the rape has occurred, for example in the victim's dealings with the police and the courts, where she may feel that she is experiencing a 'second rape.'<sup>38</sup> Roberts believes that in order to understand sexual aggression, we should be looking not at imprisoned rapists, but at everyday male behaviour. Her research is based on interviews with thirty rape victims and it emerges from their personal accounts that their rapes arose from ordinary, routine situations.<sup>39</sup> The feminist activist Catherine MacKinnon is also emphatic that rape is not 'exceptional' to women's social situation:

In feminist analysis, a rape is not an isolated event or moral transgression or individual interchange gone wrong but an act of terrorism and torture within a systemic context of group subjection, like lynching.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *What is to be done about Violence Against Women?* Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1983, p.27.

<sup>38</sup> Cathy Roberts, *Why Men Rape*, p.54.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, p.29.

<sup>40</sup> Catherine A. MacKinnon, 'Rape: On Coercion and Consent,' p.42.

Rape can thus be viewed as a means of social control, of maintaining patriarchy through sexual violence, as Andrea Dworkin asserts:

The woman is acted on; the man acts and through action expresses sexual power, the power of masculinity.<sup>41</sup>

Catherine MacKinnon argues that one of the principal difficulties in defining and recognising the crime of rape may be caused by the legal perception of rape as distinct from intercourse, while rape victims find it difficult to separate the two:

[...] where the legal system has seen the intercourse in rape, victims see the rape in intercourse.<sup>42</sup>

Rape is unlike other crimes, because whether or not it is deemed to have occurred is dependent on the man's perceptions of the woman's reactions and feelings. As MacKinnon observes:

The problem is that the injury of rape lies in the meaning of the act to its victim, but the standard for its criminality lies in the meaning of the act to the assailant.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike other crimes, rape is invisible. Although there may be forensic proof of intercourse, as Helena Kennedy argues, it does not prove whether or not the sexual act that took place was coercive.<sup>44</sup> Where the man may falsely believe that forced sex can suddenly become pleasurable for the woman, she experiences it as an act of violation: a rape.

### *Synthesised Theory*

In his book *Theories of Rape*, Lee Ellis argues for a 'synthesised' theory which embraces features from each of the prevailing contemporary rape theories: the 'feminist,' 'social learning' and 'evolutionary' theories.<sup>45</sup> Like the evolutionary

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<sup>41</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. London: The Women's Press, 1983, p.23.

<sup>42</sup> Catherine A. MacKinnon, *ibid*, p.44.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*, p.50.

<sup>44</sup> Helena Kennedy, *Why Eve Was Framed*, p.122.

<sup>45</sup> Lee Ellis, *Theories of Rape: Inquiries into the Causes of Sexual Aggression*. USA: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1989, p.105.

theorists, he argues that rape is sexually motivated, but he proposes that there are two underlying ‘drives’ that cause rape: the ‘sex drive’ and ‘the desire to possess and control.’<sup>46</sup> Thus, a desire for power and a desire for sex are equal partners in the rape act. This fusion of sex, power and control is clearly manifested in the following account by one of the 114 convicted men interviewed by Diane Scully for her study on male sexual violence:

*Rape gave me the power to do what I wanted to do without feeling I had to please a partner or respond to a partner. I felt in control, dominant. Rape was the ability to have sex without caring about the woman’s response. I was totally dominant.*<sup>47</sup>  
(my italics)

We shall see in the next section, when we examine the different categories of rapist, that for a large majority, the desire to exert power is a fundamental component of their motivation to commit rape.

## 1.5 Rapists

A number of researchers have attempted a classification of various types of rapist. Nicholas Groth, for example, identifies three types of rape: ‘Anger Rape,’ ‘Power Rape’ and ‘Sadistic Rape.’<sup>48</sup> Ronald Holmes and Stephen Holmes offer a more recent classification of rapists which is based on typologies by other researchers: ‘power reassurance,’ ‘anger retaliation,’ ‘power assertive’ and ‘sadistic.’<sup>49</sup> I shall now briefly consider each of these categories before exploring characteristics that are understood to be shared by many rapists.

### *Power Reassurance Rapist*

Like Groth’s ‘Power Rapist,’ the power reassurance rapist is motivated primarily by sexual desire and uses only enough coercion to successfully carry out his rape without inflicting excessive force. This type of rapist is also known as a ‘compensatory’ rapist.’ He typically suffers from low self-esteem, and rape is therefore a means of attaining self-importance.

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Diane Scully, *Understanding Sexual Violence*, pp. 149-50.

<sup>48</sup> Nicholas Groth, *Men Who Rape*, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ronald M. Holmes & Stephen T. Holmes, *Profiling Violent Crimes*, p.145.

### *Power Assertive Rapist*

The aim of the power assertive rapist, on the other hand, is not sexual. Rape for him is what the authors term ‘an impulsive act of predation.’<sup>50</sup> This type of rapist is often in a stable sexual relationship, but is driven by a need to commit rape. He typically demonstrates excessive aggression in his attacks on women and he is oblivious to the welfare of his victim.<sup>51</sup> From his perspective, she is there to comply with his demands.

### *Anger Retaliation Rapist*

Like Groth’s ‘anger rapist,’ the ‘anger retaliation rapist’ feels wronged. His anger is directed at women, as he believes that they have caused him to suffer. His principal aim is to hurt women for the wrongdoings which they have inflicted upon him. This type of rapist is typically from a dysfunctional family, where physical abuse by one or both parents is common. His relationship with an important female figure such as his mother, whether natural or adoptive, is a significant factor in his negative attitudes towards women in general.<sup>52</sup>

### *Sadistic Rapist*

In the case of the sadistic rapist, his purpose is to express his sexually violent fantasies through rape. He is ritualistic, typically using instruments and equipment such as ropes and handcuffs in his torture of his chosen victims. It has been argued that this type of rapist ‘has eroticized aggression and violence.’<sup>53</sup> For him, violence and sexual gratification become fused. Physical abuse and sexual deviance are typical elements of his upbringing. A sadistic rapist is in many cases married, intelligent and compulsively neat in his appearance. To all intents and purposes, he is regarded as a respectable citizen, good with his family and a pillar of the community, yet this seemingly ‘normal’ man is a violent, sadistic rapist who stalks his victims and prepares his attacks with care.

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid*, p.150.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, p.151.

<sup>53</sup> Ronald M. Holmes & Stephen T. Holmes, *Profiling Violent Crimes*, p.153.

### *Troubled Masculinity and Rape Fantasies*

A trait shared by many rapists from each of the above categories is a general inability to relate to women sexually or socially.<sup>54</sup> Men who are sexually violent can be distinguished from other violent men who are able to have stable, loving relationships with women, as Sylvia Levine and Joseph Koenig argue:

Perhaps the key ingredient is the extremely flimsy barrier between fantasy and reality that these men have, and it is this that may separate them from equally repressed, hostile and ignorant men who do not rape.<sup>55</sup>

According to the authors, the rapist does not recognise sex as something that is mutually satisfying and that occurs as a communication of love and warmth. He is completely self-absorbed in his approach to sex, having no concept of a woman's sexual arousal. Most rapists share a deep and all-consuming hatred of women and rape is a channel through which they can express their anger. Rape becomes the punishment that they feel all women deserve and the victim is the scapegoat for their grievances, whether or not she is known to the rapist.<sup>56</sup> Levine and Keonig's reference to the rapist's difficulty in distinguishing between fantasy and reality is also discussed by other researchers in the field. Anna Salter claims that rape fantasies are the driving force behind many rapes:

[This] emphasis on the importance of fantasies runs like a trail through the tangled forest of rapist cognition.<sup>57</sup>

Salter distinguishes between 'opportunistic rapists' and 'compulsive rapists.'<sup>58</sup> The former will typically commit rape during the commission of another crime, eg, during a burglary, and the latter type corresponds to the categories of 'power reassurance' and 'anger retaliation' rapist discussed above. Whether a

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, p.150.

<sup>55</sup> Sylvia Levine & Joseph Koenig, *Why Men Rape*, London: Star, 1983, p.2.

<sup>56</sup> Sylvia Levine & Joseph Koenig, *Why Men Rape*, London: Star, 1983, pp. 2-3

<sup>57</sup> Anna C. Salter, *Predators*, p.90.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid*, pp. 82-84.

rapist is motivated primarily by anger, power or sex, Anna Salter argues that there are thinking patterns shared by all 'compulsive' rapists:

The cornerstones of rape are distorted thinking and rape fantasies. These fantasies play an enormous role in the development of compulsive rapists.<sup>59</sup>

Salter, who has been studying rapists for over twenty years, summarises the motivations that drive men to rape women, and emphasises the dominant rôle of fantasy as a stimulus to committing their crimes:

Hostile attitudes to women, a sense of entitlement, callous indifference to others, and self-serving excuses play a leading role. And it is fantasy, mental rehearsal with masturbation, that leads the way.<sup>60</sup>

## 1.6 Summary

In this chapter, we have looked at a number of popular rape myths and we have also considered the various theories that have been posited with regard to the causes of rape. We saw that several categories of rapist have been identified by experts on sexual offenders and noted that they are generally considered to be deeply anxious about their social and sexual rôles. Although we have seen that there is one type of rapist (the 'power reassurance rapist') whose primary aim is sexual, his behaviour is shown to be fuelled by a desire to increase his self-importance. As this is achieved through the oppression of another human being, power can be viewed as a significant element in his motivation to rape. From a feminist standpoint, however, less emphasis is placed on individual categories of rapist. Feminists view sexual violence in the context of everyday male behaviour, perceiving rape as a consequence of unequal gender relations.

We have seen that fantasy has been found to play a significant rôle in the thinking patterns of sex offenders. For certain rapists, pornography can be recognised as a retreat from reality until such time as the pornography ceases to

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<sup>59</sup> *ibid*, p.89.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*, p.93.

satisfy their urges and they commit rape in order to enact their fantasies. In the next chapter, we shall examine the extent to which pornography may be considered to be a contributing factor in sexual crimes against women and children.



## Chapter 2

### Rape and the Rôle of Pornography

In the United States, the pornography industry is larger than the record and film industries combined.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2.1 Introduction

Sexual violence is an urgent social problem, and we saw in the last chapter that the fact of it being a vastly underreported crime makes it very difficult to analyse in terms of its prevalence. Catherine MacKinnon's estimation of the extent of sexual victimisation against women is alarmingly high:

Almost half of all women[...] are raped or victims of attempted rape at least once in their lives.<sup>2</sup>

MacKinnon, with other feminist writers and researchers such as Andrea Dworkin, is concerned with the increase in violent pornography, in which sex and violence are coalesced. Dworkin incisively describes the effects of pornography and its relation to sexual violence :

[...] the fact of the matter is that if you live in a society that is saturated with this kind of woman-hating, you live in a society that has marked you as a target for rape, for battery, for prostitution, or for death.<sup>3</sup>

In pornography, sexual violence is trivialised and normalised. Women are portrayed as responding positively to their sexual violation, of eventually becoming aroused, after initial resistance. Diane Scully points out that in non-sexual forms of fictional violence, including murder, the victims are never shown to be enjoying their experience, as they are in pornographic literature.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. London: The Women's Press, 1981, p.201.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine A. MacKinnon, *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 1989, p.176.

<sup>3</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Life and Death*. London : Virago Press, 1997, p.123.

<sup>4</sup> Diane Scully, *Understanding Sexual Violence*, p. 56.



The message conveyed by a large body of pornography, that women want to be raped and enjoy being violated, has been shown to affect men's attitudes towards women. In this chapter, we shall consider the relationship between pornography and sexual violence by looking at arguments that support the view of pornography as an influence on sexually abusive behaviour towards women and examining also those opinions that challenge the notion of a causal link between pornography and sexual violence.

## 2.2 The Power of Pornography

Jane Caputi makes the following observation regarding the influence of pornography on society's attitudes and views:

Not only does pornography, like consumer advertising, effectively promote dominant worldviews, but of critical concern is its ability to create desires and/or stimulate previously unarticulated desires.<sup>5</sup>

Caputi argues that although many people would concede the power of advertising and its ability to influence consumers, they would deny the forceful effects of pornography. It stands to reason that if advertising functions not only to promote merchandise, but also to shape public awareness and to suggest an ideal, then pornography can be understood to normalise and perpetuate the sexual oppression that is endemic in our society, through the expression of sadistic, brutalised depictions of male sexual violence against women.

### *Sex Offenders and Pornography*

Several researchers have investigated the relationship between pornography and sexual violence through studies of convicted rapists. Diana Russell believes that the effect of pornography on sex offenders is an important area of research in any investigations into a causal link between pornography and rape. Russell found that from a sample of eighty-nine incarcerated sex offenders, 66% of rapists and 47% of child abusers claimed to have been 'at least sometimes

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<sup>5</sup> Jane Caputi, 'Advertising Femicide.' *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, in Jill Radford & Diana E.H. Russell (eds) 1992, p.214.

incited by pornography to commit an offence.<sup>6</sup> Robert Jensen has also discovered a link between the consumption of pornography and sexually violent behaviour. From his interviews with thirteen sex offenders, it emerged that all but two of the men claimed a connection between their use of pornography and their commission of sex attacks against women. For a number of these offenders, an introduction to pornography in their childhood formed their sexuality from a very early age. Crucially, as Jensen acknowledges: 'for these men, pornography was an important factor in shaping a male - dominant view of sexuality.'<sup>7</sup> Jensen concedes that the narratives provided by these men do not prove that pornography causes sexual violence but argues that their accounts reveal the extent to which pornography is implicated in their sexually abusive behaviour. Jane Caputi has examined numerous other cases where it appears indisputable that pornography played a part in the planning and enactment of sadistic rape-murders. As she rightly argues, violent pornography will not incite *all* men to commit sex-murder, but that is not a reason for dismissing the effect that it might (and obviously in some cases, *does*) have on certain men.<sup>8</sup>

### *Pornography as Woman-Hating*

Andrea Dworkin makes clear her views on the relationship between pornography and rape:

Pornography is hate propaganda against women. It not only encourages acts of violence against us but it says that we love them.<sup>9</sup>

Dworkin has spent years of her life campaigning against pornography. She has studied innumerable pornographic magazines and books and spoken to the real women involved in the very real abuse that is sold under the guise of adult 'fantasy.' In her writings on sexual violence, Dworkin emphasises the interconnection between pornography, prostitution, rape and incestual abuse. She reiterates throughout her writings the fact that the majority of prostitutes

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<sup>6</sup> Diana Russell, *Dangerous Relationships: Pornography, Misogyny and Rape*. California: Sage Publications, 1998, p.150

<sup>7</sup> Gail Dines, Robert Jensen & Ann Russo, *Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality*. London: Routledge, 1998, p.134.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Caputi, 'Advertising Femicide.' *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, p.217.

<sup>9</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Letters from a War Zone*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1988, p.148.

and women used in pornography have been sexually abused in childhood, possibly as many as sixty-five to seventy percent.<sup>10</sup> She quotes horrifying cases of child-rape and gang-rape that have been generated by pornography and claims that entire scenarios depicted in pornographic magazines are re-enacted on women and children.<sup>11</sup> Dworkin perceives pornography as 'an extremely vital, vigorous and effective belief system' where everything is interrelated:

Nothing in this system is unrelated to anything else, and there is a relationship between rape and pornography. Pornography celebrates rape.<sup>12</sup>

For Dworkin, therefore, the focus is not so much on the question of whether or not pornography causes rape. In her view, pornography *constitutes* rape, extolling the sexual violation of women through their dehumanization and degradation.

### 2.3 A Dissenting View

While Dworkin and other radical feminists have waged an unceasing war against pornography, there are researchers who believe that the elimination of pornography would solve nothing in terms of combating the problem of sexual violence. Nicholas Groth argues that because rape is motivated by anger and not by sexual desire, banning pornography would not eliminate rape. Similar views are expressed by Martin Schwartz and Walter De Keseredy, who argue that the purchase of pornography and the abuse of women may derive from the same 'anti-female attitudes.' In other words, the factors that incite a man to purchase pornographic material may also, in their view, motivate him to rape women. They claim that if this is the case, then eliminating pornography would not solve anything, as woman-hating attitudes would still remain, motivating men to abuse women.<sup>13</sup> Their hypothesis ignores a fundamental aspect of pornography, the pervasive message that women enjoy being raped. Diane

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p.278.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p.317.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, p.148.

<sup>13</sup> Martin D.Schwartz & Walter S. De Keseredy, *Sexual Assault on the College Campus*. Thousand Oaks; London & New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997, p.88.

Scully is concerned that the depiction in pornography of female sexual arousal as a response to sexual violence makes rape an acceptable form of behaviour, and may incite men to act out their sexual fantasies.<sup>14</sup> This myth is incisively defined by Andrea Dworkin:

The most enduring sexual truth in pornography - widely articulated by men to the utter bewilderment of women throughout the ages - is that sexual violence is desired by the normal female [...]<sup>15</sup>

Elizabeth Wilson criticises Dworkin for what she regards as the latter's 'pessimistic, nightmare vision of a world in which all women are slaves.'<sup>16</sup> She regards Dworkin's views as over-simplistic, arguing that the assumption should not be made that all women are coerced into the porn industry or that the sexual violence depicted in pornography is real. Although accepting that a proportion of women are forced into pornography and prostitution, she is critical of what she regards as Dworkin's conflation of two distinct aspects of women's oppression: a) the actual violence suffered by women in their own homes, in the workplace, or on the streets, and b) the 'imagery [...] of pornography as an ideology.'<sup>17</sup>

Wilson's counter-argument against Dworkin's polemic might itself be viewed as over-simplified:

Some women may be terrorised into taking part in pornographic displays, just as some, but not all, women are coerced into prostitution. But it would be a mistake to assume that all women in the porn industry have been so treated, or that the whippings and mutilations are real.<sup>18</sup>

Even if we were to hypothesise that 'the whippings and mutilations' were simulated, this does not of course mean that the women and children used in the making of pornography do not suffer emotional and physical pain. As

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<sup>14</sup> Diane Scully, *Understanding Sexual Violence*, p.153.

<sup>15</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, p.166.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *What is to be Done About Violence Against Women?* Penguin Books, 1983, p.162.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *What is to be Done About Violence Against Women?* Penguin Books, 1983, p.163.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

Diana Russell points out, the exploitation depicted in pornography is experienced by real people, which challenges the notion of pornography as ‘fantasy’:

‘[...]pornographic photographs of women and children are records of their abuse and degradation.’<sup>19</sup>

Although Wilson recognises that for a number of women the violence is genuine, the generally vague and dismissive tone of her contention trivialises the exploitation and brutalisation of women involved in pornography.

### *A Cycle of Abuse*

Andrea Dworkin insists that the violence in pornography is real. She spent three years of her life immersed in pornographic publications for her book *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. As a result, she suffered from exhaustion and physical sickness at the revulsion of the material.<sup>20</sup> The photographs she studied depict real women, brutalised and tortured. Her research uncovers the stories of real victims of rape and pornography, victims of sexual abuse forced into prostitution and filmed for pornography; an endless cycle of violation through which rape, pornography and prostitution are interwoven.<sup>21</sup>

### *The Question of Choice*

Elizabeth Wilson maintains that for some women, work in the pornography industry may be more lucrative than other available jobs. This viewpoint, however, places too much emphasis on the notion of choice. For some women, pornography is just another form of abuse perpetrated by men. Dworkin believes that between 65% to 70% of women in pornography have been sexually abused as children.<sup>22</sup> For these women, the question of choice does not enter the equation. As Ann Russo points out, the argument of ‘free choice’ merely serves as a shield to prevent public scrutiny of the pornography industry and perpetuates the abuse of the women and children victimised by it.<sup>23</sup> It is

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p.64.

<sup>20</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, p.303.

<sup>21</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Letters from a War Zone*, p.315.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, p.278.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Russo, *Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality*. London: Routledge, 1998, p.27.

important to acknowledge that, even when women do choose to work in the pornography industry, their decisions are informed by their social circumstances. Poverty and sexual abuse incite women to make these choices. Like those who are lured into prostitution through advertisements for escort girls, a proportion of women are deliberately misled into believing that they will be working as 'actresses' or 'models' and they may be told that their initial involvement in the industry will lead to a better acting career. The reality, however, is quite different because of the social stigma and isolation they face as workers in the pornography industry.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Feminist Liberal Viewpoint*

Amongst feminists there is a clear division between the feminist liberals - who support pornography - and feminists in the anti-rape movement. To the feminist liberals, the notion of individual interpretation is central to their views on pornography. They therefore regard the stance of anti-pornography feminists as an attack on the sexual practices and fantasies of individuals. The feminist liberals ignore the very real issues of discrimination and oppression that form the foundations of the pornographic industry and to which the anti-pornography feminists are opposed. The feminist liberals' perspective is clearly defined by Russo:

They distinguish pornographic speech from its making or use.<sup>25</sup>

The content of pornography thereby becomes abstracted, far removed from the reality of its production.

## **2.4 Pornography and Rape Fantasies**

The sexual liberals' argument that fantasies - even violently disturbing fantasies - are harmless as long as they remain fantasies, has been disputed by a number of researchers. Sylvia Levine and Joseph Koenig claim that interviews with convicted rapists reveal that for these men, the boundary between fantasy and

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, p.23.

<sup>25</sup> Ann Russo, *Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality*, p.27.



reality is blurred.<sup>26</sup> Jane Caputi stresses the need to acknowledge that in the realm of pornography, fantasy and reality are inseparable:

Of course, many eminently reasonable people persist in denying pornography as practice, preferring to bracket it as *only* “fantasy,” as if the symbolic and material worlds, ideology and behaviour, could ever be so neatly, even surgically, disconnected.<sup>27</sup>

For certain rapists, the fantasy of committing rape is more powerful than its actual perpetration, as Anna Salter observes:

It may literally be true that in some cases the rapes are committed to provide fuel for the fantasies rather than the other way around.<sup>28</sup>

Salter points out that for many incarcerated rapists, their term in prison enables them to elaborate on their sexually violent fantasies, which they subsequently act upon on their release from prison.<sup>29</sup> Salter argues:

Steel bars and guard towers stop people but not fantasies.<sup>30</sup>

For a number of convicted sex attackers, the rapes are arguably committed in order to fulfil the fantasies which they have been able to cultivate over a period of time. Jane Caputi argues that the fantasies of sex killers and the enactment of their sexually violent fantasies are ‘graphically paralleled’ in the media, in films such as Hitchcock’s *Psycho*.<sup>31</sup>

### *Pornography and Point of View*

Diana Scully argues that the perpetrator’s anonymity which characterises a large amount of pornography enables the male viewer to ‘fantasise’ himself into the rôle that is enacted by the male aggressor in the pornographic scene.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Sylvia Levine & Joseph Koenig, *Why Men Rape*. London : Star, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, p.167.

<sup>28</sup> Anna C. Salter, *Predators*, p.89.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*, p.93.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, p.92.

<sup>31</sup> Jane Caputi, *The Age of Sex Crime*, p.92.

<sup>32</sup> Diana Scully, *Dangerous Relationships: Pornography, Misogyny and Rape*. California: Sage Publications, 1998, p.96.



Viewer identification is also discussed by D.A. Clarke, who suggests that the technique of viewpoint in recent films depicting misogynist violence entraps the viewer into ‘an identification with the invisible male protagonist as he rapes and kills.’<sup>33</sup> This type of manipulation of viewpoint is of course not exclusive to recent films. Referring to the shower scene in Hitchcock’s 1960 film *Psycho* (where the killer observes the female protagonist through a keyhole as she is taking a shower), Jane Caputi writes:

Just as the director matches his camera “eye” to the voyeuristic killer’s eye, he also wields his camera as a phallus/fetish/weapon in a direct parallel to the killer’s wielding of the knife, thereby treating the film exactly as the killer treats the woman’s body.<sup>34</sup>

The inherent voyeurism of the film is shared by the camera, the killer and the viewer, and - as Caputi observes - the fragmentation of the woman’s body by the knife-wielding psychopath is paralleled by Hitchcock’s fragmentation of the film itself through editing techniques. The scene sets out to sexually arouse the viewer, depicting the female’s sensuous enjoyment of her shower, which is suddenly and violently shattered by what has been termed ‘a pornographic murder.’<sup>35</sup> In Hitchcock’s film, sex is fused with violence and the viewer is aligned with the ‘peeping Tom’/ killer. Caputi argues that when the fantasies of rapists and sex killers are routinely portrayed in mainstream cinema, as they are in *Psycho*, they become largely accepted as harmless ‘entertainment.’<sup>36</sup>

### *The Climax of Violence*

Robert Jensen stresses the distinction between the ‘use’ of pornography and the ‘viewing’ of it to underline the function of pornography as a masturbatory aid.<sup>37</sup> He argues that to view a pornographic image while experiencing an orgasm is a considerably different experience to the contemplation of the same image without the simultaneous use of masturbation.<sup>38</sup> Jensen discusses his

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<sup>33</sup> D.A. Clarke, ‘The Evidence of Pain,’ in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, Jill Radford & Diana E.H. Russell (eds) 1992, p.334.

<sup>34</sup> Jane Caputi, *The Age of Sex Crime*, p.173.

<sup>35</sup> Jane Caputi, ‘Advertising Femicide’, in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, Jill Radford & Diana E.H. Russell (eds), 1992, p.211.

<sup>36</sup> Jane Caputi, *The Age of Sex Crime*, p.92.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Jensen, ‘Using Pornography,’ in *Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality*, p.119.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*, p.104.

personal use of pornography as a younger man and reflects on the powerful impact of pornography on his own sexual imagination:

What I had learned to find arousing was a basic power dynamic of male dominance and female subordination, which is much the same in violent and nonviolent pornography.<sup>39</sup>

In pornography, the subordination of the woman is sexualised and as Jensen argues, if male dominance over the female is eroticized, 'male violence becomes at least potentially erotic.'<sup>40</sup> The association of orgasm with sexual violence validates sexually abusive behaviour towards women. Dworkin suggests that the viewer's orgasm reinforces his belief in pornography:

If men believe the pornography because it makes them come - them, not the women - what is sex to men and how will women survive it?<sup>41</sup>

It can be argued that the experience of orgasm during the viewing of an image in which a woman is brutalised conditions the user into an acceptance of sexual violence and may serve to instil or reinforce a view of women as sexual, disposable objects. For a particular group of men however, their sexual fantasies are not centred on adult women, but on children.

## 2.5 Child Pornography

We have seen that the rôle of pornography is a crucial element in the fantasies of rapists and sex killers. We noted that pornography sexualises male violence towards women and it was suggested that this kind of representation of female submission may serve to stimulate the sexual imagination of sexually violent men. In child pornography, it is the power imbalance between dominant adult and powerless child that fuels the sexual fantasies of the child abuser. He may collect child pornography, as well as a variety of non-pornographic images of children, such as those that appear in holiday brochures, newspapers, magazines and babywear catalogues, to name but a few. The paedophile uses a

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, p.145.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Jensen, 'Using Pornography,' p.144.

<sup>41</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Life and Death*, p.97.

variety of images of children as masturbatory aids, including mental replays of his own previous assaults on children.<sup>42</sup> The Internet has revolutionised the transmission and distribution of child pornography, enabling paedophiles to easily access images of child rape and abuse.

### *Pornography and Child abuse*

There are conflicting arguments regarding the link between the consumption of child pornography and the perpetration of child sexual abuse. In some cases, expert opinions are almost polarised. For example, research by the FBI in 1998 suggested that less than 50% of users of child pornography had committed sex offences against children, whereas a study by US Customs has indicated that 80% of users are also child abusers.<sup>43</sup> This latter estimate is closer to the following observation by Ray Wyre and Anthony Swift:

While it is not true that every paedophile collects child pornography, it is most likely that a man who does keep or collect such pornography is a paedophile.<sup>44</sup>

A causal link between the consumption of pornography and its commission is specified by Patti Ironside, the project leader of children's charity 'Barnardo's Scotland':

It has been well documented that pornography is used by sex offenders for compensatory fantasy as part of the pathway which may ultimately lead to sexual assault.<sup>45</sup>

Although there may be differing opinions regarding the impact of child pornography on the minds of its consumers, it is undeniable that children are being globally abused in infinite numbers to satisfy an ever-growing demand by paedophiles for sexually explicit images of children.

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<sup>42</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*. Kent: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990, p.51.

<sup>43</sup> Jon Silverman & David Wilson, *Innocence Betrayed*, p.88.

<sup>44</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.51.

<sup>45</sup> Craig Donellan (ed), *Confronting Child Abuse*, p.34.

## 2.6 Summary

Although more research has yet to be conducted to prove a direct link between pornography and rape, it is evident from studies that have been undertaken on convicted sex offenders that pornography plays a significant rôle in the fantasy life of certain rapists and sex killers. We have seen that a number of researchers dispute the notion of a causal link between pornography and rape but concede that pornography legitimises sexist attitudes towards women and validates them as 'targets' for abuse. Amongst feminists we noted a division between anti-pornography feminists such as Andrea Dworkin - who believes that pornography emanates from 'a male supremacist culture' and that it owes its existence to the ongoing sexual abuse, rape and torture of women - and the feminist liberals, who regard attacks on pornography as an intrusion on the sexual practices and fantasies of the individual without taking into account the discrimination and oppression of those individuals who are exploited by the pornographic industry. Studies show that a high proportion of workers in the sex industry have been sexually abused and raped as children, and we know from the many cases of pædophiles convicted of downloading child pornography from the internet, that the sexual exploitation of children has become an international, commercially profitable industry. In the next chapter, we shall take a closer look at the nature of child sexual abuse and examine the motives of those who sexually abuse and rape children.

## Chapter 3

### Child Sexual Abuse

Sex between an adult and a child always involves emotional and physical brutality. It is a crime that cripples, usually for life.<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1 Introduction

Of all the forms of sexually violent behaviour, the most heinous is the sexual abuse of children. It involves an abusive exercise of power over a powerless, dependent individual, whereby the adult uses the child for the purposes of sexual gratification. The effects of abuse on the child can be physical or emotional, or both. There may be signs of venereal disease or physical injuries such as bruising and the abuse may also result in pregnancy.<sup>2</sup> A child may suffer severe physical damage, even to the extent of requiring surgery.<sup>3</sup> Aside from the physical trauma, child victims typically exhibit emotional and psychological problems such as depression, eating and sleeping disorders, promiscuity and lack of self esteem. Perceptual disturbances are also common and are typically manifested as nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations. Severely abused children may suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome as a result of their abuse.<sup>4</sup> Victims often develop coping strategies to distance themselves from their abusive experiences, such as the mechanism of dissociation, where the victim feels that she is leaving her body. In its most extreme form it is associated with the development of multiple personalities.<sup>5</sup> There is evidence to show that the effects of sexual abuse may cause lasting damage to a child's sense of self-worth, which may affect the parenting skills of

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Fraser, *My Father's House: A Memoir of Incest and of Healing*. London: Virago, 1999, p.252.

<sup>2</sup> Jean LaFontaine, *Child Sexual Abuse*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1990, pp.83-84.

<sup>3</sup> Anna C. Salter, *Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, and Other Sex Offenders*, p.49. Salter interviewed a child rapist who anally raped an eight-year-old girl, tearing her anus through to her vagina.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p.92.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.42.

the child.<sup>6</sup> Ray Wyre and Anthony Swift identify the far-reaching consequences of child sexual abuse:

The costs to society go uncounted. They are to be traced in the lives of damaging and of damaged personalities, in many individuals who never reach their full potential.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, we shall look at a number of aspects of this shocking and insidious crime, including its prevalence, its perpetrators and the social dynamics that allow it to happen. As in Chapter 1, where we considered a number of theories on the causes of sexual violence against women, we will look at the possible motives behind child sexual abuse and examine a number of myths that surround both the abuser and the victim.

### **3.2 The Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse**

Ray Wyre and Anthony Swift suggest that sexual violence against children may be more common than that against women.<sup>8</sup> Research shows that rates of child sexual abuse are exceedingly high. In the USA in 1991, 1.4 million children were reported to have been raped.<sup>9</sup> The American psychologist Anna Salter interviewed a paedophile who had abused more than 1200 children over a twenty-year period before being detected.<sup>10</sup> A study of child molesters in the USA revealed that 232 men admitted to a total of 38,000 sexual offences against children between them, involving more than 17,000 victims.<sup>11</sup> The period of time over which these crimes were committed was not provided, but the figures reveal the sheer numbers of children targeted by paedophiles. In the United Kingdom, figures also appear to be high, but as is the case with the USA, British studies have shown a broad scope in rates of prevalence: from between 5% to 62% for women survivors of child sexual abuse, and from between 3% to 27% for male victims. The diversity of these figures has been attributed to differences

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<sup>6</sup> Jean LaFontaine, *Child Sexual Abuse*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1990, pp.83-84.

<sup>7</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*. Kent: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990, p.53.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p.37.

<sup>9</sup> Anna Salter, *Predators*, p.81.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p.26.

<sup>11</sup> Anna Salter, *Predators*, p.11.



in methodology and definition between individual studies.<sup>12</sup> In 2000, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children published the findings of its survey of child abuse in the UK, the most comprehensive study of its kind to date. From the study of 3,000 young adults, one in 10 revealed that they had been coerced into sex acts under the age of 16 by individuals known to them, and the majority of these victims were female.<sup>13</sup> In 1999/2000, the UK children's telephone helpline 'Childline' received calls from 10,036 children and young people concerning sexual abuse.<sup>14</sup>

### *Norwegian Studies*

In Norway, the State Institute for Public Health conducted a survey in 1993 to determine the extent of child sexual abuse. Five thousand people were interviewed, 37% of whom responded. From these, 31% of women were shown to have suffered some form of child sexual abuse, compared to 16% of the men. When the definition was narrowed to 'serious' sexual abuse (contact with sexual organs), by a person more than four years older than the victim, the respective figures were 9% and 5%.<sup>15</sup> An earlier Norwegian survey from 1986 showed the rates of 'serious' child sexual abuse to be 14% amongst the female respondents and 9% amongst the males.<sup>16</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam has compared these findings with those from international surveys from Australia and North America, and reaches the following conclusion regarding the prevalence of child sexual abuse in Norway:

Problemet med seksuelle overgrep gjelder [...] mange barn i Nord-Amerika, og som dokumentert, også i Australia. Det er ikke urimelig å tro at norske barn er utsatt i omtrent samme grad [...]<sup>17</sup>

(The problem with sexual assaults applies to many children in North America, and as documented, also in Australia. It is not unreasonable to believe that Norwegian children are exposed to roughly the same degree [...])

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<sup>12</sup> Deborah Chate & Liz Spencer, *The Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse in Britain*. London: HMSO, 1995, p.3.

<sup>13</sup> Craig Donellan (ed.), *Confronting Child Abuse*, Vol.22. Cambridge: Independence, 2001, p.10.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p.4.

<sup>15</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001, p.35.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, p.36.



In spite of figures showing the extent of child sexual abuse, an alarmingly low percentage of offenders are convicted. Kvam states that although Norway has seen an increase in reported cases of sex offences against children, rates of conviction are declining dramatically. The 'low status' conferred on child sexual abuse cases in Norway is also very much in evidence in Britain, where a new report shows that 'fewer than one in 50 child sex offences results in a criminal conviction.'<sup>18</sup> Experts predict that if nothing is done to address the situation, the incidence of child sexual abuse will inevitably rise.

The true extent of child sexual abuse remains hidden.<sup>19</sup> Ray Wyre, an expert on paedophile behaviour, concludes that from his interviews with abusers and victims, the prevalence of child sexual abuse is 'far more common' than the reported cases imply.<sup>20</sup> We saw earlier that one child abuser was able to commit over two thousand sexual attacks on children before being caught. In order to understand these discrepancies between the prevalence of child sexual abuse and its reporting, not to mention the appallingly low rates of conviction, we need to examine the nature of child sexual abuse, including the relationship of the abuser to the victim and the secrecy that cloaks the abuse.

### 3.3 The Nature of Child Sexual Abuse

In its information on child sexual abuse, the organisation 'Scottish Women's Aid' stresses that it is crucial to recognise sexual abuse as an issue concerning gender, and to identify it as a consequence of 'the power imbalance within our society.'<sup>21</sup> Scottish Women's Aid claims that 95% of child abusers are male and that female children are two to three times more likely to experience sexual abuse than men.<sup>22</sup> Jon Silverman and David Wilson in their work on predatory paedophiles also emphasise that 'the gendered nature' of child sexual abuse should not be underestimated, claiming that the 'overwhelming majority' of

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<sup>18</sup> *The Scotsman*, 16 November 2004, p.12.

<sup>19</sup> Craig Donellan (ed.), *Confronting Child Abuse*, Vol.22, p.16.

<sup>20</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.38.

<sup>21</sup> Craig Donellan (ed.), *Confronting Child Abuse*, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

abusers are male.<sup>23</sup> The Incest Support Centre in Oslo reported a figure of 96% for male abusers and 4% for female abusers.<sup>24</sup> With regard to victims of child sexual abuse, female children are generally considered to be more vulnerable, although this view should be balanced against the tendency for under-reporting by male children.<sup>25</sup> Of 10,036 children who telephoned the children's helpline 'Childline' in 1999/2000 regarding sexual abuse, 7,388 were female.<sup>26</sup> The children's charity Barnardo's suggests that girls are more likely to suffer familial abuse, while boys are more liable to be abused outwith the family.<sup>27</sup> Jean LaFontaine states that a British television survey conducted in 1983 revealed that 12% of women had been abused in childhood, compared to 8% of men. However, LaFontaine points out that the sexual abuse of boys is under-reported and also under-represented in surveys, which she suggests may be attributed to the stigma attached to homosexuality and the fear experienced by boys of admitting to being sexually abused by a male perpetrator.<sup>28</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam claims that in Norway, the State Institute for Public Health has shown findings similar to studies conducted in the USA, which identify female children as forming between 60% and 75% of child sexual abuse victims. Among deaf children, however, the figures for male and female child victims are found to be closer.<sup>29</sup>

### *The Secret Shame*

As in the case of women affected by rape, children are far more likely to be abused by adults whom they know and trust than by strangers. Research in Britain shows that 66% of paedophiles are known to the child.<sup>30</sup> Figures given by the telephone helpline Childline are even higher, though these include cases of physical abuse. Ninety-five percent of children contacting Childline about sexual and physical abuse know their abuser, who may be a family member, neighbour, baby-sitter, family friend or a person in authority, such as a

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<sup>23</sup> Jon Silverman & David Wilson, *Innocence Betrayed: Paedophilia, the Media and Society*, p.3.

<sup>24</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, p.65.

<sup>25</sup> Bill Gillham, *The Facts About Child Sexual Abuse*. London: Cassell, 1991, p.9.

<sup>26</sup> Craig Donellan, *ibid*, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, p.16.

<sup>28</sup> Jean LaFontaine, *Child Sexual Abuse*, p.85.

<sup>29</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, p.40.

<sup>30</sup> Craig Donellan (ed.), *Confronting Child Abuse*, p.28.

teacher.<sup>31</sup> Ray Wyre and Anthony Swift claim that research reveals children to be at most risk from members of their own families:

Eighty per cent of recorded cases of sexual abuse of children in the UK between 1983 and 1987 took place in the children's own homes.<sup>32</sup>

It is arguably this fact of the abuser being known to the child in a high proportion of cases, that contributes to the secrecy that characterises the sexual abuse of children and which affects attempts at research into this devastating social problem. There may be a variety of reasons for the child victim's silence, including feelings of 'fear, shame [and] guilt.'<sup>33</sup> Bill Gillham claims that 'very little is known' about the methods used by abusers to secure the child's silence, arguing that the issue is complex and involves the child's own sense of maintaining secrecy.<sup>34</sup> Other researchers, however, have explained diverse methods used by child abusers to ensure that the child maintains a silence over the abuse. Marit Hoem Kvam highlights the abuser's method of using threats to prevent his victim from revealing the truth:

Hvis overgriperen truer med å straffe andre omsorgspersoner i barnets miljø, kan dette framkalle ekstra angst. Foruten egne problem vil barnet da også føle ansvar for andre voksnes sikkerhet.<sup>35</sup>

(If the abuser threatens to punish other people in the child's environment who are responsible for her welfare, this can cause extra anxiety. Aside from her own problem, the child will also feel responsibility for the safety of other adults.)

A threat to other members of the child's family will inevitably deepen the emotional pain caused by the abuse itself. In some cases, children may feel entrapped in an abusive relationship through fear of losing the abuser. Ray

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, p.4.

<sup>32</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.39.

<sup>33</sup> Jean LaFontaine, *ibid*, p.45.

<sup>34</sup> Bill Gillham, *The Facts About Child Sexual Abuse*. London: Cassell, 1991, p.34.

<sup>35</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, p.52.

Wyre and Anthony Swift highlight the dilemma of the child for whom the abusive relationship may be the only positive relationship in the child's life:

Sexually abused children can find themselves ensnared in an isolating web of both fear and affection. In many cases of incest the abusive relationship may also be the main affirmative relationship the child has, giving the paedophile a strong emotional hold.<sup>36</sup>

The main emotional weapon used by perpetrators in securing the silence of their child victims is that of guilt. Many will go to considerable lengths to convince children of the futility of disclosure, even to the extent of showing them newspaper cuttings of children being removed from their families and taken into care.<sup>37</sup> The concealment of child abuse does not only exist as a secret between the abuser and his victim but as Ruth Porter argues, it may be upheld by the family and by the misconceived values of our society:

Sexual abuse occurs in secret, is kept a secret by the family and is being kept a secret by society's attitudes and taboos.<sup>38</sup>

In order to try to understand more about the secrecy that surrounds the sexual abuse of children, we need to look at the social environment in which their abuse takes place.

### **3.4 The Dynamics of Abuse**

Child victims of sexual abuse may keep silent over their victimisation for a number of reasons. They may feel unable to disclose their abuse to anyone

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<sup>36</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.46.

<sup>37</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.46.

<sup>38</sup> Ruth Porter, 'Preface,' *Child Sexual Abuse Within the Family*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1984, p.xx.

through feelings of shame or guilt, or they may be physically threatened. Jean LaFontaine explains the power dynamics that sustain the child's silence:

The reasons for the silence are produced by the unequal power relationship between adults and children. The power of adults is greatest when children are young and weak but much of it continues long after that stage.<sup>39</sup>

The most obvious disparity in power relations between adults and children concerns physical strength. LaFontaine argues that children learn from an early age that they are physically weak in relation to adults.<sup>40</sup> This inequality of power relations is used by the abuser to exercise full control over his victim. An imbalance of power is also manifest in children's emotional dependence on adults. As we saw earlier, many children suffer abuse in silence because they don't want to lose the person they love, even if that person is also their abuser. Child victims therefore often experience complex and conflicting emotions which make it difficult for them to talk about their abuse, especially if they are made to feel partly responsible by the perpetrator.<sup>41</sup>

### *Child Abuse and Gender*

In section 3.3 we observed that child sexual abuse is considered to be a gendered crime in that the majority of child sex abusers are male and their victims are most likely to be female. Gender is also relevant in relation to the disclosure of abuse. Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray argue that the rationale behind the silencing of child abuse victims is dependent on the gender of the victim:

To some extent children occupy the same position vis-à-vis dominant male power regardless of their gender. But there are unique differences in the relationship women and girls have with the dominant discursive structures. For example, while a young girl may not be believed or may be called crazy when she discloses incest, a young boy is more likely to be silenced through homophobia.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Jean LaFontaine, *Child Sexual Abuse*, p.77.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.46.

<sup>42</sup> Linda Alcoff & Laura Gray, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?' *Signs* 1993, p.265.



Their argument thus suggests that the silencing of girl victims is intrinsic to the social condition of female children and adults. They may speak out, but their discourse is rejected. The silencing of male children is also socially and culturally imposed but according to the authors, boys are less liable to speak out, a view shared by other researchers, as we noted earlier. The 'silencing' of girl victims is exemplified in the case of a female child, cited by Ray Wyre and Anthony Swift, who was sexually abused by her father over a number of years, but who was consistently disbelieved by her mother, other family members, teachers, and even NSPCC<sup>43</sup> officials.

Needless to say, she regarded herself as 'having been abused as much by the system as by her own father.'<sup>44</sup> If the victim's own mother chooses not to believe her child, the victim will feel 'doubly betrayed'<sup>45</sup> and the child's entrapment will be ensured. Although there are women who turn a blind eye to the abuse of their children and there are also those who are themselves abusers,<sup>46</sup> it appears that there are many wives and partners of child abusers who are genuinely ignorant of the abuse that is going on in their own homes. Of those who are aware of the abuse, there may be several explanations for their silence:

They may be afraid of breaking up the family, afraid physically of their partner's anger, be economically dependent on the offender, or afraid of the public exposure they believe might ensue from reporting such an event.<sup>47</sup>

In the following section, we shall look at the men who sexually abuse children and examine a number of factors that are believed to motivate them to commit their crimes.

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<sup>43</sup> National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

<sup>44</sup> Linda Alcoff & Laura Gray, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?' p.269.

<sup>45</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, p.50.

<sup>46</sup> Anna C. Salter, *Predators*, p.78. Exact figures are not known, but Salter states that reports from US child protection agencies indicate that 3 to 5 percent of offenders are women.

<sup>47</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.52.

### 3.5 The Perpetrators

There is evidence to suggest that a child will find it easier to recover from sexual abuse by a stranger than from abuse perpetrated by someone they know. Marit Hoem Kvam gives the following reason for this finding:

De kan bli redde for visse situasjoner eller for fremmede generelt, men behøver ikke tape den grunnleggende tilliten til en person de er glad i.<sup>48</sup>

(They can become frightened of certain situations or of strangers in general, but don't need to lose the basic trust in a person they love.)

The notion of trust is crucial when looking at child abuse, as paedophiles are skilfully adept at gaining the trust of both the victim and the victim's family, in order to be able to carry out their abuse without suspicion. They typically seek positions of trust where they have access to children, such as in youth organisations, schools, and churches.<sup>49</sup> Paedophiles are highly skilled in the art of deception. Individual paedophiles may appear to be 'nice men' and if they occupy positions of authority they may use their power to seduce a child, through flattery or feigned solicitousness.<sup>50</sup> It is precisely the apparent 'normality' of child abusers which Anna Salter warns can deceive an unsuspecting public:

What is different about child molesters is only this: They have sex with children. They molest them for a variety of reasons that they may leave no telltale signs [sic] in their public behaviour. The priest who works tirelessly for the parish may be a nice man in his everyday dealings with people, but that has nothing to do with whether he is or isn't privately a child molester.<sup>51</sup>

Many child sex offenders will carefully plan their abuse, implementing a process of 'grooming' the child and family, and thereby gaining their trust. In choosing

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<sup>48</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, p.51.

<sup>49</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, p.43.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Anna C. Salter, *Predators*, p.48.



a victim, they will typically target the child whom they consider to be most vulnerable.<sup>52</sup>

### *The Family Abuser*

In the case of familial abuse, the betrayal of trust can be extremely damaging for the child, especially as this type of abuse typically lasts over a long period of time:

Incestforhold har vist seg ofte å være de mest langvarige. Hyppigheten av overgrepene vil også ha betydning for barnets reaksjoner på kort og langt sikt.<sup>53</sup>

(Incestuous relationships have often shown themselves to be the most prolonged. The frequency of the assaults will also have an influence on the child's reactions in the short and long term.)

In addition to the duration and frequency of the assaults, the uncertainty, fear and insecurity that torment the victim of incestuous abuse must also take its toll, as Unni Wenche Lindberg testifies in her moving account of her own experiences of sexual abuse:

Det første overgrepet skjedde da jeg var i treårsalderen. Opp gjennom barndommen var jeg, den lille jenta, i konstant beredskap. Jeg visste ikke når overgriperen kunne slå til på nytt. Av en eller annen grunn ble det hensiktsmissig å fornekte og fortrenge det som skjedde.<sup>54</sup>

(The first abuse happened when I was three. Up through my childhood I, the little girl, was in constant alertness. I didn't know when the abuser would strike again. For one reason or another, it became expedient to deny and suppress what had happened.)

For Lindberg her 'constant alertness' and perpetual terror throughout her childhood led to chronic physical pain in adulthood. For many years her secret was buried deep in her subconscious, until it finally emerged and took form in a

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>53</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, p.51.

<sup>54</sup> Unni Wenche Lindberg, *Vet du hva det koster? Konsekvenser av seksuelle overgrep*. Oslo: Emilia 2001, p.7.

collection of poems which encapsulate the pain and isolation of the sexually abused child.

### *Myths and Motives*

For the majority of people it is inconceivable that anyone would sexually abuse their own child. Abusers have been known to give a variety of excuses for sexually abusing their children, which can be distinguished from the true motivations behind their actions. These excuses typically conform to sexual abuse myths such as the 'seductive behaviour' of the child or the 'sexual inadequacy' of the wife.<sup>55</sup> Jean LaFontaine argues that the myth that children are responsible for their abuse is 'an easy excuse' for child abusers:

Refusing to accept responsibility for what happened is a common characteristic of perpetrators of sexual abuse; interpreting the child's behaviour to exonerate the adult from blame is one of the commonest forms that this denial of accountability takes.<sup>56</sup>

The abuser's refusal to take responsibility for his crimes inevitably has a damaging effect on his victim as it shifts the blame onto the child, who will already be suffering from feelings of shame and guilt. The popular excuses provided by child abusers when caught serve as a veneer for the real motivations that spur them to abuse children, whether their own or other people's.

According to Ray Wyre and Anthony Swift, there are several reasons why certain individuals choose to sexually abuse children:

[...] an impulse to exercise power abusively over the powerless, fear of the world of adults and an inability to form close relationships with adults, a misplaced desire to take revenge against women in general by damaging the symbol of their love and affection, and a view of women and children as the property of males.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *Women, Men and Rape*, pp.40-41.

<sup>56</sup> Jean LaFontaine, *Child Sexual Abuse*, p.71.

<sup>57</sup> Ray Wyre & Anthony Swift, *ibid*, p.42.

The above list covers a wide spectrum but at the heart of the rationale behind the child abuser's motivation lies the notion of power. An abuse of power is not only present in the attitude and behaviour of those individuals who sexually abuse children. It can also be identified in the adults who refuse to listen to children who are sexually victimised. We could argue that the failure to protect children lies not only with the parents, but also with society at large.

### 3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented several aspects of child sexual abuse. As in the case of adult rape, which was discussed in chapter 1, sexual abuse by a perpetrator known to the child was identified as being far more more widespread than sexual attacks by strangers. The betrayal of trust involved in incestuous abuse, where the perpetrator is a family member - a person whom the child loves and trusts - was considered to be particularly damaging to the child. It was noted also that although a proportion of child sexual abusers are believed to be motivated by a sexual preference for children, others are known to commit sexual crimes through their inability to form sexual relationships with adults. As in the case of sexual violence against adult women, the notion of power over the powerless is considered to be a significant factor in sexual offences against children. Many abused children are trapped into silence, too afraid to disclose the abuse to which they are subjected and which in many cases may last throughout their entire childhood. Research suggests that the cycle of sexual abuse will continue to repeat itself unless we give children a voice and allow them to speak.

In Part II, my aim is to explore the important function of literary texts as a means of counteracting the silence of the sexual abuse victim. As Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray point out, the metaphor of 'breaking the silence' characterises the titles of many writings about childhood sexual abuse.<sup>58</sup> Literary texts that dare to confront this subject serve not only to empower the victim, but function also as a means of exposing the reality of child sexual abuse, of 'hauling it out of the private darkness,' in the words of Marilyn French.<sup>59</sup> The following

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<sup>58</sup> Linda Alcoff & Laura Gray, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?' p.265.

<sup>59</sup> Marilyn French, *The War Against Women*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992, p. 198.

chapters examine ways in which a close linguistic analysis can serve to deepen our awareness of a world that is experienced through the senses of the sexual abuse victim. I shall be arguing that through a process of 'uncovering' linguistic features in the text which relate to point of view and to the representation of a character's individual conceptualisation of events and circumstances, we can discover how specific linguistic choices can affect our reading of a narrative about sexual violence.

## **Part II:**

# **The Language of Rape**

## Chapter 4

### Point of View in Narratives of Sexual Violence

The choice of the point(s) of view from which the story is told is arguably the most important single decision that the novelist has to make, for it fundamentally affects the way readers will respond, emotionally and morally, to the fictional characters and their actions.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.1 Introduction

In her thesis *The Music She Hears: Point of View and Technique in Women's Writings about Childhood Sexual Abuse*, Ellen Klosterman highlights the important function of point of view in narratives concerning sexual abuse:

[...] identification of technical point of view and the strategy in choice of point of view can be used to distinguish objectifying works from those in which the consciousness of victimization is conveyed [...]<sup>2</sup>

Klosterman thus distinguishes between 'objectifying' and 'pro-survivor' texts, arguing that a narrative perspective from the victim's viewpoint serves to encourage the reader's identification with that character. By 'looking through a character's eyes', as Jonathan Culpeper argues in his book *Language and Characterisation*, 'a reader gets to view the fictional world as if they were that character.' The reader thereby 'becomes more of an actor in that world than an observer of it.'<sup>3</sup> With relation to narratives about rape and sexual abuse, the question of whether a reader is an 'actor' or an 'observer' is obviously fundamental to the notion of objectification.

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<sup>1</sup> David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*. London: Penguin, 1992, p.26.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears: Point of View and Technique in Women's Writing about Childhood Sexual Abuse*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University, 1997, p.229.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Culpeper, *Language and Characterisation: People in Plays and Other Texts*. London: Longman, 2001, p.147.

Without a representation of the victim's perceptions and emotions, there is a further danger that the reader may misinterpret the actions of the perpetrator and read the abuse as consent on the part of the victim.<sup>4</sup> The 'actor-observer bias,' which is clearly delineated by Culpeper, is also of relevance to the notions of responsibility and blame. Referring to two separate extracts from Andrew Morton's biography of Princess Diana, *Diana, Her New Life*, Culpeper shows how the manipulation of narrative viewpoint can affect the relationship of the reader to the characters involved. The first extract presents a viewpoint that is clearly Diana's as it presents her thoughts and feelings and includes direct representation of her speech and thoughts. By means of these linguistic mechanisms, the reader is placed in the viewing position of an 'actor' and is therefore more liable to blame Diana's situation than Diana herself for her emotional problems. By contrast, Prince Charles is depicted through external narration, i.e. we are not given access to his thought processes. As a consequence, the reader becomes 'an observer' and is thereby more inclined to attribute Charles's problems to his character.<sup>5</sup> The actor-observer bias is a useful reference point apropos the narration of sexual abuse. A point of view that is aligned with the victim is more likely to place the reader in a position of actor, i.e. it will involve the reader in the cognitive, perceptual and emotional processes of the victim. A reader witnessing events through her eyes will be less inclined to attribute the cause of the abuse to the victim herself. Conversely, a point of view that does not present events from the victim's perspective will place the reader as an observer, and might thereby be more likely to influence the reader's decision to attribute responsibility to the character rather than to the context of her abuse.

### *Reader Identification and Point of View*

Culpeper argues that a reader's choice of viewpoint as an actor or observer is not only dependent on the manipulation of point of view, but also on whether or not the reader is able to identify with the character involved.<sup>6</sup> A good example of this type of tension between point of view and a reader's identification with a given character is shown by Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short in their textbook on the linguistic study of prose style. In *Style in Fiction*,

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<sup>4</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.140.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Culpeper, *Language and Characterisation*, p.148.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Culpeper, *Language and Characterisation*, p.147.



they discuss a case where a reader's response might occur on 'two levels', citing William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* as an example.<sup>7</sup> The narrative point of view is that of 'Jason,' who is trying to beat his niece with a belt. Although the events are related from Jason's perspective, a reader might have difficulty identifying with such an unsympathetic character. A similar type of tension occurs in Krohg's novel *Albertine*, as we shall see in chapter 6. Although the point of view shifts mainly between the omniscient narrator and the protagonist, there is a section where the narrative viewpoint lies with Albertine's rapist, the police officer Winther. For one page of narrative we view Albertine through his eyes. Although he has not yet committed the rape against her at this point in the story, the effect on the reader is unsettling for his appraisal of Albertine occurs while she is asleep and unaware of his intense observation of her. Ellen Klosterman argues that a manipulation of viewpoint that is used to 'decrease the distance between the perpetrator and the victim, and the perpetrator and the reader'<sup>8</sup> indicates the victim's objectification. Although I share Klosterman's stance that the identification of point of view is vital in establishing whether a text objectifies the victim or whether it allows the reader access to her consciousness, it is my aim in this chapter to identify the specific linguistic features that might lead us to such a conclusion. I aim to look at the various categories of point of view and examine their function with relevance to narratives concerning sexual violence. As I shall be analysing *Albertine* and *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* in Part III, I propose to focus on the remaining four texts: Mette Sundt's *Som igår, som imorgen* (1990); Hanne Dahl's *Vannliljen* (1999); Sverre Inge Apenes's *Fange hele livet* (1988); and Trine Kolberg's *Jenta bak den gule stolen* (1990).

### *A Brief Summary of Categories*

Following Roger Fowler's framework for analysing narrative point of view, we can identify four categories: the spatial, temporal, psychological and ideological.<sup>9</sup> Spatial point of view concerns the viewing position of the narrator, or the 'camera angle' from which events are observed and temporal point of view considers the relation between the time of an utterance and the time of

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<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech & Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. London: Longman 1981, p.277.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music she Hears*, p.136.

<sup>9</sup> For a full discussion of these four 'planes' of point of view, see Fowler (1996) and Simpson (1993)

events referred to in that utterance.<sup>10</sup> The categories of psychological and ideological point of view relate to the psychological processes and belief systems of the narrator or character.

There are, of course, many arguments amongst theorists concerning the subdivision of narrative point of view into categories. In the following analysis of the various facets of point of view and their function in the selected texts, I draw mainly on Toolan (1996), Fowler (1996) and Simpson (1993). I shall now attempt to clarify each of these categories, using relevant examples from the studied texts.

## 4.2. Spatial Point of View

### 4.2.1 Deixis

In their article on 'the linguistic marking of space in children's and adults' language' in Stephen King's novel *IT*, Willie Van Peer and Eva Graf examine spatial concepts and their linguistic realisations in the novel. Discussing a child's early experience of realising his or her body as a discrete, concrete entity in space, the authors observe:

These early experiences bring about the acquisition of certain primitive spatial notions like spatial dimension of one's body or the distance between oneself and other objects or persons.<sup>11</sup>

Babies are of course able to point to people or objects before they acquire language and hence it can be argued that the system of deixis 'occupies a special

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*. London: Routledge, 1993, p.13.

<sup>11</sup> Willie Van Peer & Eva Graf, 'Spatial Language in Stephen King's *IT*.' in Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper (eds) *Cognitive Stylistics: language and cognition in text analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, p.127.

status' when it comes to the realisation of space in language.<sup>12</sup> As Michael Toolan observes:

Any text that contains deictic information is [...] understood as oriented from the spatiotemporal position that those deictics imply.<sup>13</sup>

In narrative fiction, spatial point of view is typically conveyed by deictic expressions that locate the spatial position from which the description of events occurs. Spatial deixis indicates a speaker's situation in physical space in relation to objects and other people and is realised by the deictic adverbs 'here' and 'there'; the demonstrative pronouns 'this' and 'that,' and deictic verbs such as 'come', 'bring' and 'go.' Locative expressions such as 'over there' and 'under the tree' are also indicators of spatial deixis as they locate the spatial position of objects or people in relation to the speaker and the person being addressed.<sup>14</sup>

### *Sexual Violence and Space*

If, as we have seen, one of the concepts of space concerns 'the distance between oneself and other objects or persons,' space will inevitably play a significant rôle in narratives of sexual violence, particularly where the narration is focalized through the victim. The notion of space is central to Malkah T. Notman and Carol C. Nadelson's definition of rape:

Rape is the ultimate violation of the self, short of homicide, with an invasion of the inner and most private space of the individual as well as loss of autonomy and control.<sup>15</sup>

The penetration of an individual's 'inner and most private space' can be viewed as the culmination of other violations of space, such as the victim's bedroom or bathroom, or any other spatial element of her immediate physical environment. Deictic expressions that highlight the perpetrator's transgression

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<sup>12</sup> Willie Van Peer & Eva Graf, 'Spatial Language in Stephen King's *IT*, p.131.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*, London: Routledge, 1988, p.67.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*. pp.13-14.

<sup>15</sup> Malkah T. Notman and Carol C. Nadelson, 'Psychodynamic and life-stage considerations in the Response to Rape.' in Sharon L. McCombie (ed.) *The Rape Crisis Intervention Handbook: A Guide for Victim Care*. New York: Plenum Press, 1980, p.135.

of the victim's space and ultimately, her corporeal boundaries, are a linguistic feature of several of the studied texts.

### *Som igår, som imorgen*

Mette Sundt's novel tells the harrowing story of the protagonist's sexual abuse by her father and of the physical abuse she suffers at the hands of both parents. The entire novel is written in the first-person, present tense which lends an immediacy to the narration, as events appear to be related as they are happening. In *Som igår, som imorgen*, deixis is a prominent linguistic feature of the text which reflects the protagonist's consistent point of view and identifies the perpetrator's spatial relation to the victim. In her research on deixis in narrative, Gail Bruder found that deictic verbs 'helped to identify' the character whose point of view was being presented. The verb 'come', for example, signifies movement towards the character whose point of view is conveyed and the verb 'go' indicates an action moving away from that point of view.<sup>16</sup> In the following extract from *Som igår, som imorgen*, the deictic verb 'kommer' occurs in the protagonist's description of a recurring dream:

Plutselig kommer en hvit dame. Hun holder en kjempestor sprøyte i hånden. I drømmen er den like stor som meg.<sup>17</sup>

(Suddenly a white lady comes. She is holding a huge syringe in her hand. In the dream, it's as big as me.)

The deictic verb 'kommer' identifies the point of view as that of the protagonist/narrator. There is a tension here between the allusion to purity implicit in the reference to the 'white lady,' and the monstrous instrument that she is wielding. The depiction is surreal and sinister in its juxtaposition of these two incongruous images and the implicit depiction of the nurse/mother/angel as the ghost-like harbinger of pain and death. A similar image occurs too in Hanne Dahl's autobiographical work *Vannliljen* which we shall look at in more

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<sup>16</sup> Gail Bruder, 'Linguistic Devices in Spatial Deixis,' in Judith F. Duchan, Gail A. Bruder & Lynne E. Hewitt (eds) *Deixis in Narrative*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995, pp.243-260.

<sup>17</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*. Oslo: Gyldendal 1990, p.7.

detail later. The following extract concerns the young protagonist's visit to the dentist:

[...] i hånda holdt han en stor, blank sprøyte med lang, lang sprøytespiss.<sup>18</sup>

(In his hand, he held a large, clear syringe with a long, long syringe point.)

Hanne associates the syringe with the oral rapes that are an integral part of her young life. We might also link the nightmare image of the giant syringe in *Som igår, som imorgen* to the protagonist's experiences of sexual abuse, in conjunction with her mother's acts of physical abuse.

### *The Deictics of Entrapment*

The protagonist of *Som igår, som imorgen* spends much of her time practically imprisoned in her own home, as she is seldom allowed to play outside with other children. She is moreover often forced by her cold, bacteria-obsessed mother to spend an unnecessary amount of time confined to her bed and much of the narration is therefore spatially located in the child's bedroom. Spatial deixis conveys the child's isolation and physical entrapment, which is further compounded by the systematic sexual abuse inflicted by her father:

Igjen og igjen kommer han.<sup>19</sup>

(He comes again and again.)

In the following extract the deictic verb 'kommer' appears also with a negative impersonal pronoun, as a further indication of the child's feelings of entrapment and isolation. In her nightmare, she knows that no-one will save her:

Ingen kommer likevel.<sup>20</sup>

(However, no-one comes.)

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<sup>18</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.66.

<sup>19</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.36.

<sup>20</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.7.

In this novel, there is a tension between the positive and negative forms of the deictic verb 'kommer.' The action of a parent approaching a child in her bedroom is, in a healthy and normal family environment, a positive one but in Mette Sundt's text, it foreshadows sexual and physical abuse. The protagonist's mother is also a regular visitor to her daughter's room and can be seen as the frightening 'white lady' of her nightmares. Like the father, the mother's contact with her daughter is abusive, mostly in the form of unnecessary medical examinations and enemas:

Hun kommer inn til meg med emaljekannen.<sup>21</sup>

(She comes into my room with the metal can.)

In her rôle as a qualified nurse, she subjects her daughter to painful and unnecessary medical procedures. She appears devoid of any expressions of maternal love; her physical contact with the child is clinical and abusive. In contrast to the invasive medical procedures she inflicts upon her daughter, she is at times physically neglectful of her well-being, as highlighted in the following extract:

Hun sier godnatt, slukker lyset og går. Jeg vet ikke hvor hun går. Hun har glemt å gi meg mat.<sup>22</sup>

(She says goodnight, switches off the light and goes. I don't know where she goes. She has forgotten to give me food.)

The repetition of the distal deictic term 'går' can be seen to signal not only the physical distancing of her motion away from her daughter, but also the emotional distance she places between herself and her only child.

### *The Deictic Centre*

The deictic verbs that recur throughout *Som igår, som imorgen* serve not only to highlight the protagonist's entrapment within a fixed space, but also to

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid*, p.49.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, p.56.



identify her as the 'deictic centre' of the novel. This term is defined by Erwin Segal:

[...] the 'location within the world of the narrative' [which] serves as the centre from which the sentences are to be interpreted.<sup>23</sup>

Segal claims that the deictic expressions 'here' and 'now' in particular, indicate the deictic centre of a narrative. The writers and readers of fictional texts are required to 'shift their deictic centre from the real world situation' to a place within the fictional world. In other words, when reading fictional texts, readers enter the stories and indirectly experience them.<sup>24</sup> The spatial deictic term 'her' in the following extract locates the protagonist as the deictic centre, thus indicating her position at the time of narration:

Jeg bor her, bak vinduet. Jeg bor i stillheten og gråfargen.<sup>25</sup>

(I live here, behind the window. I live in the stillness and the greyness.)

The protagonist is not permitted to play outside but watches the children from her vantage-point behind her bedroom window. The 'here' that she inhabits embodies a 'stillness' imposed by her loveless parents and a 'greyness' that not only reflects the actual colour of the walls and the floor but which also symbolises the monotony and joylessness of her existence. Its usage can also serve to emphasise the father's invasion of the protagonist's private and inner space and its aftermath:

Det lukter vondt her inne. Det lukter klam varme. Og det gjør vondt der nede. Men jeg må ikke tenke på det, jeg må ikke kjenne etter.<sup>26</sup>

(It smells bad in here. It smells of clammy heat. And it hurts down there. But I mustn't think about it, I mustn't touch it.)

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<sup>23</sup> Erwin Segal, 'Narrative Comprehension and the Role of Deictic Shift Theory,' in Judith F. Duchan, Gail A. Bruder & Lynne E. Hewitt (eds) *Deixis in Narrative*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995, p.15.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, pp.14-15.

<sup>25</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.61.

<sup>26</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.35.



There is a tension here between the proximal deictic term 'her inne' and the distal expression 'der nede', which reflects the victim's response to her father's sexual assault on her body. The claustrophobic surrounding space of her room, pervaded by her father's sexual odour, appears closer than her own inner space, the pain of which she refuses to acknowledge. The distal deictic term conveys her need to distance herself from the site of the pain, confirmed by the subsequent sentence expressing her denial. Proximal spatial deixis is at play in the following extract from the same novel, where the child is enjoying a rare and short-lived moment of tranquility out on the terrace of the family house:

Det er stille og fint her<sup>27</sup>

(It is quiet and nice here.)

The peaceful 'here and now' is soon shattered, however, when she accidentally knocks over a glass. As a punishment, her abusive father drags her into the house and forces her to eat a cockroach. In this extract we follow their journey into the house and up to the bathroom, where the punishment takes place:

Han drar meg inn i huset, opp trappene, innover gangen mot rommet mitt, mot badet.<sup>28</sup>

(He drags me into the house, up the steps, along the passage towards my room, towards the bathroom.)

Unlike the previous extracts from the novel, where the perceptual position was stationary, the above example illustrates what Paul Simpson describes as a 'narrative tracking shot'.<sup>29</sup> The viewing position moves with the protagonist, who is the deictic centre of the novel. As she is dragged from the terrace to the bathroom, the changing locations are presented successively, in a similar way to the technique of filming, where camera movements might follow a sequential pattern in the filming of a particular scene.

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<sup>27</sup> *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.109.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*, p.110.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.19.

### *Vannliljen*

Hanne Dahl's autobiographical work *Vannliljen*, which was briefly mentioned earlier, is also a harrowing narrative about child sexual abuse. The book is written in the third-person in the form of a novel, but is based on the author's appalling experiences of sexual violence throughout her childhood and adolescence. *Vannliljen* is the first Norwegian autobiographical work by a person diagnosed with 'multiple personality disorder' and it tells the story of how twenty-five 'helpers' emerged over a period of time to shield the protagonist 'Hanne' during the most brutal and depraved acts of sexual violence to which she was subjected. In the following extract the deictic verbs 'kom' and 'gikk' are indicators of spatial deixis, which locate the spatial point of view as that of the six-year old Hanne:

Det lød skritt bak Hanne, og det fikk henne til å snu seg. En mann til kom inn, leverte penger til farmoren, og gikk og satte seg på en ledig stol.<sup>30</sup>

(Hanne could hear steps behind her, and it made her turn round. Another man came in, handed over money to her grandmother, and went and sat down on an empty chair.)

In the following extract from the same scene, the deictic verb 'kom' again identifies the viewing position as that of Hanne. The locative expression 'opp på podiet' is another indicator of spatial deixis. The preposition 'opp' identifies the location of 'podiet' in relation to both the narrator and reader, the definite article further indicating a shared visual perspective<sup>31</sup>:

Farmoren kom mot Hanne. Førte henne i ringen av menn, opp på podiet.<sup>32</sup>

(The grandmother came towards Hanne. Led her into the circle of men, up onto the podium.)

In this text the spatial point of view is often that of Hanne, even when the narration is not mediated through her consciousness. This suggests a narrator who is very much aligned with the protagonist, which is the case in *Vannliljen*

<sup>30</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen: historien om et barn*. Oslo : Pax 1999, p.91. Hanne Dahl is a pseudonym.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.14.

<sup>32</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.92.

as the narrator is the adult Hanne, recalling the terrible trauma of her childhood. For example, in the above extract although the spatial viewpoint is that of the protagonist, the definite form 'farmoren' suggests the presence of an omniscient narrator whose words are describing the grandmother's actions. The language here is that of an adult narrator, particularly evident in the noun 'podiet.' The definite form suggests to us that 'the podium' has previously been mentioned. In the paragraph preceding the above extract, its description is 'mediated'<sup>33</sup> through the consciousness of the young protagonist and the scene is described from her viewing position:

Hva var det som skulle foregå her? Det var ryddet plass, og mange menn satt i ring rundt et oppbygd platå med et lite, lavt bord på.<sup>34</sup>

(What was going to happen here? A space had been cleared, and many men sat in a circle round a raised level, with a little, low table on the top.)

The adverb 'her' locates Hanne spatially as the deictic centre of the scene and its occurrence in a sentence that is free indirect discourse further identifies the orientation as that of the protagonist. Proximal deictics such as 'here', 'now', 'this' and 'today' are linguistic indicators of FID, which Michael Toolan defines as a 'strategy [...] of alignment, in words, values and perspective, of the narrator with a character.'<sup>35</sup> In other words, the narration in FID is presented as though in the words of the character.

### *Notions of Ambiguity*

In all of the extracts that I have quoted from *Vanniljen* there is an apparent ambiguity concerning the narrator's voice. Helen Aristar Dry has pointed out that a text which interweaves FID passages with sentences that do not have FID features creates a 'narrative ambiguity', as the narrating voice in the sentences that are unmarked by FID can be identified as belonging to either the narrator

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<sup>33</sup> Paul Simpson & Martin Montgomery, 'Language, Literature and Film: the Stylistics of Bernard MacLaverly's *Cal*,' in: Verdonk & Weber (eds) *Twentieth Century Fiction: From Text to Context*. London: Routledge 1995, p.149.

<sup>34</sup> Hanne Dahl, *ibid*, p.91.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1988, p.127.

or the character.<sup>36</sup> In *Vannliljen* there are points in the narrative, as exemplified above, when we view events from the perspective of the young child Hanne. We are given an insight into her thought processes as she puzzles over the scene before her, describing the 'podium' in her own words. At other times in the narrative, the situations that are incomprehensible to the child victim are related from the point of view of the adult survivor, retelling the horrific events that robbed her of her childhood:

Sekkebiten ble fjernet, og barnet ristet til det åpnet øynene. Savn og Kattungen tittet ut. Redde, forvirrede og helt forsvarsløse. Stille sto de der, mens farmoren satte på det skremte barnet halsbånd og lenke, og kommanderte henne ned på alle fire.<sup>37</sup>

(The piece of sacking was removed, and the child was shaken until it opened its eyes. Loss and the Kitten peeped out. Afraid, bewildered and completely defenceless. Quietly, they stood there, while the grandmother put a collar and chain on the terrified child, ordering her to go down on all fours.)

In the above extract, a viewing position that is situated externally to the characters is evident in the reference to Hanne as 'barnet.' An external point of view is also indicated by the use of the distal adverb 'der' which refers to the location of two of Hanne's helpers, who 'peep out' from Hanne's body. Even here, where the narration is seemingly external, there is nevertheless an implicit subjectivity in the adjectives used to describe Hanne's helpers and Hanne

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<sup>36</sup> Helen Aristar Dry, 'Free indirect discourse in Doris Lessing's 'One off the Short List,' in Verdonk & Weber (eds) *Twentieth Century Fiction: From Text to Context*. London: Routledge 1995, pp.101 -102.

<sup>37</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.94.

herself which is also at play in the following extract, where narrative ambiguity is evident even in the representation of spatial deixis:

Der hang hun. Kjente farens hender rundt de bare anklene, hendene var i det kalde vannet, og rundt seg så hun bare de svarte, mørke brønnveggene. Langt der oppe hørte hun farens latter.<sup>38</sup>

(There she hung. Could feel her father's hands round her bare ankles, her hands were in the cold water, and all around her she saw only the black, gloomy walls of the well. Far up there she could hear her father's laughter.)

The 'distal' deictic adverb<sup>39</sup> 'der' suggests a spatial point of view that is situated at a distance from Hanne but a shift in viewpoint then seems to take place with the occurrence of Hanne's processes of perception, her spatial viewpoint confirmed by the deictic expression 'der oppe.' I would suggest that the deictic adverb 'der' has distinct functions in this extract which I shall now proceed to examine.

### *The distal adverb 'der'*

Charles Fillmore clarifies the important distinction between three different uses of this deictic term in English: 'gestural', 'symbolic' and 'anaphoric'. The gestural use entails a perception that is shared by both speaker and addressee. For example, the sentence "Put it there" can only be understood if the addressee is able to perceive the place referred to by the speaker. The symbolic function of the term involves a knowledge of certain aspects of the speech situation. As an example of this use of the term Fillmore cites the telephone utterance "Is Johnny there?" where the addressee can interpret "there" as meaning "the place where you are". The anaphoric use of the term refers to something that has already been identified in the discourse.<sup>40</sup> It is this latter usage which is exemplified in the first occurrence of 'der' in the above extract. Immediately prior to this sentence, we have been given an account of Hanne's lowering into the well by her father, who holds the terrified child upside-down by her ankles. The narration is filtered through her consciousness, indicated by verbs that serve to

<sup>38</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.32.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.13.

<sup>40</sup> Charles J. Fillmore, *Lectures on Deixis*. Stanford: CSLI Publications, 1997, pp. 62-63.

convey her feelings and perceptions. The function of the second occurrence of 'der' can be understood as gestural, because it is accompanied by the adverbs 'langt' and 'oppe'. It refers to the specific location of Hanne's father in relation to Hanne herself. The reader's perspective is thus aligned with Hanne's perceptual position.

### *The Omniscient Perspective*

The deictic centre in the following extract from *Vannliljen* is not as easily identifiable. The spatial point of view is not aligned with a participating character and should therefore be attributed to an omniscient narrator, who is able to simultaneously describe interior and exterior settings. The viewing perspective is situated proximally to the location of the child in the cowshed, indicated by the preposition 'bortover.' The narration here is located outwith the consciousness of a participating character and 'interacts' with spatial deixis to present what Paul Simpson defines as a 'floating viewpoint' or 'bird's eye view,' which suggests an omniscient narrator.<sup>41</sup> Authorial omniscience is evident in the opening preposition, which provides a tension between distal and proximal narration. The deictic centre appears to be located in the vicinity of the barn as the reader is initially presented with a general overview of the New Year setting.

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<sup>41</sup>Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, pp. 20 & 63.

Suddenly the narrative tracking appears to zoom in, as it focuses on the tiny 'bundle':

I husene bortover var stuene fylt av glede, latter, varme og kjærlighet. Juletrelysene brant og lyste opp inne. Ute smalt nyttårsrakettene i været og lyste opp himmelen. Men inne i fjøset mellom sagflis og striesekker lå en liten, naken, kald og blodig bylt og hulket fram sitt inderligste nyttårsønske: en varm og trygg voksen favn.<sup>42</sup>

(In the houses further along, the living rooms were filled with joy, laughter, warmth and love. The Christmas tree lights burned and lit up the indoors. Outside the New Year fireworks exploded in the air, lighting up the sky. But inside the cow shed, between sawdust and gunny sacks, lay a small, naked, cold and bloody bundle, sobbing forth its innermost New Year's wish: a warm and safe adult embrace.)

The ordering of the elements in the scene is not strictly sequential, as the description shifts between interior and exterior settings. The most significant element in the scene is placed at the end of the description, in a climactic position, which marks also the end of the chapter.<sup>43</sup> Authorial omniscience is expressed in the evaluative language used to describe the interior of the houses, so remote from Hanne's desperate situation. Although the description of Hanne is from an external position - she is unnamed and unrecognisable - subjectivity is conveyed in the adjective 'kald', and furthermore, we are told of her 'innermost wish', which again suggests an omniscient narrator with knowledge of the character's consciousness. In terms of spatial point of view, authorial omniscience provides a perspective that is both distal and proximal, a deictic centre conveyed by the deictic expression 'bortover.' The camera viewpoint thus changes from a wide lens to a narrow focal point. What begins as a general and fluctuating depiction of the New Year setting, shifts to a fixed, specific location.

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<sup>42</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.95.

<sup>43</sup> Mick Short, *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*, London: Longman, 1996, p.281.



#### 4.2.2 Spatial Deixis and Dissociation

I shall conclude this section on spatial point of view by examining its relationship to the concept of dissociation in two of the subsidiary texts. In chapter 3 it was noted that this coping strategy was developed by child victims to distance themselves from the abuse. Ellen Klosterman points to the possible effects of dissociation on victims of child sexual abuse:

Dissociation has been linked with the development of multiple personalities or M.P.D. among survivors.<sup>44</sup>

There is a growing public awareness of the link between child sexual abuse and the development of multiple personality disorder, notably as a result of the publication of autobiographical accounts such as Truddi Chase's book *When Rabbit Howls*, written in 1987 and which has been translated into several languages.<sup>45</sup> Truddi Chase had ninety-two multiple egos that emerged in response to the sexual abuse she was subjected to throughout her childhood. We saw earlier that the protagonist in *Vannliljen* had at least twenty-five multiple personalities to help her to survive the prolonged sexual trauma she suffered during the first seventeen years of her life. In the following extract, one of these personalities, 'Redd' emerges from the kitchen, where she has been abused by Hanne's grandmother:

Redd skalv og gråt langt inni seg når hun kom ut fra farmoren, men Hanne forsto ikke hvorfor. Hun satt trygt på Vismannens fang og så på Redd som kom løpende inn i Trøsterens favn og gjemte seg under sjalet hennes.<sup>46</sup>

(Redd was shivering and crying deep inside herself when she came out from where grandmother was, but Hanne couldn't understand why. She sat safely in the Wise Man's lap and watched Redd come running into the Comforter's lap and hide herself under her shawl.)

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<sup>44</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.42.

<sup>45</sup> The Norwegian translation, *Når kaninen hylar*, was published by Cappelen in 1996, with a translation by Ann-Magritt Sævoid.

<sup>46</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.46.

The first occurrence of the deictic verb 'kom' indicates Redd's motion towards Hanne, thus identifying the protagonist as the deictic centre. Hanne's point of view is further expressed through verbs that convey her thought processes. The second occurrence of the deictic verb indicates that Hanne's two adult helpers, 'Vismannen' and 'Trøsteren', share the deictic centre with Hanne. An analysis of spatial deixis in the above extract thereby shows us that 'Hanne', 'Vismannen' and 'Trøsteren' share the same source. In contrast to the above example of 'proximal' deixis, which indicates a physical closeness to the deictic centre, the spatial point of view in the following extract is 'distal', as it conveys movement in a direction away from the location of the deictic centre:

Noen ganger klarte hun å stoppe utenfor låvedøren, og Liten gikk inn i stedet. Hanne syntes synd på Liten, for hun hørte at Liten gråt.<sup>47</sup>

(Sometimes she managed to stop outside the barndoor, and Little One went in her place. Hanne felt sorry for Little One, for she heard Little One crying.)

In the above extract, Hanne is the deictic centre, identified by the distal verb 'gikk'. The agent of the verb is 'Liten', another of Hanne's personalities, who appears to walk away from Hanne at the entrance to the terrifying 'barn' where so much of the abuse takes place. Hanne's dissociation from her experiences of sexual abuse through the creation of alternative 'victims' is further conveyed through verbs that express her emotions and perceptions.

Although dissociation is expressed in a particularly heightened form in *Vannliljen*, it also occurs in texts which do not involve the development of multiple personalities. The function of dissociation as a coping mechanism is exemplified in Mette Sundt's novel *Som igår, som imorgen*. The interrelation

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<sup>47</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.26.

between spatial deixis and the representation of dissociation is particularly dynamic in the following extract:

De kommer inn, går bort til jenta med frimerkene. De ser ikke på meg.<sup>48</sup>

(They come in, walk over to the girl with the stamps. They do not look at me.)

At this point in the narrative the protagonist has dissociated herself from her position at the table with the stamp collection and has 'escaped' to her bed, where she can mentally transport herself to the museum and call forth wonderful tapestries in her mind. The spatial point of view is indicated by the deictic verbs 'kommer' and 'går' and the adverb 'borte', all of which identify the protagonist as the deictic centre of the narrative. She is physically spatially located 'with the stamps', but through the process of dissociation her deictic centre has been displaced from the table to the bed. There is an interesting ambiguity in the final sentence which suggests either that the first-person objective pronoun 'meg' refers to the protagonist's physical self at the table or that it indicates her disembodied self on the bed. Both interpretations signify the protagonist's dissociative state. Although her survival mechanism does not, as in the case of *Vannliljen's* protagonist, develop into 'dissociative identity disorder', where multiple ego states exist in the same body,<sup>49</sup> she exhibits a temporary splitting of her self into two separate personae, exemplified in the following extract:

Jeg våkner av at bildøren slår i. Ser at jenta har sovnet ved bordet. Flytter fort inn i henne, skrur av lyset, trekker en nattkjole over hodet før jeg kryper opp i sengen.<sup>50</sup>

(I wake up at the sound of the car door slamming. See that the girl has fallen asleep at the table. Move into her quickly, turn off the light, pull a nightdress over my head, before I creep into bed.)

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<sup>48</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.115.

<sup>49</sup> Kate Cairns, *Surviving Paedophilia* London: Trentham Books, 1999, pp.24 - 25.

<sup>50</sup> Mette Sundt, *ibid*, p.116.

Her withdrawal from a dissociative state is clearly expressed through spatial deixis, as the protagonist's fragmented self becomes whole again through her movement back 'into' her body. In the following extract, the protagonist's process of dissociation is activated as an immediate response to the sexual abuse she is subjected to by her father:

Langt borte kjenner jeg fingerer som tar, tar, tar.<sup>51</sup>

(Far away I can feel fingers that grab, grab, grab.)

The coping mechanism of dissociation has been defined as a process of 'distancing' which the victim can experience as the abuse is being perpetrated.<sup>52</sup> In the above extract, this 'distancing' is spatially conveyed by the deictic adverb phrase 'langt borte', which denotes directionality away from the deictic centre. However, there is a tension here between the distal spatial deixis conveyed in the opening deictic expression and the sensory proximity expressed in the remaining phrase. The distal adverb 'borte' which one would expect to occur with a perceptual process of 'seeing' or perhaps 'hearing', is in the extract above unexpectedly operating with the sensory process of 'feeling'. The victim's process of dissociation, represented through spatial point of view, serves to extend the distance between mind and body as a defence strategy during the invasion of her most private, inner space.

We have seen ways in which spatial point of view can be linguistically represented in texts about sexual abuse, notably in the form of deictic expressions that serve to identify the 'deictic centre,' or source, of the narrative viewing position. We have also seen that spatial deixis can serve to highlight the spatial dynamics involved in the representation of dissociation in two of the subsidiary texts. In the next section, we shall look at the temporal dimension of point of view and consider its function in narratives concerning sexual violence.

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<sup>51</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 1990, p.34.

<sup>52</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.30.

## 4.3 Temporal Point of View

### 4.3.1 Temporal Features

If, as we have seen, spatial point of view in narrative is analogous with the 'camera angle' in the technique of filming, the temporal point of view in a written narrative also shares similar features in filmic texts. Paul Simpson clarifies the parallels between temporal features in written and filmed narratives:

[...] filmic texts and narrative texts share many features of temporal point of view, with their flashbacks, gaps in the progression of time, and the interweaving of other stories and incidents which break up the linear development of the main body of the narrative.<sup>53</sup>

In narrative texts these features of temporal point of view are realised through tense and temporal deictic elements such as the adverbs 'now', 'today,' 'then', 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow', all of which can only be understood in relation to the 'fictional speaker in his or her fictional world.'<sup>54</sup> The temporal point of view in a narrative about sexual abuse may reflect the victim's responses to the severe trauma of sexual violence in the form of dissociation, as we saw in the previous section. If the victim 'splits into parts' it may mean that the part that is experiencing the abuse is immobilised through shock, while other parts can distance themselves from the assault.<sup>55</sup> Inevitably, this fragmentation of experience will affect the victim's perception of time, particularly if the dissociation produces separate ego states where periods of time may be lost to the victim and we will be looking at this temporal aspect of dissociation later on in this section.

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<sup>53</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.13.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, p.17.

<sup>55</sup> Kate Cairns, *Surviving Paedophilia* London: Trentham Books 1999, p.24.

### 4.3.2 The Deixis of Memory

The temporal development of a narrative about sexual violence may be disrupted by flashbacks to the time when the abuse occurred. In Trine Kolberg's autobiographical work *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, the 'yellow chair' of the title keeps alive the protagonist's memories of her abusive father:

Når jeg sitter i den, kan jeg fremdeles kjenne stanken av min fars sigaretter som drysset glør og brant lukten av askeberger inn i dype huller i armlenene.<sup>56</sup>

(When I sit in it, I can still smell the stench of my father's cigarettes that showered ash and burned the smell of ashtrays into deep holes in the arm rests.)

The temporal feature of flashback is realised through the system of tense and the temporal adverb 'fremdeles'. The shift to present tense narration describes an aspect of the protagonist's father which she recalls from her childhood. His damage to the chair can be read as a metaphorical representation of the abuse he inflicts on his daughter, the deictic adverb 'fremdeles' expressing the link between her present state of remembering and the actual time the remembered events took place.

A similar use of temporal deixis occurs in Sverre Inge Apenes's 'dokumentarroman' or work of 'faction' *Fange hele livet*. Like Kolberg's text, the protagonist's experiences of sexual abuse occurred during her childhood and adolescence. *Fange hele livet* has two narrators: the journalist 'Randi' and the sexual abuse victim 'Kate', who was sexually abused by her uncle from the age of ten and subsequently raped and abused by various other males throughout her adolescent years. Kate and Randi have regular meetings, during which Kate discloses her harrowing experiences. The text thus has two interwoven narrations, both in the first-person but with distinct uses of tense.

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<sup>56</sup> Trine Kolberg, *Jenta bak den gule stolen*. Oslo: Pax Forlag, 1990, p.5.

Randi's narration is in the past tense and Kate's narration takes the form of both present and past tense, as the following excerpt clearly shows:

Fremdeles kan jeg kjenne følelsen av sakte kvelning, og de harde hendene som holdt meg om hodet mitt, så jeg ikke hadde noe mulighet til å slippe unna.<sup>57</sup>

(I can still feel the sensation of slow suffocation, and the hard hands that fastened themselves around my head, so that I had no possibility of getting away.)

There is a temporal contrast here between the present tense spoken by the adult narrator Kate and the past tense of the events she experienced in her childhood, yet the clarity of the description belies the time span between the time of the narration and that of the abuse. The distinction between these two time frames of past and present is clarified by Wallace Chafe in his observation concerning tense and time:

Tense is a way of linguistically marking the relation between the time of an extroverted consciousness and the time of a *representing* (not represented) consciousness.<sup>58</sup>

Chafe explains that the 'extroverted' consciousness is 'a consciousness that is immediately affected by the environment.' In the extract we have just looked at from Apenes' novel, the 'extroverted consciousness' is that of the protagonist *at the time of the abuse* that she is recalling through her 'representing consciousness' *at the time of the narration*. The separation in time and space between the two modes of consciousness is thus conveyed through tense. Chafe claims that this type of narration indicates an unreliable narrator:

[...] a distal represented consciousness belonging to the same self as the representing consciousness suggests a narrator who is gifted with an unrealistic ability to remember distal experiences.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*. Oslo: Metope, 1988, p.32.

<sup>58</sup> Wallace Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness and Time*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.205.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*, p.227.



I would argue, however, that a temporally distal relationship between the time of narration and the time of the narrated events does not inevitably indicate an ‘unrealistic’ power of recall, particularly if the distal experiences are deeply traumatic such as in the case of sexual violence. Research on memory recall in children has shown that in all cases children are able to remember in more detail incidents that deviate from normal events, particularly if the occurrences are of extreme import to the child:

Det er for eksempel funnet at barn helt ned til treårsalderen kan huske opplevelser fra smertefulle medisinske undersøkelser like godt som noe eldre barn.<sup>60</sup>

(It has for example been found that children as young as three can remember experiences of painful medical examinations as well as somewhat older children.)

In the case of adults, one of the damaging psychological effects of sexual abuse experienced in childhood is manifest in a tendency to continually relive the incidents of abuse, and may be a symptom of ‘Post Traumatic Stress Disorder’:

PTSD kan oppstå etter unormalt vonde og traumatiske opplevelser, og karakteriseres ved stadig gjenopplevelse av den traumatiske hendingen [...] <sup>61</sup>

(PTSD can arise after abnormally bad or traumatic experiences, and is characterised by a constant reliving of the traumatic event [...])

An adult who is the victim of childhood sexual abuse could thus be said to maintain a temporally proximal relationship to the traumatic experiences of her formative years. The ‘reliving’ of a traumatic incident may also manifest

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<sup>60</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001, pp. 59-60.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, p.47

itself physically. In the case of sexual abuse, the body can recall trauma even in the absence of memory:

Det er mange måter å huske på. Kroppen kan gjenkjenne følelser, lyder og lukter, men hodet greier kanskje ikke å kalle fram det som skjedde.<sup>62</sup>

(There are many ways of remembering. The body can recognise feelings, sounds and smells, but the head perhaps cannot manage to call forth what happened.)

In the experience of Unni Wenche Lindberg whose words are quoted above, her head continually denied the warnings that were signalled by her body until eventually after forty years her brain began to acknowledge the physical memories that had plagued her since childhood.

### *Narrative Memory*

For the adult survivor of sexual abuse, the sensory experience of sexual trauma experienced as a child can be transferred into 'narrative memory'. In other words, adults are able to accommodate trauma through the 'telling' of their story, while children do so through a 'compulsive re-enactment' of the trauma, either in literal or symbolic terms.<sup>63</sup> In *Fange hele livet* the memory of Kate's abuse, expressed through the telling of her story, is manifest in linguistic structures such as 'fremdeles kjenner jeg [...]', where the coexistence of temporality and sensory perception serves to reinforce the 'physical' aspect of

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<sup>62</sup> Unni Wenche Lindberg & Bodil von Schantz, *Vet du hva det koster?Konsekvenser av seksuelle overgrep*. Oslo: Emilia, 2001, p.19.

<sup>63</sup> Kate Cairns, *Surviving Paedophilia*. London: Trentham Books, 1999, p.50.

memory we looked at earlier. This is further heightened through the device of repetition in the following extract from the text:

Ennå kjenner jeg den fiskeaktige, slimete, ekle, sure, beske, kvalme smaken av sæd og urin og av ham. Ennå hører jeg de forferdelige, brølaktige stønnene hans, med vodkapusten og billig etterbarberingsvann over meg.<sup>64</sup>

(I can still feel the fishy, slimy, nasty, sour, bitter, nauseating taste of semen, urine and of him. I can still hear his horrible, bellowing groans, with his vodka breath and his cheap aftershave all over me.)

The repetition of the temporal adverb 'ennå' interacts with the sequence of evaluative adjectives and nouns to portray the abuse in proximal and vivid terms. We might say then, that the temporal adverbs 'fremdeles' and 'ennå' fulfil a notable function in narratives about sexual violence. These temporal expressions imply a continuity between the time of the related event and the time of utterance which, as we have seen, reflects the impact of the abuse on the sexual abuse victim's psyche, sometimes in the form of a continual re-enactment of her abuse. Although there is a difference in time frame between the narration and the narrator's experiences of sexual abuse, the first-person narration indicates that the experiencer of the narrated events corresponds to the 'producer of the language.' Wallace Chafe clarifies this 'equivalence' regarding first-person narration:

[...] first person expresses a coincidence of the extroverted self with the reporting self.<sup>65</sup>

First-person narration does not of course necessarily involve a temporal coincidence, unless it is in the present tense. In the case of the first-person narration in *Fange hele livet*, the narrated events are temporally distal to the time of narration. The sexual abuse the narrator experienced as a child is retold in the language of the narrator as an adult. The depictions of sexual abuse are thereby affected by the separation in time between the narration of the abuse and the abuse itself. This is also the case with Trine Kolbergs' *Jenta bak den gule*

<sup>64</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*. Oslo: Metope, 1988, p.32.

<sup>65</sup> Wallace Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness and Time*, p.233.

*stolen*. However in Kolberg's text the narrator addresses the reader directly, unlike *Fange hele livet*, where the narrator Kate tells her story to another character/narrator. This mode of narration, with an intermediary addressee, conveys a style that is akin to reporting.

### *A Question of Tense*

Mette Sundt's novel *Som igår, som imorgen* is also narrated in the first person. However, in contrast to *Fange hele livet*, the narration is almost consistently in the present tense by a single narrator, the young protagonist of the novel:

Han tørker brått av hånden sin, gnir den fort mot lakenet. Jeg kan merke at han skjelver, sengen rister svakt.<sup>66</sup>

(He quickly dries off his hand, rubbing it hard against the sheet. I notice that he is trembling, the bed is rocking gently. )

The narration here is highly subjective, occurring as it does in both the present tense and in the first-person, which places the protagonist at the 'deictic centre'<sup>67</sup> of the narrative. The present-tense form refers to events that occur 'in the present time', rather than being reported as events that have taken place at some point in the past.<sup>68</sup> In the above extract the protagonist, like 'Kate' in *Fange hele livet*, is simultaneously the 'perceiver' of the narrated events and the producer of the language. However, a significant difference between the two novels with regard to temporal point of view concerns a distinction in tense. In *Fange hele livet* Kate narrates her past experiences in the past tense whereas in *Som igår, som imorgen* the time of the narrated events appears, through the use of the present tense, to coincide with the time of narration.

In the following extract from Sundt's novel, in which the protagonist refers to an evening's respite from her father's sexually violent behaviour, this

<sup>66</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.26.

<sup>67</sup> Erwin M.Segal, 'Narrative Comprehension and the Role of Deictic Shift,' in: Judith F.Duchan, Gail A. Bruder & Lynne E.Hewitt (eds) *Deixis in Narrative*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995, p.15.

<sup>68</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1996, p.171.

congruence between the ‘representing’ consciousness and the ‘extroverted’ consciousness is conveyed by the deictic adverb ‘nå’:

Fri. Jeg har fri. Nå er jeg glad.<sup>69</sup>

(Time off. I have time off. Now I am happy.)

Wallace Chafe argues that conversations, which are of course typically in the present tense, are conducted in what he terms as the ‘immediate mode.’ In other words, in a conversation, the consciousness of each speaker is affected by their shared, immediate environment.<sup>70</sup> In *Som igår, som imorgen*, the immediate mode of narration relates events directly to the reader. Unlike the narrator Kate in *Fange hele livet*, there is no intermediary addressee in the form of another character. In a narrative depicting a child’s experiences of systematic abuse, this immediate mode of narration is a highly effective narrative device in creating temporal proximity, not only between the narrator and her experiences of sexual abuse, but also between the reader and the narrative representation of abuse. Like the spatial adverb ‘her’ the deictic temporal adverb ‘nå’ is situated at the deictic centre of the narrative. Its occurrence in the following extract signifies a post-abuse state, which is repeated in a never-ending cycle of sexual violence:

Det er over nå.  
Idag. Som igår. Som imorgen.<sup>71</sup>

(It is over now.  
Today. Like yesterday. Like tomorrow.)

The sequence of temporal deictic adverbs conveys the incessant nature of the protagonist’s brutalisation. Separated by a full stop, each deictic term occurs in isolation, with equal emphasis, for each day is the same: an interminable monotony of sexual, emotional and physical abuse. The relentless nature of the protagonist’s victimisation and her helplessness in a situation from which she cannot escape is of course embodied in the title itself, which comprises the latter two deictic adverbs of the above sequence: *Som igår, som imorgen*.

<sup>69</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.117.

<sup>70</sup> Wallace Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness and Time*, p.196.

<sup>71</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.106.

We saw earlier that flashbacks can disrupt the flow of a narrative, as in the case of *Fange hele livet*, where Kate relates her experiences of sexual abuse to the other 'I' narrator. In *Som igår, som imorgen*, flashbacks are infrequent, and when they do happen, they do not refer to incidents of sexual abuse. The protagonist's experiences of abuse are consistently narrated in the present tense. Projections forward in time occur more often than retrospective narration, although most of the narrative occurs in the present tense. In the following extract, the narrator's anticipation of future actions indicates to the reader that these are movements she has already performed many times and physical sensations that are only too familiar:

Seinere skal jeg reise meg og gå de åtte skrittene inn til sengen. Jeg skal merke at det verker i knærne, at lårene svir etter slag, at kroppen er øm og mør overalt. Jeg skal registrere det. Idag, som igår. Som imorgen.<sup>72</sup>

(Later, I will move myself and walk the eight steps up to my bed. I will notice that my knees are hurting, that my thighs are burning from blows, that my body is sore and stiff everywhere. I will take note of it. Today, like yesterday. Like tomorrow.)

The sequence of deictic adverbs is equivalent to the earlier example, except in one respect: the punctuation. The terms expressing the past and the present are separated by a comma, which suggests continuity. The abuse that is perpetrated 'today' is a repetition of the abuse that took place 'yesterday.' The full stop that marks the end of the first two deictic adverbs provides an important syntactic boundary between the past and the future, reinforcing the protagonist's awareness that her future holds no hope. In this extract, the future tense effectively conveys to the reader the repetitive nature of the protagonist's brutalisation. She knows the exact number of steps that measure the distance between her bed and the bathroom wall, which she is leaning against at this point in the narrative. The nature of the protagonist's incarceration is conveyed through the interplay of temporal and spatial point of view. The setting is reminiscent of a prison cell, the nature and frequency of the child's injuries comparable to those of torture victims. In *Som igår, som imorgen*, the protagonist's home is essentially a prison, her own parents the perpetrators of her systematic sexual, emotional and physical abuse.

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<sup>72</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.106.



The future tense in the following extract from the same novel expresses a different kind of knowledge from that depicted above. Here, the child's anticipation is of an unexpected and temporary nature:

De skal i selskap, det vet jeg, og da kommer han ikke. Det er ikke tid til det. Klokken viser at jeg har fri.<sup>73</sup>

(They are going to a party, that I know, and so he won't be coming. There isn't time for that. The clock shows that I have time off.)

Here, the significant rôle of time in the life of the sexually abused child is indicated through the protagonist's understanding of the clock as signifying much more than the passing of seconds, minutes and hours. It determines the course of events: whether she will be abused or reprieved, albeit temporarily. Her tragic circumstances are poignantly highlighted by her acknowledgment that she has 'time off.' The child in a normal, happy home environment might refer to 'time off' from homework but in the case of the sexually victimised child, this concept represents not an enjoyable break but a brief respite from her ongoing sexual victimisation.

### *The Deixis of Immediacy*

*Som igår, som imorgen* is written in the immediate mode, where there is no difference between the 'representing' consciousness (the narrating voice) and the 'represented' consciousness (the ideas that are represented).<sup>74</sup> In this particular text, the interplay of present tense and first-person narration, with spatial and temporal deixis, conveys a mode of narration that is highly subjective, and which decreases the distance between the reader and the narrator/victim. In terms of temporal point of view, deictic adverbs of immediacy such as 'nå' and 'idag,' locate the protagonist at the deictic centre of the narrative, thus showing that the narrated events are temporally proximal to the character/narrator. In *Fange hele livet*, although the narration is in the first-person, and deictic adverbs such as 'fremdeles' and 'ennå' provide a sense of continuity between the representing and represented consciousness, we saw that the narrated events were temporally distal to the time of narration. Although

<sup>73</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.114.

<sup>74</sup> Wallace Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness and Time*, p.198.



the consciousness of the adult survivor belongs to the same self as the child victim, there is a separation between the two in terms of time and space.

#### 4.3.3 The Deixis of Suspension

In Hanne Dahl's autobiographical work *Vannliljen*, temporal point of view is closely associated with the child protagonist's experiences of sexual abuse. Because her abuse is so severe, she develops 'dissociative identity disorder' to help her to survive her horrific subjection to sexual, physical and mental cruelty.<sup>75</sup> From the age of two, when she is orally raped by her father, twenty-five different 'helpers' gradually emerge at different times. They come to Hanne's aid when the abuse is too much for her to withstand. When this happens, the child 'goes to sleep' in the lap of 'Vismannen', a large, strong, omniscient male figure, who resembles a North American Indian. Meanwhile, one or more other 'helpers' endure the abuse until it is over and Hanne is able to 'wake up.' Hanne has no recollection of what has occurred while she is 'asleep' and because her young life is constantly being disrupted by periods of sustained sexual violence which necessitate her withdrawal from reality, she has no conception of what 'time' actually means. Although she knows

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<sup>75</sup> Kate Cairns, *Surviving Paedophilia*. London: Trentham Books, 1999, p.24: 'For some people, [...] the dissociated ego states take on a life of their own, existing side by side in the same personality, the condition known as dissociative identity disorder.'

that it is an elusive concept to her, she does not understand the reason, or why her particular relationship with time is not shared by others:

Tiden. Dette rare som kaltes tid. Hva var det? Hanne hadde aldri helt fått taket på det. Hun kunne se på klokken, og plutselig var det gått en halv time, fem timer, tre uker. Hun hadde trodd at alle hadde det slik, men hadde så små begynt å forstå at slik var det ikke. Andre eide tiden sin. Det hadde aldri Hanne gjort.<sup>76</sup>

(Time. This strange thing that was called time. What was it? Hanne had never quite grasped it. She could look at the clock, and suddenly a whole half-hour, five hours, three weeks had gone. She had thought that's how it was for everyone, but then she had gradually begun to understand that it wasn't. Others owned their time. That was something Hanne never had.)

Hanne's temporal point of view is thus directly influenced by the appalling abuse to which she is subjected throughout her entire childhood and adolescence. To Hanne, time is not predictably progressive, but irregular and fragmentary. If the periods of sexual violence and its repercussions are temporally marked by the collapsing of days or even weeks without her knowledge, the sporadic moments she has to herself are distinguished by an extension of time:

Mens hun undret seg over tidsbegrepet, så hun at det ble lysere i rommet. Fuglene sang, solen sto opp.<sup>77</sup>

(While she was wondering over the idea of time, she saw that it grew lighter in the room. The birds sang, the sun rose.)

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<sup>76</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.100.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

The temporal aspect of sexual abuse in this narrative is exemplified in the following extract, which takes place in the grandmother's kitchen:

Farmoren var overalt. Tiden gikk. Og tiden sto stille. Endelig var farmoren sliten av å leke fiskeleken.<sup>78</sup>

(The grandmother was everywhere. Time went. And time stood still. Finally, the grandmother was tired from playing the fish game.)

During the trauma of Hanne's subjection to sexual abuse by her grandmother, her concept of time becomes distorted, reflecting the disenablement of her perceptions of the world around her. Time inevitably passes, yet it also appears to stop, suspended until Hanne's terrifying ordeal is over. In contrast to the child victim's confused perception of time, the adult perpetrator measures the progression of time towards a specific goal:

Toårsdagen til Hanne kom. Åsmund hadde planlagt den lenge. Han var rent opprømt med tanken på hans spesielle gave til Hanne.<sup>79</sup>

(Hanne's second birthday arrived. Åsmund had been planning it for a long time. He was completely elated by the thought of his special gift for Hanne.)

Here, temporal point of view serves to underscore the extent of the father's cruelty as we are presented with a rare insight into his consciousness.

#### 4.3.4 Time and Space

In the following extract from *Vannliljen* we are given a further glimpse into the

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<sup>78</sup> *ibid*, p.45.

<sup>79</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.19.

depraved mind of the perpetrator, as we learn the exact nature of his 'gift' to Hanne:

Han visste hvordan munnhulen hennes kjentes, i dag skulle han lenger. Lenge hadde han tenkt på denne dagen, og den trange halsen hennes.<sup>80</sup>

(He knew what the opening of her mouth felt like; today he would go further. For a long time, he had been thinking of this day, and of her tight throat.)

The extract presents a deeply disturbing link between spatial and temporal point of view. The proximal temporal deictic elements 'i dag' and 'denne dagen' suggest that the orientation is that of Hanne's father, his viewpoint further conveyed by the cognition verbs 'visste' and 'hadde tenkt.' The coexistence of temporal and spatial perspective, particularly salient in the juxtaposition of the spatial adverb 'lenger' and the temporal adverb 'lenge' underscores the extent of the man's brutality and the depth of his obsession.

The interplay of spatial and temporal relations is evident in several of the texts. In the following extract from *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, the protagonist's symbolic journey back to her traumatic past is expressed through a spatial and temporal viewpoint:

Jeg skal på en lang vandring, forbi bildene mine, forbi den skittengule stolen, inn forbi mørket, for å finne lys til penselen min. Jeg skal tilbake, tilbake forbi den lysende, solgule stolen og til barnet bak den.<sup>81</sup>

(I am going on a long journey, past my pictures, past the dirty yellow chair, in past the darkness, to find light for my paintbrush. I shall go back, back past the shining, sun-yellow chair and to the child behind it.)

This metaphorical passage back in time and space transforms the narrator's perception of the yellow chair. The repetition of the adverb 'tilbake' - which can express temporal or spatial retrogression - conveys a distal relationship

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<sup>80</sup> *ibid*, p.20.

<sup>81</sup> Trine Kolberg, *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, p. 5.

between the protagonist as an adult and the small child she once was. This initially distal relationship will, however, eventually become proximal when the protagonist reaches 'the child' at the end of her journey. She will go back to a time before the 'sun-yellow' chair became 'dirty yellow,' to a time preceding the sexual and physical abuse to which she was subjected by her father, and which is symbolised by 'the darkness.'

In the following extract from *Som igår, som imorgen*, the adverb 'tilbake' also expresses a distal relationship, but one that remains so, for in contrast to the above extract from *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, the adverb occurs in a negative clause:

Vi har flyttet.  
Vi skal aldri reise tilbake til den lille huset øverst i gaten.  
Vi skal bo her nå, har de sagt.<sup>82</sup>

(We have moved.  
We will never again go back to the little house at the top of the street.  
We will live here now, they've said.)

There is a tension here between the coexistent proximal temporal and spatial deictics 'her nå' and the third person plural referent 'de.' Although the deictic centre in the sentence 'Vi skal bo her nå' can be assumed to be shared by the protagonist and her parents, the pronoun 'they' indicates that her mother and father are 'deictically remote'.<sup>83</sup> It can be argued that in this instance, the remoteness between them can be understood in psychological terms. Her

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<sup>82</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.57.

<sup>83</sup> Mick Short, *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*. London: Longman, 1996, p.271.

definition of each parent is spatio-temporally contrastive in the following extract, which describes the daily routine in their new home:

Han går på jobben tidlig om morgenen, og kommer tilbake seint på kvelden. Hun går rundt i leiligheten og pakker ut og tørker støv og gråter.<sup>84</sup>

(He goes to work early in the morning, and comes back late in the evening. She goes round the flat, and unpacks and dusts and cries.)

Both parents are portrayed here in terms of their actions but the father's movements are expressed from a temporal perspective whilst those executed by the mother are depicted in spatial terms. There is also a spatial dimension to the father's actions, conveyed by the distal deictic verb 'går' and the proximal deictic expression 'kommer tilbake.' It is, however, very distinct from the spatial representation of the mother's movements. There is a prominent tension between the linear nature of the father's actions and the circularity of the mother's movements. Both parents are agents of the deictic verb 'går', but the individual usage of the verb in spatial terms is distinct. The father's movements take him in and out of the home, whereas the mother is confined within the space, caught in a cycle of housework and depression. The novel is narrated from the child's perspective and she is thus consistently at the deictic centre of the narrative. She is not able to see what her father does after he has left the flat (only that he 'goes' and 'comes back') for she remains in the home with her mother, whom she observes going 'round' performing the housework. The spatial quality of circularity is reflected in the repetition of the coordinating conjunction 'og', which gives equal weight to the mother's menial tasks and to her action of crying, all of which appear to occur in a perpetual cycle. Spatial and temporal points of view serve to convey the child protagonist's distinct perceptions of each parent's relationship to their new home and thus, implicitly, to their relationship to the protagonist herself. Her isolation is highlighted through her observation of the separate, clearly defined motions of each parent, none of which involve the protagonist as she watches them from her position at the deictic centre.

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<sup>84</sup> Mette Sundt, *ibid*, pp. 57-58.

We can argue that temporal perspective is a significant aspect of narrative point of view in texts about sexual abuse because of the fundamental connection between time and memory. In the case of an adult survivor recalling past experiences of sexual abuse, as we have seen in *Fange hele livet*, temporal deixis indicates the temporal relation between the time of narration and the time of the abuse. The concept of time is perhaps of special significance to the child victim of sexual violence, where dissociative disorders can develop as a mechanism of survival. In *Vannliljen*, we saw that the horrific sexual violence experienced by Hanne actuated a splitting of her self into numerous ego states, where time had no meaning. Time does not belong to the victim of rape and sexual abuse but is, along with her bodily integrity and private space, appropriated by her abuser.

## 4.4 Psychological Point of View

### 4.4.1 Point of View and Focalization

We saw earlier that spatial point of view concerns the visual angle from which narrative events are viewed: it tells us from whose viewing position the narration takes place. Psychological point of view identifies the source of the actual words used in the narration. If spatial point of view correlates to the question ‘Who sees?’, psychological point of view can be summarised by the question: ‘Who speaks?’<sup>85</sup> This category of narrative point of view is clearly defined by Paul Simpson:

Psychological point of view refers to the ways in which events in a narrative are ‘mediated through the consciousness of the ‘teller’ of the story.’<sup>86</sup>

Simpson suggests that spatio-temporal point of view might be regarded as ‘a subsystem’ of point of view on the psychological plane, as an author assuming the psychological point of view of a character would also perceive events from

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<sup>85</sup> Michael J. Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*, p.68.

<sup>86</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.11.



that character's spatio-temporal position.<sup>87</sup> The ultimate responsibility for the narration does of course lie with the author but Michael Toolan points out that narration which is filtered through the consciousness of a particular character might in some cases be distinct from that of the narrator:

[...]speaking, thinking and seeing need not come from the same agent.<sup>88</sup>

Simpson equates psychological point of view with the term 'focalization,' which he believes clarifies the distinction between omniscient narration, where the narrator demonstrates a greater knowledge than any of the characters, and narration presented from the restricted viewpoint of a character which is thereby focalized through that character. Focalization has been defined as 'the viewpoint from which things are seen, felt, understood, assessed,' and is generally understood to be divided into two categories: 'external' and 'internal'.<sup>89</sup> However, as Mick Short has argued, the novel is by far the most complex genre to analyse in terms of point of view.<sup>90</sup> There are obviously many instances where the narration cannot be rigidly identified as either one or the other, but rather as a fusion of the two, and we shall be looking at such examples later in this section.

### *External and Internal Focalization*

In the case of external focalization, the narrative perspective is not allied with any characters in the text, i.e. the viewpoint is situated outside the consciousness of any of the characters.<sup>91</sup> This mode of narration is characterised by a lack of mental process verbs, which prevents the reader from gaining an insight into the characters' thought processes. In contrast, internal focalization occurs when the narration is 'from a point of view within the character's consciousness' or from the point of view of a narrator with knowledge of the characters' inner state - often referred to as an 'omniscient' narrator.<sup>92</sup> Verbs of perception and

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid*, p.43.

<sup>88</sup> Michael J. Toolan, *ibid*, p.69.

<sup>89</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1996, pp.169-183 & Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, pp.30-44.

<sup>90</sup> Mick Short, *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose* , p.256.

<sup>91</sup> Paul Simpson, *ibid*, p.41.

<sup>92</sup> Roger Fowler, *ibid*, p.170.

cognition are linguistic indicators that help to identify a narration that occurs from the point of view of a specific character. The most subjective form of internal focalization occurs either when the narration is in the first-person by a participating character, or in the third-person, with indications of the character's consciousness, as for example in the occurrence of 'free indirect discourse,' which we touched upon earlier in the section on spatial point of view. Ellen Klosterman refers to this mode of narration as 'semi-omniscient' and observes that it is commonly found in writings by sexual abuse survivors.<sup>93</sup>

### *First-person narration*

Jonathan Culpeper identifies three manipulations of point of view that might bring a reader closer to a character or character-narrator: a) first-person narration; b) internal narration and c) more direct speech and thought presentation.<sup>94</sup> The first-person mode of narration by a participating character as Paul Simpson points out, 'is located entirely within a participating character's consciousness.'<sup>95</sup> This highly subjective type of narration is exemplified in Mette Sundt's novel *Som igår, som imorgen*:

Jeg er ikke ensom. Ikke egentlig.  
Bare alene.<sup>96</sup>

(I am not lonely. Not really.  
Just alone.)

Leech and Short argue that first-person narration by a main character creates a 'personal relationship' in which the reader is biased in favour of the narrator/character.<sup>97</sup> In *Som igår, som imorgen*, the character's thoughts and feelings are communicated directly to the reader. The narrator is also the protagonist of the novel and thus the boundary between the character and the narrator which exists in third-person narration collapses. As we saw earlier in the section on temporal point of view, the present tense narration further serves to decrease the distance between the reader and the main character. Thus we

<sup>93</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.135.

<sup>94</sup> Jonathan Culpeper, *Language and Characterisation*, pp.147-148.

<sup>95</sup> Paul Simpson, *ibid*, p.39.

<sup>96</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.61.

<sup>97</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech & Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. London: Longman, 1981, p.265.

read about the protagonist's pain *while* she is being raped, as opposed to reading about her rape from a point in time *after* it has happened. The internal focalization in *Som igår, som imorgen* can be described as 'fixed', as it is focalized entirely through the protagonist.<sup>98</sup>

### *Third-person Narration*

Third person narration can also convey a highly subjective point of view if the reader experiences a close relationship to the narrator. Ellen Klosterman clarifies this important function of what she terms as 'third-person omniscient' narration in writings about childhood sexual abuse:

This point of view can [...] create the illusion of closeness between the main character and the audience, the success of which depends upon the narrator becoming invisible.<sup>99</sup>

While I would agree with Klosterman's claim that a reader's sense of closeness to the protagonist is dependent upon a relative invisibility on the narrator's part, I would argue that the reference to 'omniscience' in the term 'third-person omniscient' expresses an ability to enter the consciousness of *every* character in the narrative, not only that of the main character. Although a proximal relationship to the protagonist is desirable in terms of reader identification with the character, the blending of external and internal narration can provide a valuable insight into the circumstances of her abuse, as we shall see when we come to examine manipulations of point of view in Hanne Dahl's *Vannliljen*. I would suggest that the kind of invisibility referred to by Klosterman can be identified in specific linguistic structures. The narrator's concealment is dependent upon an internal mode of narration, conveyed by

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<sup>98</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.33.

<sup>99</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.136.

such linguistic mechanisms as verbs of perception and cognition, evident in the following extract from *Vannliljen*:

Hanne trodde hun døde. Hun skjønte ikke hvem som skrek før hun kjente farens hånd over munnen.<sup>100</sup>

(Hanne thought that she died. She didn't know who screamed before she felt her father's hand over her mouth.)

Here, the narration is very strongly focalized through the character of Hanne. The proliferation of verbs denoting the character's mental processes signals a narration that is mediated through her consciousness. Although it is in the third-person, the narration creates a sense of closeness between the reader and the protagonist referred to in the earlier quote from *Klosterman*, which encourages the reader to identify with, and have sympathy for, the character/victim.

Focalization need not, of course, remain fixed throughout an entire narrative, but may switch between an internal and an external viewpoint:

Focalization very commonly [...] varies between the orientation of a particular character and that of a rather neutral, detached position.<sup>101</sup>

Paul Simpson distinguishes between two modes of third-person narration: 1) 'narratorial mode', where the viewing position is situated outside any of the characters, and 2) 'reflector mode' in which the third-person narrator inhabits the consciousness of a character, whether for a prolonged period of time or only momentarily.<sup>102</sup> The above extract from *Vannliljen* is a clear example of narration in reflector mode, the verbs of perception and cognition establishing

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<sup>100</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.38.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Toolan, *Narrative : A Critical Linguistic Introduction* , p.71.

<sup>102</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.62.

an internal viewpoint of events. Hanne is also the reflector in the following extract, where we view 'the dentist' through her child's eyes:

Tannlegen så snill ut, han hadde grått hår. Kanskje han var en bestefar. Han luktet ikke slik som mennene på laven, og på skrivebordet hans sto en kaffekopp, ikke vannflaske.<sup>103</sup>

(The dentist looked kind, he had grey hair. Perhaps he was a grandfather. He didn't smell like the men in the barn and on his desk stood a coffee cup, not a bottle of water.)

Hanne's statement 'Kanskje han var bestefar' expresses her conclusion that the dentist must be kind because of his grey hair (which can be favourably compared to the black hair of her father) and suggests also her longing for a grandfather figure. Hanne's processes of perception are further conveyed through her comparison of the dentist's smell to those of the men who molest her. All of the men who sexually abuse Hanne - including her father - are heavy drinkers and this is undoubtedly one of the rare occasions that a sober member of the male sex comes into close contact with the child. Another signal that the narration is focalized through the protagonist is the restricted viewpoint conveyed by her mental reference regarding the 'bottle of water, which expresses the child's limited knowledge. Earlier in the narrative we have been told that the many 'guests' who visit the barn for the purpose of sexually abusing the child give her father 'bottles with water in,' which to the reader is obviously alcohol in the form of payment:

Det kom flere gjester på laven. Ofte og oftere. Hanne likte det ikke. De så vemmelige ut. Ekle. Stygge. Alle ga de faren flasker med vann på. Da ble faren glad. Hanne forsøkte også å gi faren vann for at han skulle bli glad. Han ble ikke det. Hanne forsto det ikke.<sup>104</sup>

(More guests came to the barn. More and more often. Hanne didn't like it. They looked revolting. Disgusting. Ugly. All of them gave her father bottles with water in. Then her father became happy. Hanne also tried to give her father water so that he would become happy. He didn't. Hanne didn't understand it.)

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<sup>103</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.66.

<sup>104</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.30.

The spatial deictic adverb 'kom' identifies Hanne as at least momentarily the deictic centre for the spatial point of view. Paul Simpson argues that spatial viewpoint can often interact with internal narration to create 'a subtle visual perspective.'<sup>105</sup> Verbs of perception and cognition indicate that the events depicted here are seen through the eyes of the protagonist. The child's perspective of the influx of 'guests' is conveyed in the 'value-laden' language<sup>106</sup> used to describe her abusers, which reflects not only her visual impression of them but also the nature of their actions. Internal focalization is further reflected in her misinterpretation of the 'water' and in the lexical choice of 'gjester' for the men who visit the barn solely for the purposes of sexually misusing her. There is, however, the presence of another voice, which Paul Simpson would define as an 'external commentator.'<sup>107</sup> This detached narrator is evident in the identification of Hanne by her first name, and not the third-person pronoun 'hun.'

#### 4.4.2 The Character's Consciousness

In a text such as *Vannliljen* where we can discern several different 'voices,' it is useful to be able to identify the 'immediate source'<sup>108</sup> of the narration through various linguistic techniques such as point of view and free indirect discourse. We saw in the previous extract how internal narration serves to present the restricted point of view of the young protagonist which, when fused with the narration of the adult author, expresses the tragic irony implicit in the child's mistaken observation. Her limited viewpoint is even more poignantly

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<sup>105</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.69.

<sup>106</sup> Mick Short, *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*, p.265.

<sup>107</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.37.

<sup>108</sup> Michael Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*, p.75.



underscored in the following extract, where the protagonist's thoughts are presented in the form of free indirect discourse:

Åtte skalv av redsel, klarte ikke å flytte på seg. Da overtok Lydig. Hun gikk pent ned til faren og mannen, og neide slik hun hadde lært. Mannen tok Lydig i hånden, og sammen med faren gikk de inn i laven. Der snakket faren med mannen og beklagde at hun hadde fått regulering på tennene. Lydig forsto ikke hva mannen hadde med dette å gjøre. Kanskje han var fotograf? Men hun kunne jo smile med lukket munn.<sup>109</sup>

(Eight trembled with fear, wasn't able to move. Then Obedien took over. She walked nicely down to her father and the man, and curtsayed as she'd been taught. The man took Obedient by the hand and together with her father, they went into the barn. There her father spoke to the man and apologised that she had received dental treatment. Obedient didn't understand what the man had to do with this. Perhaps he was a photographer? But she could, after all, smile with her mouth closed.)

When 'Lydig' initially takes over from 'Åtte,' we can identify two voices: the external narrator describing Åtte's action of 'trembling' and an internal perspective suggesting the cause of Åtte's action: 'av redsel'. The spatial point of view remains with the latter, indicated by the distal deictic verb 'gikk' and the deictic adverb 'ned', both of which express a directionality away from the deictic centre. The accompanying shift in psychological viewpoint is conveyed by the descriptive word 'pen', and also through the contrastive actions of the 'obedient', self-contained second personality to the immobility of the terrified personality of 'Åtte'.<sup>110</sup> The focalization is not straightforward: it can be attributed to the character of 'Åtte' or to the omniscient narrator, who shifts in and out of the consciousness of each personality. Although there are no verbs denoting the mental and cognitive processes of any participating characters, a subjective viewpoint is expressed through the evaluative language and the simple sentence structure, which suggests a child-like point of view. The deictic spatial adverb 'der' expresses a distal relationship between the deictic centre and the focalized objects, which is further reinforced by the distal deictic expression 'gikk inn i,' expressing a spatial point of view situated outside the barn. After the

<sup>109</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.78.

<sup>110</sup> An overview of Hanne's twenty-five 'helpers' are listed at the end of Dahl's book, with a short description of each personality.



reporting of Hanne's father's apology to the man, the narration becomes strongly focalized through 'Lydig.' The reference to her cognitive processes ('Lydig forsto ikke') introduces us to the free indirect discourse in which the character's thoughts are presented. Helen Aristar Dry explains one of the most prominent effects of FID:

[...] it gives the reader a sense of being 'inside' the character's mind.<sup>111</sup>

Aristar Dry argues that our sense of closeness to a character increases when we are presented with the character's own words. In the case of 'Lydig', our empathy is compounded by other emotions, as the appalling reality of the situation comes to light. The connection between the man in the barn and Hanne's dental repairs is of course lost on the little girl, as she struggles to understand the significance of her father's words. Several linguistic features of FID such as the switch in reference from name to pronoun, her speculation in the form of a question and her 'self-directed argument'<sup>112</sup> conveyed by the adverb 'jo,' indicate that the character's words are being presented with little intervention on the part of the narrator.<sup>113</sup> The subtle fusion of external and internal narration, particularly evident in the blending of the narrator's voice with those of the protagonist and her numerous 'helpers', highlights the diametric interplay between the innocent world view of the child in the face of horrific sexual abuse, and the manifestation of her abusers' unspeakable fantasies.

In the following extract from the same text, the contrast between the child

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<sup>111</sup> Helen Aristar Dry, 'Free indirect discourse in Doris Lessing's 'One off the Short List' in Peter Verdonk & Jean-Jacques Weber (eds) *Twentieth - Century Fiction: From Text to Context*, London: Routledge, 1995, p.102.

<sup>112</sup> Roy Pascal, *The Dual Voice: Free Indirect Speech and its functioning in the nineteenth-century European novel*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977, p.44 & p.114.

<sup>113</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction*, p.338.

victim's incomprehension at her abuser's actions and the man's depraved brutality is manifest in the use of both direct and free indirect discourse:

“Takk!” Slikkepott lyste opp, tok imot sjokoladen. “Så snill du er. Er du også glad i sjokolade?” “Sug!” Mannen tok tak rundt skuldrene til Slikkepott, ventet litt, tok sjokoladen fra henne og gransket den. Slikkepott forsto ingenting. Skulle hun ikke få den likevel? Han så så sint ut. Hvorfor var han sint?<sup>114</sup>

(“Thank you!” Sweet-tooth brightened up, taking the chocolate. “How kind you are. Do you like chocolate too?” “Suck!” The man took hold of Sweet-tooth's shoulders, waited a little, took the chocolate from her and examined it. Sweet-tooth didn't understand any of it. Was she not going to get it, after all? He looked so angry. Why was he angry?)

In this scene from *Vannliljen*, ‘Sweet-tooth’ has just taken over from ‘Obedient’ as the ‘helper’ who is most fond of sweets. Direct speech and free indirect thought are interspersed with narration that can be attributed to either the adult Hanne/narrator or to the child Hanne/protagonist. The narration in the final three sentences, however, is clearly from Sweet-tooth's point of view. The switch from proper name to third-person pronoun, the retention of subject and verb inversion, (as in direct questions) and the use of the modality signal ‘likevel’ and the emotive element ‘så’, are all linguistic indicators of free indirect discourse.<sup>115</sup> The fusion of character focalization and narrative voice characterises the style of free indirect discourse, as it gives the narrator access to the character's consciousness while still retaining the narrative flow.<sup>116</sup>

Although the following extract, which occurs later in the narrative, does not contain free indirect discourse and appears to be external through its

<sup>114</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.79.

<sup>115</sup> Michael J. Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*, p.123.

<sup>116</sup> Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. London: Longman, 1989, p.193.

use of verbs denoting physical actions, distinctions in narratorial expression are nevertheless blurred:

Da runden var tatt, ble Skallet ført opp på podiet igjen og plassert med magen over det lave bordet.<sup>117</sup>

(When the round had been done, the Shell was led up to the podium again and placed, stomach down, over the low table.)

The narrative point of view appears to occupy a position located outside the character's consciousness. The treatment of events is apparently external through the depiction of 'Skallet' as the object of several verbs of action, and also in the omission of any of the protagonist's thought processes. However, although the mode of narration seems to be external, the use of the proper noun 'Skallet' suggests an internal perspective. Unlike the definite reference to Hanne's father as 'faren', which signals a psychological distancing between focalizer and object of focalization, the word in the form of a proper name, 'Skallet', like 'Åtte' and 'Lydig', conveys a psychological closeness to the narrator. As a name known only to the author of the text, it refers to an aspect of her own psyche. 'Skallet' refers to one of the author's ego states which emerged as the child learned how to dissociate herself from the trauma of her abuse. Hanne's horrifying memories surfaced during the course of therapy, and the book was conceived from her desire to tell other people what she had been through.<sup>118</sup> Thus Hanne's 'story', though written in the form of a third-person narrative, is woven from the fabric of her experience. The blurring between internal and external narration in *Vannliljen* allows the reader an insight into the thoughts and feelings of the child victim, while at the same time depicting the social and environmental context of her abuse.

We witness Hanne's devastating experiences from the point of view of the victim as a child and also from her perspective as an adult survivor. We are thereby given access to a unique inner life. Events are focalized not only through the child Hanne, but also through the multiple personalities that become

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<sup>117</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.94.

<sup>118</sup> Thomas Kessel writes in his afterword to *Vannliljen*: "Jeg vil være ærlig overfor meg selv og fortelle hva jeg har gjennomgått," var et av hennes første utsagn da behandlingen startet hos meg' (p.173.) ("I want to be honest with myself and tell what I have been through," was one of her first statements when her treatment with me began.)

activated as a mechanism for her survival. Through the creation of her numerous identities, with distinct names and personalities, Hanne's inner life develops its own imaginary narrative as a counterpoint to the daily atrocities to which she is subjected.

### *Dissociation*

The detachment strategy of dissociation, also thematised in other texts such as Herbjørg Wassmo's *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* and Mette Sundt's *Som igår, som imorgen* is an important aspect of the sexual abuse victim's inner life. It recurs in both fictional and factually-based narratives, as we have seen, and reflects the indistinct boundary that exists in writings about sexual abuse. Although *Som igår, som imorgen* is defined as a 'novel' its convincing representation of child sexual abuse has several parallels with the autobiographical narrative, *Vannliljen*. Both texts concern the sexual abuse of the child protagonist, which is further compounded by physical violence and extreme emotional cruelty. In each case the child adopts the coping mechanism of dissociation but in Sundt's novel the process does not, as in Dahl's narrative, take the extreme form of dissociative identity disorder. In the following extract from *Som igår, som imorgen* the tension between the victim's psychological process of dissociation and the perpetrator's physical actions of sexual abuse is expressed through distal spatial deixis and the contrast between the protagonist's repeated cognitive process (in its negative form) and the strongly agentive process 'drar':

Hele tiden er det noe som drar meg ut av hodet mitt. Jeg vil ikke ned dit hendene er, jeg vil ikke kjenne det som skjer mellom beina.<sup>119</sup>

(The whole time, there is something that drags me out of my head. I don't want to go down where the hands are, I don't want to feel what's happening between my legs.)

The victim's denial is expressed as a physical distance between her 'head' and the part of her body that is being invaded, her denial further accentuated by the negative form of her mental processes.

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<sup>119</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.34.

### *The Inner Self*

Unlike the protagonist of *Vannliljen*, the character/narrator of *Som igår, som imorgen* does not split into separate, named identities. She herself remains nameless throughout the text and as the 'I' narrator of the story, the narrative is focalized exclusively through her. Because the narration is situated entirely in the protagonist's consciousness, the reader is given direct access to her perceptive and cognitive processes:

Øynene verker, likevel klarer jeg ikke å ta dem vekk fra det skinnende dyret. Det er urørlig. Bak dyret, bak hånden som holder det, kan jeg så vidt skimte ansiktet hans.<sup>120</sup>

(My eyes hurt, but I can't manage to take them away from the shiny creature. It is motionless. Behind the creature, behind the hand that holds it, I can just make out his face.)

In this scene, internal narration interacts with spatial deixis to convey the visual perspective of the young protagonist as she is held against the bathroom wall by her father, who is about to force a live cockroach down her throat. The insect is foregrounded, its proximal location to the deictic centre reinforced by the distal position of the father's face. The first-person, present tense narration creates a sense of intimacy between the reader and the narrator which is further reinforced by the use of verbs denoting the protagonist's sensory processes.

We saw earlier, in the extracts from *Vannliljen*, that it is possible to identify two voices in one sentence. The extent to which a narrative is mediated through a character's consciousness can vary from one sentence to the next within the same text, as we have seen in the case of *Vannliljen*. Often when we are reading a narrative, we are unable to identify whether the narration is internal or external, and we might say that in some cases, it is a blurring of the two modes. Paul Simpson suggests that in passages where third-person narration interacts with free indirect discourse, 'the boundaries [...] are more fuzzy than clear.'<sup>121</sup> In a narrative concerning sexual violence, the subtle shifts between internal and external narration enable the reader to experience an illusion of closeness with

<sup>120</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.34.

<sup>121</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.37.

the protagonist/victim, where the abuse is witnessed from her perspective, while simultaneously watching the effects of her abuse from an external viewpoint.

The degree to which internal focalization is used is variable not only within a single narrative, but can of course vary significantly between texts. In *Som igår, som imorgen*, we noted that the first-person narration ensures a consistently internal mode of narration throughout the length of the narrative. The psychological point of view is situated entirely with the child protagonist of the novel. This is also the case with *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, where the narration is consistently focalized through its protagonist. In *Vannliljen*, we looked at several sections of the narrative where more than one mediating voice can be identified in the third-person narration, where the focalization appears to slip from one mode into another. Later, we shall see that in *Fange hele livet*, where the representation of sexual abuse occurs in the form of first-person narration to a second party, more emphasis is placed on the abuser's actions than the perceptions and emotions of the victim.

#### 4.4.3 External Point of View

If internal narration is typified by references to the character's inner self, external narration is generally characterised by a lack of verbs denoting psychological processes. Michael J. Toolan argues that in this mode of narration, the narrator/focalizer distinction could be said to collapse, in the absence of a character focalizer.<sup>122</sup> External narration, which is neutral and objective in its style, is associated with impersonal narration such as news reporting. The omission of characters' feelings and motivations means that

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<sup>1</sup>22 Michael J. Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*, p.69.



extensive references may be made to their physical characteristics.<sup>123</sup> Ellen Klosterman gives the following description of this type of narration:

The most distanced narration third person objective, reports strictly the behaviour of the main character with as little interpretation by the narrator as possible. This is the epitome of objective reporting.<sup>124</sup>

Klosterman claims to have found very few instances of this mode of narration in narratives written by survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Of the texts I have looked at, only one can be noted for its extended use of external narration: Sverre Inge Apenes's documentary novel, *Fange hele livet*. Although the narration does include some references to the thought processes of the two main characters, much of the narration by Kate could be termed as external, as it is characterised by actions. As we noted earlier, in the section on temporal deixis, *Fange hele livet* has two narrators: 'Kate', the adult survivor of child sexual abuse and 'Randi,' the journalist to whom Kate relates her history. Randi is initially the principal narrator but Kate's narration subsequently takes over much of the story. Her narration, which is mainly retrospective as she is recalling the catalogue of abuse she endured as a child and adolescent, is characterised by verbs denoting the actions of her abuser. Although there is no reference to Kate's thoughts and emotions, the narration can never be entirely objective because the first-person narrator is the victim as an adult. In the following extract, she is relating to Randi one of many incidents of rape perpetrated by her uncle:

Der rev han av meg bukse, sko og truse, bøyde meg fremover så jeg sto bukk med hodet oppe i en solbærbusk, og så tok han meg så hardt og brutalt som han vel aldri har tatt meg, hverken før eller siden.<sup>125</sup>

(There he tore off my trousers, shoes and panties, bent me forwards so that I stood, bent over, with my head in a blackcurrant bush and then he took me harder and more brutally than he has ever taken me, either before or since.)

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<sup>123</sup> *ibid*, p.178.

<sup>124</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.135.

<sup>125</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*. Oslo: Metope, 1988, p.95.



The tone of the narration is matter-of-fact, in spite of being in the first-person by the victim herself. There is, nevertheless, a blurred distinction between external and internal modes of narration which derives from the juxtaposition of first-person narration with a neutral style of reporting. The overall impression of detachment can be attributed to the fact that the extract is dominated by the rapist/agent's actions, while the victim's thoughts and feelings are omitted. The narrator tells us that this is the most 'brutal' of the rapes perpetrated by her uncle, but because we are not given an insight into the psychological and emotional effects of the rape on the victim, it is more difficult for us as readers to identify with her as a character. Although the above extract depicts actions that are indisputably abusive to the victim, the absence of psychological processes means that we do not view the abuse from her perspective. Furthermore, the first part of the description produces an unfortunately comic effect which detracts from the extreme violence and brutality of the rape. The reader is provided with a sequence of actions perpetrated by the rapist and details of the circumstances of the rape, including the setting and the removal of precise items of the victim's clothing but her thoughts and feelings are omitted. As Klosterman asserts, the victim's cognitive and perceptive processes are key to our understanding of her experiences of abuse and consequently if these are omitted we are less likely to identify with the victim.<sup>126</sup> The documentary status of *Fange hele livet* does of course produce a more objective style of writing in which the narration is dominated by the characters' actions.

A more subjective point of view is expressed in the following extract from the same scene, through the use of verbs that convey the psychological and physical effects of the rape on the victim:

Han hvilte litt inne i meg, og jeg turde ikke en gang rette meg opp, og jeg kjente smerten og stivheten i både lår og legger på grunn av stillingen.<sup>127</sup>

(He rested a little while inside me, and I didn't even dare to straighten myself up, and I could feel the pain and stiffness in both my thighs and my legs because of the position.)

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<sup>126</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.140.

<sup>127</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*, p.96.

Through the depiction of the character/narrator's thoughts and feelings, we are given an insight into her inner life. Glimpses into Kate's thought processes are, however, few and far between and many of the representations of rape and sexual abuse in *Fange hele livet* are situated outwith the consciousness of the victim.

We have explored some of the methods used in the narrative representation of psychological point of view. An internal mode of narration involves a dissolving of the boundary between narrator and character which creates an illusion of closeness between the reader and the character through whom the narration is focalized. External narration achieves the opposite effect. The absence of a character/focalizer means that the narration is situated outwith the consciousness of a participating character. A single narrative can display various modes of focalization, where the point of view subtly shifts between internal and external modes, and where more than one mediating voice can often be identified. We saw, for example, the complex representation of narrative perspective in *Vannliljen*, where changes in point of view reflected the protagonist's dissociative processes. We shall now consider the ideological category of point of view and examine ways in which this aspect of narrative perspective might manifest itself linguistically in the texts we have been looking at.

#### 4.5 Ideological Point of View

We have seen that spatial point of view concerns the question 'Who sees?' and psychological point of view pertains to 'Who speaks or thinks?' We have also noted cases where these two categories of point of view can be assigned to the same source. The following question regarding ideological point of view is formulated by Jean-Jacques Weber:

[...] how does the particular person who sees, speaks or thinks modalize what s/he sees, says or thinks?<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Jean Jacques Weber, *Critical Analysis of Fiction: Essays in Discourse Stylistics*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992, p.30.

When individuals ‘modalize’ a perception, utterance or thought, they are qualifying their expressed propositions. Through the use of modal verbs such as ‘must’, ‘can’ and ‘might’, for example, and modal adverbs like ‘perhaps’ and ‘possibly’, they are assessing the truth of their propositions in respect of certainty, probability and possibility. A modalized expression can also convey degrees of necessity, knowledge, belief and volition.<sup>129</sup> Ideological point of view is thus concerned with attitudes and beliefs. Roger Fowler claims that ideological point of view in a text may be expressed in two distinct ways. The first of these can be identified through the use of modalized expressions, as discussed above, and also in the occurrence of ‘generic sentences.’<sup>130</sup> These are generalisations that claim to be universally true (eg. ‘All men are bastards.’) The second expression of ideological point of view identified by Fowler involves the representation of a distinct world view which he has termed ‘mind style,’ and which we shall examine in detail in the next chapter. Before resuming my discussion on ideological viewpoint, however, I would like to clarify my reason for not including the concept of mind style as an aspect of ideological point of view.

### *Ideological Point of View and Mind Style*

I have chosen to explore mind style and its linguistic features separately from ideological point of view because of what I perceive to be the important rôle of mind style in narratives about sexual violence. The expression of ideological perspective through the use of modality and generic statements is concerned with an individual’s values, beliefs and assumptions about the world. Mind style, on the other hand, as Inecke Bockting points out, ‘is not in the first place a matter of the conscious message of the speaker.’<sup>131</sup> Roger Fowler argues that while modal structures (eg. ‘I believe,’ ‘I know,’ ‘It is certain that’) are ‘explicit’ expressions of judgments and beliefs, world view may also be conveyed by ‘less direct’ means:

[...] other parts of language , indirectly but nevertheless convincingly, may be symptomatic of world view.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, p.302.

<sup>130</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*, p.167.

<sup>131</sup> Inecke Bockting, *Character and Personality in the Novels of William Faulkner. A Study in Psychostylistics*. Maryland: University Press of America, 1995, p.26.

<sup>132</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*, p.168.

The distinction between a conscious linguistic choice and a linguistic structure that is not conscious is a very important one in my view, particularly with respect to narratives concerned with sexual abuse and rape. I would argue that a woman or child subjected to an act or acts of sexual violence will project a mind style that reflects the distortion and fragmentation of her consciousness, caused by the violation of her private and inner space. This mind style is manifest in language features that are 'symptomatic' of her abuse and which may convey not only the trauma of her experience, but also the cognitive processes that function as survival mechanisms induced by terror and physical powerlessness. We shall explore several of these linguistic features of mind style in the next chapter. Although Roger Fowler analyses mind style as an expression of ideological point of view, I shall restrict this present discussion to his first example of ideological point of view, which as we have seen, concerns the attitudes and beliefs that are projected by the text:

Now when we speak of point of view on the plane of ideology in a narrative text, we mean the set of values, or belief system, communicated by the language of the text.<sup>133</sup>

### *Modality*

In the following extract from *Vannliljen*, the narrator's judgments concerning the circumstances referred to in the narrative are manifest in the use of modal structures:

Som toåring døde hun, men døde ikke likevel. Hannes lille barnesjel var sterk og levende. Kanskje har Gud gitt henne en engel likevel. Kanskje har Gud sett hva Hanne skulle oppleve, sett det lenge før hun ble født, og gitt henne en liten engel som blåser luft inn i henne når hun slutter å puste selv, slik at hun ikke dør - helt.<sup>134</sup>

(She died as a two year-old, but nevertheless didn't die. Hanne's little child's soul was strong and alive. Perhaps God has given her an angel after all. Perhaps God has seen what Hanne would experience, seen it long before she was born, and given her a little angel that blows air into her when she stops breathing herself so that she doesn't die - completely.)

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<sup>133</sup> *ibid*, p.165.

<sup>134</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.14.

The narration is characterised by a tension between faith and caution, which finds its expression in the occurrence of several modal adverbs.

This sense of contradiction is already at play in the opening sentence.

Implicit in the first occurrence of the adverb 'likevel' is an expectation that Hanne would die and that the fact that she did not die defies all expectations. The occurrence of modal adverbs indicates an ideological perspective in terms of the narrator's expression of her opinions and musings. Katie Wales makes the following claim regarding the relationship between modality and subjectivity:

The more qualified or evaluated the statements, the more a sense of the narrator's personality is conveyed, and the greater awareness revealed of an implied addressee.<sup>135</sup>

In the passage we have been looking at, the self-reflection implicit in the repetition of the adverb 'kanskje' and the qualification of Hanne's propositions suggest that in this case the 'implicit addressee' may be Hanne herself. The 'marked qualification'<sup>136</sup> that characterises this passage indicates a heightened subjectivity, which is particularly prominent in the occurrence of the final, delayed qualifier, 'helt' which ends the narrator's propositions on a note that conveys a sense of scepticism and expresses the sentiment of the victim as an adult commenting on her own survival.

The narrator is, after all, an older, retrospective 'Hanne.' The evaluative language and qualified statements that characterise the extract under discussion thereby reveal the narrator's closeness to the circumstances she is describing.

### *Conflicting Ideologies*

A novel may present a single world-view or a range of distinct or conflicting ideologies.<sup>137</sup> In Sverre Inge Apenes's *Fange hele livet* there is an obvious clash of ideologies between the initially naive and blinkered world-view of the narrator Randi and the book's explicit theme of sexual abuse and its devastating consequences on the victim. In the following extract, Randi has been

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<sup>135</sup> Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, p.302.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid*, p.303.

<sup>137</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*, p.166

contacted with a request that she write a book about incest. Her initial reaction is characterised by a lack of either knowledge or compassion:

- Incest står for meg som et symbol på mannshat og feministisk gråtekoneri [...] - Incest er noe som stort sett bedrives av bygdetullinger i avstengte fjordarmer, og som kommer langt ned på min liste over hva folk flest er opptatt av.<sup>138</sup>

(- Incest for me stands as a symbol for man-hating and feminist wailing.[...] - Incest is something that is by and large committed by country idiots in isolated fjord inlets, and which comes far down on my list of what most people are preoccupied with.)

Although Randi gradually comes to accept Kate's story as truthful, her scepticism regarding the prevalence of sexual violence reveals itself in many of her responses to Kate's information regarding various cases of sexual abuse. When Kate tells her that the local doctor was known to routinely break the hymen of young girls during gynaecological examinations, Randi's response is indicative of her initial doubts regarding the veracity of Kate's story:

-Dette kan vel godt ha vært fete rykter, vel?<sup>139</sup>

(-These could well have been empty rumours, couldn't they?)

Modality is a mechanism which can be used to express a speaker's 'degree of commitment to the truth'. Here, the modal auxiliary 'kan' and the repeated modal adverb 'vel' indicates Randi's view about the truth value of the incidents related to her by Kate. Randi's uninformed and prejudiced ideological standpoint is expressed through generalized propositions that signal her belief system regarding incest. These generalizations serve as a counterpoint to the precise statistics of sexual abuse cited by Kate's husband:

- Visste du at hver åttende jente er misbrukt?<sup>140</sup>

(- Did you know that one in eight girls is abused?)

<sup>138</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*, p.16.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid*, p.70.

<sup>140</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*, p.24.



Randi eventually relents and agrees to meet the incest victim Kate with a view to writing her story. The book details the meetings between the two women and describes, through Kate's narration, the years of sexual abuse to which she was subjected. Kate's narration is interspersed with Randi's reactions to the related incidents of sexual violence, which reflect a certain ideology. In the following extract Randi's physical and verbal reactions to Kate's statement indicate the possibility of a second narrative voice:

- Altså - siden onkel Jon begynte med meg, har jeg vært alle manns eie, uansett hvor jeg har vært, og ikke bare her på Øya. Da - etter tyve års flukt fra sex og kroppslig nærhet - kjente jeg for første gang på alle disse årene den første murringen. Et fjernt minnes blaff av fryd strøk over meg, og jeg rettet meg opp i stolen og sa - nokså uten sammenheng: - Har du hatt glede av det, da?<sup>141</sup>

(- So - since Uncle Jon began with me, I have been every man's property, no matter where I have been, and not even just here on the Island. Then - after a twenty-year flight from sex and physical intimacy - I felt for the first time in all these years, the first murmur. The flicker of desire from a distant memory brushed over me, and I sat up in the chair and said - without really any continuity: - Have you had any pleasure from it, then?)

Randi's response appears to suggest a belief system which promotes rape myths such as those discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, where women are perceived to enjoy being violated - a message perpetuated through pornography. From a feminist viewpoint it is tempting to attribute this ideology to the text's male authorship and to argue that it is an ideology of sexism, particularly salient in Randi's verbal response to the young woman's grievance about her perceived status as a nymphomaniac. Equally, however, one could interpret Randi's blatantly insensitive question as a spontaneous reaction which characterises her profession as a journalist. Her highly insensitive and obtuse question is not, I would argue, characteristically female but is perhaps intended as a signal of her boredom and preoccupation with her own past. Nevertheless her reaction

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<sup>141</sup> *ibid*, p.48



strongly conflicts with the text's projection of male sexual brutality, as articulated by the multiple-rape victim 'Kate':

-Jeg tror at det er med sex menn viser hva slags makt de har.<sup>142</sup>

(-I believe that it is through sex that men show what kind of power they have.)

Kate's ideological perspective on heterosexual sex is conveyed by her statement of belief regarding sex as a male expression of power. Her ideological point of view is linguistically manifested in the modal expression 'Jeg tror at...' Her assertion is resisted by Randi, who in her response, sidesteps the question of male power which is central to Kate's recently voiced conviction:

Jeg ristet bestemt på hodet - og jeg så for meg det gode og fine som en gang hadde vært - langt, langt tilbake i tiden: - Sex handler da om ømhet, godhet og lyst?<sup>143</sup>

(I shook my head firmly - and I saw before me the good, fine things that had once been - a long, long time ago: - Sex is surely about tenderness, kindness and desire?)

Randi thus projects her personal, idealised view of sex - based on her own experience of sexual love - which has remained unchanged since the death of her fiancée. The conflict of ideologies between the two female characters is an effective strategy in highlighting the dichotomy between the victims of sexual violence and those who deny or ignore its existence. However, I would argue that there are parts of the narrative which undermine the sensitive and critical nature of the text's subject matter. To illustrate as an example, I shall return to the earlier extract discussed above. Randi's reaction of sexual arousal to Kate's observation that she is regarded as 'every man's property', is regarded, at least by this reader, as a highly inappropriate and male-gendered

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<sup>142</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*, p.60.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid*, p.48.

response. Of course, as Sara Mills argues in her essay on Marxist Feminist stylistics, not all women read a text in the same way:

One major distinction within women readers which should be made are those who are male-affiliated and those who are female-affiliated.<sup>144</sup>

Female affiliation is thus a 'framework of reading' which the reader assumes in order to resist the position allocated to the male reader. Therefore, Mills argues, a text that addresses the reader as male can be challenged by the resistant female reader. These gender-determinate reading positions are not, however, necessarily permanent. They may occur at different stages in a text, and in different texts.<sup>145</sup> I would argue that there are parts of *Fange hele livet*, such as the one discussed above, which are resistant to a female-affiliated reading. Gender is obviously an important aspect of reader-address, and one which Mills claims to be overlooked by critics in their discussions on reader address and positioning.<sup>146</sup> Although the descriptions of rape and sexual abuse in *Fange hele livet* are narrated by the character herself and are thereby presented from the perspective of the female victim, I would argue that the reactions of her female addressee, the other 'I' narrator 'Randi,' contradicts a female-affiliated reading on the part of the text's addressee.

## 4.6 Summary

In this chapter, we have looked at several categories of narrative point of view and we have examined their function in establishing the source of the narration in a number of texts written in Norwegian. Spatial deixis was considered to be an important feature of texts concerning sexual violence as deictic expressions serve to delineate the spatial relationship between the deictic centre, or source of the narration, and other people or objects. Spatial deixis was also found to be a salient feature in the depiction of dissociation, where the abused child splits herself into several 'selves.' We saw in the section on psychological point of view that internal narration presents the reader with a glimpse of the character's

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<sup>144</sup> Sara Mills. 'Knowing your place: A Marxist feminist stylistic analysis' in Jean-Jacques Weber (ed.) *The Stylistics Reader*, London: Arnold 1996, p.250

<sup>145</sup> *ibid*, p.251.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid*, p.249.

consciousness and can be linguistically identified by verbs of cognition and perception. In a text where the narration is filtered through the character's consciousness, the reader becomes an 'actor' rather than a mere 'observer' of events. When the narrative concerns sexual violence and events are focalized through the protagonist/victim, the reader is more liable to empathise with that character who is the victim of rape and sexual abuse. In the last section, we noted ways in which ideological point of view can be indicated directly by a character. We saw, for example, the function of modal structures in the expression of ideological point of view in *Vannliljen* and *Fange hele livet*. We noted also that Randi's ideological position was linguistically conveyed by the generalizations she expressed concerning her views on incest. Finally, we saw that more than one world-view can be presented in a text. The conflict of ideologies at play in *Fange hele livet* underscores the tension between, on the one hand, those who are ignorant and dismissive of the concept of sexual abuse, and on the other, the victims who have had first-hand experience of the reality of sexual abuse. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, ideological point of view can also express an idiosyncratic viewpoint which may manifest itself as an unusual style of language. It is this expression of ideology with which the concept of 'mind style' is concerned.<sup>147</sup> Because of what I consider to be its pivotal rôle in the representation of the protagonist/victim's world-view in narratives of sexual violence, I will dedicate the next chapter to the concept of 'mind style' and examine a number of its linguistic manifestations.

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<sup>147</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*, p.168.

## Chapter 5

### The Victim's World View: Linguistic Features of Mind Style

Agency and animacy are fundamental aspects of linguistic structure which are highly significant determiners of what I have called mind-style.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, we studied the various categories of narrative point of view and analysed their linguistic manifestations in several Norwegian texts about sexual abuse. We examined the spatial and temporal features of point of view, mainly in terms of its deictic elements, and looked also at aspects of psychological point of view and its rôle in identifying the source of the words used in the narration. We saw that events focalized through the victim's consciousness achieved an effect of closeness between the protagonist and the reader, which encouraged the reader's identification with the victim. At the same time, we identified ways in which the narrator's point of view might blend with that of the character to give the reader an insight into both the internal life of the protagonist and the external forces responsible for her victimisation. We were thus chiefly concerned in the last chapter with the protagonist's perceptual point of view: what the character 'sees' and her spatial relation to other people and objects and also the degree to which her internal processes are represented in the narrative. In this chapter, we shall investigate more closely the linguistic manifestations of a character's individual conceptualisation of the world. In other words, we shall not only look at *what* she sees, but examine ways in which her perceptions are expressed through specific linguistic structures that reflect her individual world view.

My aim in this chapter is to examine the relevance of 'mind style' to narratives concerning sexual violence and to provide an explanation of a number of

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistics and the Novel*, London: Methuen, 1977, p.106.

linguistic indicators of mind style, identifying their usage in the chosen texts. I aim also to look at additional linguistic aspects of the narratives that I consider to be of relevance to the theme of sexual violence and its representation from the victim's perspective. My study will cover both lexical and grammatical features. As I give detailed stylistic analyses of the two core texts, Christian Krohg's *Albertine* and Herbjørg Wassmo's *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* in Part III, I shall in this discussion be principally drawing on examples from the texts studied in the last chapter, with occasional references to the core texts. Before embarking on a discussion on the grammatical features on mind style and their usage in the literary texts, I propose to look briefly at the relation between mind style and point of view and to clarify what I consider to be its importance in the analysis of rape and sexual abuse narratives.

### 5.1.1 Mind Style and Point of View

#### *Ideological Point of view and Mind Style*

The term 'mind style' was originally formulated by the linguist Roger Fowler:

We may coin the term 'mind-style' to refer to any distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual mental self.<sup>2</sup>

Although Fowler equates 'mind-style' with the category of 'point of view on the ideological plane,' Elena Semino and Kate Swindlehurst argue that these two concepts are discrete:

In short, ideological point of view captures the evaluative and socially shared aspects of world views, while mind style captures their cognitive and more idiosyncratic aspects.<sup>3</sup>

Semino and Swindlehurst thus underline the crucial distinction between *collective* and *individual* attitudes. To illustrate this point with an example from *Albertine*, I would argue that an aspect of the protagonist's ideological point of view is manifest in her fear of the police, shared by other working class women

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<sup>2</sup> Elena Semino & Kate Swindlehurst, (1996) 'Metaphor and Mind Style in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*,' *Style*, vol. 30, no.1, p.143.

<sup>3</sup> Elena Semino & Kate Swindlehurst, 'Metaphor and Mind Style in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*,' p.146.

of the time. Her mind style, on the other hand, is conveyed through linguistic features that indicate a singular conceptualisation of events:

Og det ble koldt omkring de sammenpressede knær, og på hvert av dem la det seg en varm hånd som tok tak og ville bryte dem fra hverandre.<sup>4</sup>

(And it grew cold around her knees, which were tightly pressed together, and on each of them, a warm hand placed itself, wanting to break them apart.)

Here, a particular mind style is conveyed through a pattern of transitivity which presents body parts as agents of verbs denoting actions. We shall see later, in the section on Transitivity, that body part agency features frequently in the projection of mind style in narratives concerning sexual violence.

### *Mind Style and Narrative Point of View*

Semino and Swindlehurst clarify the close relationship between the concepts of mind style and point of view, while at the same time explaining their distinct functions:

Clearly, we can perceive a character's mind style only if we are presented with his or her point of view. The reverse, however, is not always true. The access to a character's point of view does not necessarily imply access to his or her mind style.<sup>5</sup>

In the last chapter, we looked at various examples from the texts, where the reader was given access to a character's point of view, but where the wording used to describe the focalized events was attributed to the narrator rather than to a character. This is particularly true of third-person writing, where the narration can be a blending of the narrator's and character's wording. A character's mind style often reveals a deviation from what Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short term a 'commonsense version of reality.'<sup>6</sup> In other words, a character's individual perspective may be reflected in unusual representations of her experiences and her environment. In my view, this is why mind style is such

<sup>4</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.88.

<sup>5</sup> Elena Semino and Kate Swindlehurst, 'Metaphor and Mind Style in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, p. 145.

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech & Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction*, London: Longman, 1981, p.188.



a significant narrative feature in texts concerning sexual violence. The act of rape constitutes an extreme invasion of an individual's body, and can create a 'wordless terror', manifest in an immobility of the senses.<sup>7</sup> In other cases, an act of sexual violence may invoke feelings of anger, shock, disorientation and physical pain. In a narrative about sexual violence, the emotional and physical effects of sexual abuse may be reflected in a language style that conveys the deviance of the abuser's actions and the victim's psychological and physical responses to her abuse.

### 5.1.2 Mind Style and Dissociation

The most significant factor in a victim's reaction to her rape usually concerns the damaging effects of the assault on her psyche. The emotional consequence of sexual violence is voiced by a rape victim in her interview with the sociologist Cathy Roberts:

[...] 'This doesn't matter', she said, pointing to a swollen lip, 'but the man fucked my mind.'<sup>8</sup>

Marius Råkil highlights the psychic damage caused by sexual violence:

Denne type vold er gjerne den aller mest tabuiserte og skambelagte. Kunnskap om hvor psykisk nedbrytende den seksualiterte volden er, brukes blant annet i tortur.<sup>9</sup>

(This type of violence is probably the most taboo and shameful. Knowledge about the mentally destructive effects of sexualized violence is, for one thing, used in torture.)

For the child victim in particular, the psychological effects of sexual violence are acute and enduring. In many cases the trauma of sexual abuse leads to the response of 'dissociation',<sup>10</sup> as we noted in chapter 3 and also in chapter 4, in the discussion on spatial point of view. We saw how the protagonist of

<sup>7</sup> Kate Cairns, *Surviving Paedophilia*, London: Trentham Books, 1999, p.14.

<sup>8</sup> Cathy Roberts, *Women and Rape*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989, p.74.

<sup>9</sup> Marius Råkil, *Menns vold mot kvinner*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2002, p.71.

<sup>10</sup> Kate Cairns, *Surviving Paedophilia*, p.23.



*Vannliljen* split herself into many selves as a defence mechanism in the face of the most horrific sexual abuse.

The child victim's legacy of torment is described by Kate Cairns:

The silenced child is not telling us of the traumatic stress they have suffered. Instead those who care for them live with the disorders which indicate the unspoken terrors, the painful distortions of thought and feeling and behaviour which afflict the victim of trauma.<sup>11</sup>

I would suggest that a particular narrative language is required in order to effectively convey the 'unspoken terrors' and 'painful distortions' of the senses experienced by the sexually victimised child. A study of the linguistic manifestations of mind style is a constructive means of examining ways in which the world view of the sexually abused child is projected by the author of the text. The world view may be that of a character or narrator, but in either case, the relevant mind style is an individual interpretation of reality. As Katie Wales observes, each of us has a distinct perception of the world that we inhabit:

[...] mind style reflects the fact that all our conceptualizations of existence are different, and to some extent controlled by the language we use.<sup>12</sup>

The importance of language as an expression of individuality is also clarified by Ineke Bockting:

Scholars in different fields have recognised the relation between style and the manifestation of individuality, focussing on the linguistic features favoured by the individual.<sup>13</sup>

For the individual subjected to sexual abuse, the language is arguably that of survival. Out of necessity, the victim's mind style projects an alternative 'reality' which may be reflected in specific linguistic features. A narrator's mind style

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p.40.

<sup>12</sup> Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, London: Longman, 1989, p.301.

<sup>13</sup> Ineke Bockting, *Character and Personality in the Novels of William Faulkner. A Study in Psychostylistics*, Maryland: University Press of America, 1995, p.26.

may deviate less from 'reality' than in the case of a character in the story, but it will nevertheless direct the reader along a particular pathway, as no writing can be said to be completely neutral and objective.<sup>14</sup>

I propose now to examine a number of linguistic manifestations of the protagonist's mind style in the texts we have been looking at in the last chapter. My analysis will be divided into two main sections: 'grammatical features' and 'lexical features,' although my discussion will focus primarily on the grammatical indicators of mind style. I will refer to several texts, including the two core texts, but my principal focus in this chapter will be on Mette Sundt's novel *Som igår, som imorgen*, Hanne Dahl's *Vannliljen* and Sverre Inge Apenes's *Fange hele livet*.

## 5.2 Grammatical Features: Transitivity

In this section I will be concerned with the grammatical features of mind style, focussing on Michael Halliday's system of transitivity. I will look at aspects of this grammatical framework and its relevance to texts concerning sexual violence. My aim is to show ways in which transitivity patterns can function in the texts to convey experiences that are specific to a victim of sexual abuse. I will conclude the chapter with a look at the use of metaphor and its relation to mind style in Mette Sundt's novel *Som igår, som imorgen*. The novel's highly effective projection of a sexually abused child's conceptualisation of sexual violence is manifest in a notably marked mind style, which deserves a more detailed investigation.

### *The Transitivity Model*

Michael Halliday's system of transitivity has been widely used in the analysis of fictional narrative, particularly in the study of mind style because of its central

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<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech & Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction*, London: Longman, 1981, p.188.

rôle in the ideational function of language, which relates to the representation of experience.<sup>15</sup> The ideational function is explained by Halliday:

[...] it is through this function that the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world, and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness [...]<sup>16</sup>

These experiences can be identified through patterns of transitivity. Transitivity thus generally concerns the representation of meaning within a clause: the types of events and processes, the participants involved and the circumstances within which the processes take place. Choices from the system of transitivity have been shown by Halliday to convey different world views, as for example the 'highly defamiliarised' viewpoint of Lok, the Neanderthal man in William Golding's novel *The Inheritors*.<sup>17</sup> In his examination of key syntactic features in *The Inheritors*, Halliday gives the following definition of transitivity:

Transitivity is the set of options whereby the speaker encodes his experience of the processes of the external world, and of the internal world of his own consciousness, together with the participants in these processes and their attendant circumstances. [...] Transitivity is really the cornerstone of the semantic organisation of experience.]<sup>18</sup>

It is this 'experiential aspect of meaning'<sup>19</sup> which is crucial to the representation

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<sup>15</sup> Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, London: Longman 1989, p.466.

<sup>16</sup> M A K Halliday, 'Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding's *The Inheritors*', in Donald Freeman (ed.), *Essays in Modern Stylistics*, London, Methuen, 1981, p.328.

<sup>17</sup> M A K Halliday, 'Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding's *The Inheritors*', p.327.

<sup>18</sup> M A K Halliday, *Explorations in the Functions of Language*, London: Edward Arnold, 1973, p.134.

<sup>19</sup> M A K Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, London: Edward Arnold, 1985, p.101.

of a character's world view within the fictional world of the text. The three elements that constitute the function of transitivity as set out by Halliday are:

- a) the process (represented by the verb phrase)
- b) participants in the process (people and objects represented by noun phrases)
- c) circumstances (typically realised by temporal and spatial adverbs, adverbs of manner and prepositional phrases)<sup>20</sup>

In a literary text the author makes certain choices regarding these elements. The possible options we can select from the system of transitivity represent different ways in which we can 'encode' - as speakers and writers - our experience of the world.<sup>21</sup> Processes are categorized according to whether they denote actions, states of being, states of mind or speech. Broadly speaking, the processes realised in this system are those of 'doing,' 'being,' 'sensing,' and 'saying.' In the transitivity system, these are respectively realised as 'material,' 'relational,' 'mental' and 'verbal' processes. Of these, I will be focussing on the two major processes of 'doing' and 'sensing': the 'material' and 'mental' processes. I will now proceed with an outline of each of these process types and explore their function in the texts.

### 5.2.1 Material Processes

Within the system of transitivity, each process is associated with a particular participant rôle. For example, in the case of a material process, the entity performing the action - whether human or inanimate - is known as the 'actor' or 'agent.' If the material process involves a second participant, the entity that is affected by the process, or experiencing it, is termed the 'goal.'<sup>22</sup> The following

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 101-102. See Chris Kennedy, 'Systemic Grammar and its Use in Literary Analysis' in *Language and Literature*, Ronald Carter (ed.), London: Routledge, 1982, pp. 83-85, for a clear summary of Halliday's framework.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.87.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Simpson. *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.89.

are simple examples of a material process in an intransitive and transitive clause, respectively:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	
The boy	punched	
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
The boy	punched	the bag

In the above example it is clear that the process of ‘punching’ is intentional. Halliday explains that this is not always the case in a concrete process:

Even with concrete processes, however, we have to recognise that there are some where the Actor is involuntary, and thus in some respects like a Goal.<sup>23</sup>

The following shows an example of this type of process:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>
The girl	fell

The process of falling can be interpreted as something that has happened to the girl, rather than something which she is ‘doing’ or ‘performing’ of her own volition. Thus, material processes can be subdivided into those of ‘material action intention’ and those of ‘material action supervision’ (where the process simply ‘occurs.’<sup>24</sup> )

#### *Failed Material Processes*

In a text concerning sexual violence, if we look at the material processes of the victim, we can note that they are frequently either involuntary or severely restricted. In the following extract from *Vannliljen*, the two year-old victim’s

<sup>23</sup> M A K Halliday. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p.104.

<sup>24</sup> Sara Mills, ‘Close Encounters of a Feminist Kind: Transitivity Analysis and Pop Lyrics,’ in *Feminist Linguistics in Literary Criticism*, (Essays and Studies 1994). Cambridge: Brewer, 1994, p.142.

material process occurs as a physical reaction to the oral rape perpetrated by her father:

Barnet sprellet hjelpeløst.<sup>25</sup>

(The child flailed helplessly.)

The victim's lack of control over her own body is exemplified in the following extract from the same text. Here, Hanne is seen to be suffering from the side effects of the pesticide DDT, administered by her abuser to numb the little girl's mouth:

Hun skalv, frøs, orket ikke å røre på seg, det gjorde så vondt - så veldig, veldig vondt.<sup>26</sup>

(She shivered, froze, couldn't manage to move, it was so painful – so very, very painful.)

The failed material process, which in the above extract is represented by the verb phrase 'orket ikke å røre seg,' is a characteristic feature of several of the studied texts. The victim's inability to move, either because she is physically overpowered by her abuser, or because (as in the above example), she is debilitated by the immediate effects of her abuse, is typically manifest in material processes that occur in the negative form. The victim's powerlessness to take action can also stem from fear, as in the following extract from *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*:

Og hun ville rope på mora, kjenne henne inntil seg. Men hun fikk ikke frem en lyd.<sup>27</sup>

(And she wanted to shout for her mother, to feel her close against her. But she couldn't make a sound.)

The above extract describes a recurring situation in which the protagonist wakes up from a nightmare, alone in the darkness of her room. Although it takes place over a period of time prior to her experiences of abuse, it can be

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<sup>25</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.20.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, p.80.

<sup>27</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981, p.5.



interpreted as a forewarning. The protagonist's terror of the dark inhibits her from accomplishing the action of calling for help, the material process in this instance remaining an unfulfilled wish. The situation described above indicates also the protagonist's vulnerability: the preconditions that permit her abuse to occur.

A failed material process is more typically caused by a physical agent, as in the following extract from *Vannliljen*:

“NEI!” hylte Hanne. Hun hoppet ned av fanget og prøvde å løpe ut. Faren var raskere.<sup>28</sup>

(“NO!” yelled Hanne. She jumped down from his lap and tried to run out. Her father was quicker.)

The most extreme suppression of a victim's actions occurs during the act of rape. In *Som igår, som imorgen*, the child protagonist's actions are hindered by the brute strength of her adult rapist, her attempts to break away from her father manifest in a sequence of failed material processes:

Han har lagt hånden over munnen min. Jeg får ikke puste, prøver å skyve ham vekk med armene, klarer det ikke.<sup>29</sup>

(He has placed his hand over my mouth. I'm not able to breathe, try to push him away with my arms, can't manage it.)

As in the above example, the verb 'prøvde' in the following extract from *Vannliljen* is complemented by a material process, which is subsequently contradicted by the second clause introduced by the co-ordinating conjunction 'men.' The protagonist's intentions are thus shown to be defeated, her inability

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<sup>28</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.28.

<sup>29</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.66.



to move evident in the physical effects of rape on her undeveloped, child's body:

Det var ettermiddag og mørkt da Hanne oppdaget at hun lå sammenkrøllet oppå sengen sin. Hun prøvde å sette seg opp, men det var så vondt å sitte.<sup>30</sup>

(It was the afternoon and dark when Hanne discovered that she was lying curled-up on her bed. She tried to sit up, but it was so difficult to sit.)

The destructive consequences of child rape are exemplified in the following extract from an earlier part of the novel, at a time when Hanne is just five:

Hanne klarte ikke å stå. Klarte ikke å våkne. Klarte ikke å kjenne.<sup>31</sup>

(Hanne was unable to stand. Unable to wake up. Unable to feel.)

The extract encapsulates the pattern of failed processes in the text, in this instance directly generated by the young victim's rape. The immobilisation of Hanne's movements and senses is linguistically manifest in the sequence of negative processes, which conveys the disablement of her most fundamental physical and cognitive processes. In the following extract, the victim's subjugation is manifest in the modification of a material process:

En stille toåring som lydlig spiser bløtkake med død blikk.<sup>32</sup>

(A quiet two year-old who obediently eats cake, her eyes dead.)

The normally joyful image of a young child eating birthday cake is here disturbingly subverted through the final phrase.

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<sup>30</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.64.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, p.38.

<sup>32</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.20.

### *The Helpers' Processes*

The child's action of 'eating' is attenuated by several modifiers that express the psychological damage of oral rape on a two-year-old. The 'dead' expression in Hanne's eyes signifies the child's metaphorical death, for Hanne has experienced here the first 'splitting' of her self. The child described above is referred to by the narrator as 'Liten,' a 'helper' who is created when Hanne is raped by her father on her second birthday and becomes 'Barnet Som Sover.' The material processes of Hanne's helpers, or ego states, often compensate for the protagonist's failed material processes. In the following extract, Hanne is unable to make paper decorations at school because her father has brainwashed her into thinking that she is clumsy. 'Lydig' emerges to take over from Hanne, accomplishing the task with confidence:

Det ble liv bak øynene, Lydig kom fram, grep en saks og klippet strimler i alle farger.<sup>33</sup>

(The eyes came to life, Lydig came forward, grabbed a pair of scissors and cut strips in all colours.)

Hanne's helpers have the ability to escape from her father, when Hanne is physically entrapped by him:

Hanne klarte ikke å røre på seg, men det klarte Redd. Hun ville løpe bort, men faren holdt henne tilbake.<sup>34</sup>

(Hanne didn't manage to move, but Redd managed it. She wanted to run away, but her father held her back.)

Although most of Hanne's ego states are 'children' like herself, conceived in order to withstand the abuse that she is unable to endure, Hanne has also created several adult helpers, whose material processes display a tenderness that is completely absent from the behaviour towards Hanne of the real adults in her life. The following extract describes the crucial functions fulfilled by these

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid*, p.61.

<sup>34</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.51.

adult 'caretakers' when Hanne's father takes his daughter up to her bedroom for the purpose of raping her:

Hun gikk innover i seg selv, inn til Vismannen, - det eneste stedet hvor hun kunne legge fra seg tårene sine. Hun Som Visker Ut strøk henne hastig og mildt over ansiktet da hun passerte inngangen til rommet bak virkeligheten, og gråtende kastet Hanne seg i armene til Vismannen. Han løftet henne opp på fanget, tørket tårene hennes, vugget henne og nynnet rolig.<sup>35</sup>

(She went inwards into herself, in to the Wise Man, - the only place where she could lay aside her tears. She Who Rubs Out stroked her face hurriedly and gently as she passed the entrance to the room behind the reality, and Hanne threw herself, crying, into the arms of the Wise Man. He lifted her up into his lap, dried her tears, rocked her and hummed quietly.)

This extract exemplifies Hanne's complex inner world, where each ego state fulfils a special, individual function. 'Vismannen' is Hanne's protector and he is there to shield her from the most severe abuse to which she is subjected. 'Hun Som Visker Ut' stands for 'repression'; her rôle is to erase memories.<sup>36</sup> There are a number of material processes in this passage, several of which have Hanne as agent. However, these processes are actually taking place in the depths of Hanne's psyche, in her inner world, situated 'behind reality.' In this alternative world, Hanne is permitted to enact a childhood of which she is deprived in the 'real world.' In this specially constructed setting, she is able to run into the protective arms of a caring adult, and to shed tears that she is normally forced to suppress. In this alternative reality, her material processes are informed by a 'letting go', represented in the above extract by the verb phrases 'legge fra seg' and 'kastet seg' and the present participle 'gråtende.' The impression of release conveyed by these processes diametrically opposes the extreme repression of her real self. The material processes of Hanne's adult helpers are characterised by compassion and nurture, qualities that are absent from Hanne's everyday life. The relation between Hanne's material processes and those of her other 'selves' is one particular linguistic aspect of the unique mind style of an individual whose extreme suffering has invoked an alternative existence, where

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, p.64.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, p.162.

she is provided with the sanctuary and love she has never experienced in her young life.

### A 'Normal' Mind Style

In Sverre Inge Apenes's *Fange hele livet*, the mind style projected by the victim is much less unusual than that of the protagonist of *Vannliljen*. Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short describe the important characteristic of what they refer to as 'normal' mind styles:

[...] they require a reader to adopt a view of things which is not noticeably at variance with the view we take of the real world.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike *Vannliljen*, there are no unusual transitivity patterns in *Fange hele livet*. If we look at the material processes of the abuse victim, Kate, we can find considerably more intentional processes than are to be found in Hanne Dahl's text, particularly those that involve a second participant in the rôle of 'goal' or object:

Jeg kastet nattkjolen og den skitne trusa i en haug på gulvet, fant et rent håndkle og tappet vann i badekaret.<sup>38</sup>

(I threw the nightdress and the soiled pants in a heap on the floor, found a clean towel and ran water into the bath.)

In this post-rape situation, the victim is evidently in control of her actions, manifest in the sequence of material intention processes in transitive clauses. During the narration of the rape itself, all of these process types are assigned to the rapist, with the exception of one:

Han prøvde å kysse meg, men også det var brutalt, og jeg vred vekk hodet mitt så godt jeg kunne [...]<sup>39</sup>

(He tried to kiss me, but that was brutal as well, and I twisted my head away as well as I could [...])

<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction*, p.197.

<sup>38</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*, p.45.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, p.44.

In contrast to the failed material processes in *Vannliljen* that we looked at earlier, in the above extract it is the rapist who is the agent of the verb 'prøvde'. It is the process of 'attempting' and not 'kissing' that is described as 'brutal.' The victim, although only a child when raped by the adult perpetrator, is seen to exercise a degree of autonomy, manifest in her material process of intention. Her ability to end a sexual assault under her own control is expressed in the following extract, which takes place during a gynæcological examination conducted by a sexually abusive doctor:

Jeg lå helt stille - han var tross alt doktoren her på Øya og jeg en femten år gammel jentunge - hva hadde vel jeg å stille opp med overfor ham? Men så ga jeg blanke - dette ville jeg ikke være med på. Jeg satte meg opp, skjøv ham bort og sa:  
 - Din jævel, ligg unna meg.  
 Og så gikk jeg.<sup>40</sup>

(I lay completely still - he was, after all, the doctor here on the Island, and I a fifteen year-old girl - how could I possibly be a match against him? But then I didn't care - I didn't want to be part of this. I sat up, pushed him away, and said:  
 - You beast, get away from me.  
 And then I left.)

The victim's rôle from 'passive experiencer' to 'active instigator'<sup>41</sup> is manifest in the progressively agentive sequence of material processes. From an initial process of 'lying' which could be described more as a state of being than an actual process, particularly as the victim is inert and coerced into this position, she becomes increasingly autonomous, involving a second participant in her material process. In the material intention process 'skjøv ham bort,' the victim is the agent and the abuser is the 'goal', or object. The victim is thus shown not only to take control of her body, but to physically fight back against her abuser. The nature of Kate's material processes, in contrast to the failed material processes of Hanne, indicates a differentiation in victim status which may be argued to reflect the extent and duration of the abuse to which each was subjected. Kate's abuse lasted over a period of four years and began when she was ten. Hanne was abused from infancy until she left home at seventeen.

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, p.70

<sup>41</sup> Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, p.15: 'Narrators and characters can be seen to be active instigators or passive experiencers, according to whether they are 'agents' or 'patients.'

### *A Symbolic Killing*

In *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, the victim's material processes that are directed specifically against her abuser begin in a metaphysical form:

Hver kveld torturer og dreper jeg ham der i mørket. Lyttende, alltid beredt. Søvnene kommer når jeg hører ham snørke. Da vet jeg faren er over. For denne gang.<sup>42</sup>

(Every evening I torture and kill him there in the dark. Listening, always prepared. Sleep comes when I hear him snore. Then I know that the danger is over. For this time.)

The young victim compensates for her powerlessness against her rapist through a symbolic enactment of his torture and killing, which metaphorically redresses the sexual and physical brutalisation to which she is systematically subjected to by her father. The deictic adverb 'der' locates 'the darkness' of her bedroom as the site of her abuse, which is located distally to the first-person narrator/protagonist at the deictic centre of the narrative. In the next extract, which takes place when she is older, she is still unable to vent her hatred directly, attacking instead the image of her abuser that she sees behind her, reflected in the window of her bedroom:

Da brast det for meg. Smykkeskrinet mitt, det vakre smykkeskrinet jeg fikk av tante Johanne på niårsdagen min, sto foran meg i vinduskarmen. Sakte løftet jeg det over hodet, kylte det rett i speilbildet av ansiktet hans. Så slo jeg. Av alle krefter lot jeg knyttnevene hamre mot den forhatte ansiktet.<sup>43</sup>

(Then I couldn't contain myself. My jewellery box, the beautiful jewellery box I received from Aunt Johanne on my ninth birthday, stood in front of me in the window sill. Slowly, I lifted it above my head, smashed it right into the reflection of his face. Then I hit. With all my strength I let my fists hammer against that hateful face.)

The mind style of the victim is effectively conveyed through specific transitivity patterns in the form of material action intention processes, which emphasise

<sup>42</sup> Trine Kolberg, *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, Oslo: Pax Forlag, 1990, p.36.

<sup>43</sup> Trine Kolberg, *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, p.151.



the explosive nature of the protagonist's actions and implicitly convey her emotions of hatred and rage towards her abuser, which have hitherto remained repressed. In the clause 'Så slo jeg,' the object is omitted from the material intention process, which places emphasis on the action. Not until the subsequent clause are we told the nature of the object and 'goal' of the protagonist's 'hammering.' At this point, the bodily parts of the protagonist take over as the agents of the material intention process 'hamre,' as she invests her 'fists' with the force of her anger. Tragically, her actions are self-directed, as the abuser's 'hateful face' is merely a reflected image, the shattering of which entails injury to the very parts of the protagonist's body that should have destroyed the concrete counterpart of that detested image. Although her processes are those of intention, and are thereby not 'failed' in the sense that they are fully performed by the agent, the omission of the intended object of her actions reflects the relative powerlessness of the victim to her father/abuser.

We have seen from the above examples from the texts that the victim's actions are typically impeded by her abuser, her powerlessness linguistically manifest in failed or negative material processes, which also serve to convey the damaging physical consequences of sexual violence on the undeveloped body of a child. In *Vannliljen* we saw that the victim's failed material processes were compensated by those of her other selves, in a safe, alternative reality to her 'real' life. We also noted the victim's symbolic enactment of material processes in *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, which, like the metaphysical processes of Hanne's helpers, can also be seen as a compensatory strategy. In contrast to the failed or symbolic actions of these protagonists, we found a higher degree of autonomy in the victim's behaviour in *Fange hele livet*, which was expressed in material action processes of intention.

### 5.2.2 Body Part Agency

Material processes can take body parts as agents and this is a feature of agency which I consider to have a special function in texts about sexual violence, most notably in relation to the representation of the perpetrator and the mind style of the victim. Leech and Short observe that the use of a bodily part as an agent affects the way in which we attribute the motivation for an act, arguing that this



device may be implemented in order to minimise a character's culpability for a particular action.<sup>44</sup> In a text about sexual violence, this interpretation of the function of body part agency is relevant to material processes where the bodily parts are those of the victim. If, however, the anatomical element belongs to the abuser, I would suggest that body part agency can be identified as a syntactic feature of a sexual abuse victim's mind style. The occurrence of the perpetrator's isolated body parts as agents of material processes can serve to highlight aspects of the abuser that emphasise, for example, physical characteristics such as size and strength, features that reinforce in particular his 'maleness,' especially when focalized through the eyes of his child victim.

I propose now to offer a discussion on the function of body part agency in a variety of genres, before considering its usage in specific examples from the narratives we have been looking at. In my analysis of extracts from the texts, I intend to examine the body part agency of both victim and perpetrator in relation to its rôle in the presentation of mind style and consider ways in which this feature of agency may affect our reading of narrative representations of abuse.

### *Examples of Body Part Agency in the Text*

In his analysis of an extract from Dashiell Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon*, which depicts a scene of violence between two male characters, Roger Fowler indicates a preponderance of noun phrases referring to body-parts, many of which function as agents. He suggests that this specific use of noun phrases may hold a clue to the 'link between violent texts and pornographic texts and between their associated mind-styles.'<sup>45</sup> Robert Jensen and Gail Dines have shown in their critique of the pornography industry that in pornographic novels and short stories agency is limited to the men, who are invariably the sexual subjects.<sup>46</sup> The women rarely function as agents; they are routinely acted upon, their bodies the receptacles for the sexual acts committed by the men. In the representation of body parts in pornographic texts, the authors have discovered a notable pattern in the differences between female and male body-part agency. Women are consistently reduced to their breasts, buttocks and

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<sup>44</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech & Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p.232.

<sup>46</sup> Gail Dines, Robert Jensen & Anne Russo, *Pornography*, London: Routledge, 1998, p.93.

genitalia, but these are typically objectified, whereas agency is invariably ascribed to the male sexual organ. Jensen and Dines have also shown that violent imagery is often used in the depiction of the male member, which is described as a weapon, as in noun phrases such as ‘rifle-like penis’ and ‘dagger-like rod’. Agency is also invested in other male body parts that occur with material processes denoting violence and pain, as in the following example:

‘his fingers cruelly cut into her soft flesh’<sup>47</sup>

We can thus argue that the dominant theme of male sexual power and the violence through which it is routinely expressed in pornographic texts is manifest in patterns of transitivity, particularly in material processes with body parts functioning as agents. Similar transitivity patterns can of course be found in non-pornographic texts, but one major difference between the linguistic patterns of a pornographic and a non-pornographic text concerns the relationship between point of view and the narrative representation of sex. Jensen and Dines found, for example, that whether violent sexual acts were described from the perspective of the male or the female, violence was consistently synonymous with pleasure and sexual gratification. It must be acknowledged, of course, that although certain scenes in pornographic texts are supposedly represented from the point of view of the woman, the bulk of pornographic literature is penned by men.<sup>48</sup> In non-pornographic literature, where sexualised violence is examined in the context of female oppression, events are written from a female perspective, and these works do thereby not objectify the victim.<sup>49</sup> We shall observe later, when we come to examine extracts from the texts we have been looking at, the important function of body part agency in representations of sexual violence: most notably in the comparison between a male-authored narrative and texts written by women writers.

Body part agency is unquestionably an effective device in the representation of a character’s mind style as it can serve to tell the reader something about that character’s psychological state. If mind style conveys ‘an individual

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<sup>47</sup> Gail Dines, Robert Jensen & Anne Russo, *Pornography*, London: Routledge, 1998, p.93.

<sup>48</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography*, London: The Women’s Press, 1981, p.34.

<sup>49</sup> Sabine Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998, p.305.

interpretation' of experience<sup>50</sup> body part agency can arguably be viewed as a significant element of that experience, as it may indicate a 'reality' that deviates in some way from an unmarked, unexceptional representation of events. It has been argued that the agency of body parts can, in certain texts, serve to express a lack of control. Paul Simpson notes this function of body part agency in the genre of horror fiction. In his analysis of an extract from a piece of 19th century Gothic fiction, Paul Simpson argues that clauses such as 'My hair bristled' and 'My heart laboured' serve to express the narrator's 'abject fear' through a lack of control over his own body, although his mental faculties may appear intact.<sup>51</sup>

In representations of sexual desire in adult fiction we can of course find countless examples of body parts as Actors in material processes. In her analysis of female desire in a passage from a work of popular romance fiction published by Mills and Boon, Mary Talbot examines process types and narrative point of view, focussing her analysis on the focalization of the female protagonist. It is striking to observe the number of material processes in which an anatomical element of the male character appears as an agent, as in the following example :

A strongly defined dark eyebrow tilted upwards and the sensually wide mouth curled, revealing white, even teeth.<sup>52</sup>

In both of the above clauses, a body-part is the agent of a material process. We can analyse the first clause, following Halliday's framework:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Material Process</i>	<i>Circumstance</i>
A strongly defined dark eyebrow	tilted	upwards

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<sup>50</sup> Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, p.466.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.102.

<sup>52</sup> Mary M.Talbot, 'An Explosion Deep Inside Her,' p.130.

The second main clause is more complex, having a dependent clause and thus two processes:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Material Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
the sensually wide mouth	curled, revealing	white, even teeth

In her analysis, Talbot comments on 'the exaggerated male activity and female passivity' that is characteristic of romance fiction.<sup>53</sup> The former is conspicuous in the occurrence of the male participant's body parts as agents in material processes, heightened by the predominance of descriptive words concerning these body parts.

Sara Mills considers these diametric rôles of agency and passivity within the ideological framework of romantic love in her analysis of transitivity in the lyrics of pop songs:

Women are constructed in different ways to men within pop songs and within culture in general, and the notion of who is in control is central to this ideological gender difference, since generally women are represented as passive 'recipients' of love and men are represented as 'agents.'<sup>54</sup>

Ideological representations such as those discussed above are thus crucially located in linguistic structures and the system of transitivity can serve as an effective framework for investigating the relationship between ideology and language, particularly with respect to the different power relations in a text.<sup>55</sup> Body part agency is arguably an important feature of this type of analysis, as its occurrence may signal activity that is unintentional, or uncontrolled. In the context of power relationships, body part agency can thereby signify a *reactive* process.

This aspect of agency is explored by Deirdre Burton in her feminist analysis of Sylvia Plath's novel, *The Bell Jar*. In this text, body part agency is an element of

<sup>53</sup> Mary M. Talbot, 'An Explosion Deep Inside Her', p.118.

<sup>54</sup> Sara Mills, 'Close Encounters of a Feminist Kind, in *Feminist Linguistics in Literary Criticism*, Katie Wales (ed.), Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1994, p.145.

<sup>55</sup> Deirdre Burton, 'Through Glass Darkly: Through Dark Glasses,' in *Language and Literature*, Ronald Carter (ed.), London: Routledge, 1982, p.200.

what Burton observes to be the 'disabling syntactic structures' that pervade Plath's writings. Burton argues that the prevalent fictional representation of women as passive beings who are 'acted upon' is generally accepted in our culture and that this language of 'disablement' is located within specific linguistic structures.<sup>56</sup> The scene that is analysed by Burton takes place in a hospital setting and concerns the protagonist's experience of electric shock treatment. Constructions such as 'my skin had gone stiff, like parchment' are shown to convey processes that are beyond the protagonist's control. These points made by Burton are obviously highly relevant to narratives of sexual abuse, where the victim is an object 'acted upon' by her abuser.

### 5.2.3 Body part agency: the victim

In a text concerning sexual violence, material processes involving the victim's body parts as agents can serve to convey her feelings of disempowerment, of a lack of control over her own body in a situation where she is completely in the power of another human being. The extreme helplessness of the infant victim of sexual abuse is conveyed in the following extract from *Vannliljen*:

Åsmund gikk på laven. La barnet på et bord. Så de redde øynene, den lille munnen som skalv. Men det rørte ham ikke.<sup>57</sup>

(Åsmund walked to the barn. Laid the child on a table. Saw the frightened eyes, the little mouth that quivered. But it didn't touch him.)

There is a sense of fusion here, between external and internal narration. The perpetrator's process of perception indicates that the child is described from his point of view, his gaze fragmenting his infant victim into specific body parts before coming to rest on the receptacle of his abuse. However, the adjectives used to describe these isolated body parts express an intense poignancy, conveying an empathy with the helpless child that cannot be attributed to a man who is about to perpetrate oral rape on his two year-old daughter. The child's involuntary body part agency not only expresses her fear,

<sup>56</sup> Deirdre Burton, 'Through Glass Darkly: Through Dark Glasses,' p.201.

<sup>57</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.20.

vulnerability and complete dependence on her abuser, but serves also to underscore the depraved brutality of her rapist.

The powerlessness of the abuse victim is again conveyed through body part agency in the following extract from Mette Sundt's novel *Som igår, som imorgen*. At this point in the narrative, the protagonist's father is punishing her for accidentally knocking over a glass. He has the child pinned against the bathroom wall, one hand gripping her throat, the other holding a cockroach which he is forcing her to eat:

Bak meg kjenner jeg flisene på veggen, kjølige gjennom sommerkjolen. Fingrene mine leter langs siden, langs flisen, famler etter noe å holde fast i. Jeg finner bare glatt kulde.<sup>58</sup>

(Behind me I feel the tiles on the wall, cool through my summer dress. My fingers search along, along the tiles, searching for something to hold onto. I find only smooth coldness.)

In this extract, the entrapment of the child victim is effectively conveyed through specific features of transitivity that indicate her mind style. The agency of her fingers compensates for the enforced immobility of the rest of her body, her physical powerlessness also reinforced through the depiction of her cognitive processes. The novel's highly subjective, intense narrative style fully engages the reader as it gives us direct access to the character's consciousness.

The victim's body part agency in the following extract from *Vannliljen* conveys a mind style that can be attributed to the narrator, who is also the character as an adult, revisiting the trauma and devastation of her childhood:

To runde øyne stirrer med død redsel ut i mørket uten å se. En skitten, skjelvende barnehånd strekkes fram i mørket. Famler etter noe trygt som ikke finnes. Som aldri har vært.<sup>59</sup>

(Two round eyes stare with lifeless fear out into the dark, without seeing. A dirty, trembling child's hand reaches forward into the darkness. Searches for something safe that can't be found. That never was.)

<sup>58</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.111.

<sup>59</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.10.



As in the previous extract from *Som igår, som imorgen*, the victim's body part is the agent of the material process 'famler etter.' The depiction of little Hanne locked in the barn appears to be a merging of external and internal narration. Although the child's physical characteristics are described, the portrayal is infused with the narrator's subjectivity ('uten å se'). Her ideological viewpoint is conveyed in the final two sentences, which express her insight into Hanne's deplorable situation. Like the protagonist in *Som igår, som imorgen*, Hanne is physically trapped but makes an attempt to reach out for support. In each case, the failed material process of her bodily part conveys the isolation and entrapment of the sexually victimised child. However, it is important to recognise that the child protagonists in these texts are not typically depicted as passive beings. Their resilience in the face of the most horrific sexual abuse is linguistically manifest in attempts at material processes that fail only because of the vast power imbalance between the child victim and the adult perpetrator. The sexual abuse victim is physically and emotionally entrapped by her abuser, particularly if he is also a parent and the abuse takes place in what should be the sanctity of the home. As Liz Kelly observes, 'exploitation limits choices,'<sup>60</sup> and in the case of the child victim of sexual abuse, her entrapment is further secured by physical abuse,<sup>61</sup> her attempts at escape inevitably hindered by the size and strength of her abuser. As we have seen, the child's physical entrapment actuates survival strategies that can be seen as creative processes. The individual who is unable to physically resist her abuser must create an alternative strategy of resistance, which finds its expression in the mind. Liz Kelly argues that there is no such thing as 'passive resistance' to rape.<sup>62</sup> Resistance might thus be recognised as an active process even when the victim is physically overpowered and this perspective is manifest in the various survival strategies of the victims. In *Vannliljen*, for example, we have seen that Hanne's defence mechanism

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<sup>60</sup> Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence*, p.184.

<sup>61</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.190. Klosterman argues that as well as entrapping the victim more efficiently, physical abuse consolidates the 'damage from the sexual abuse.'

<sup>62</sup> Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence*, p.184.

against her sexual exploitation takes the form of a ‘splitting’ process, described by her psychiatrist Thomas Kessel:

Hanne diktet opp hjelpere, som kunne ta unna for de verste mishandlingene hun ble utsatt for. Hun spaltet seg opp i deler eller fragmenter og brukte disse delene som redningsplanker.<sup>63</sup>

(Hanne invented helpers, who could alleviate the worst of the maltreatment she was subjected to. She split herself up into parts or fragments, and used these parts as a last hope.)

We could say, then, that Hanne’s process of self-fragmentation is an active process, which is reflected in the material processes of those ‘selves’ whom she has chosen as her protectors, and which is exemplified in the following extract:

Hanne kjente to sterke armer som løftet henne opp, og så satt hun der på Vismannens fang.<sup>64</sup>

(Hanne felt two strong arms lift her up, and then she was sitting there in the Wise Man’s lap.)

The cognitive process ‘kjente’ tells us that the narration is focalized through the protagonist. The unique mind style of a child who dissociates herself from the horrific abuse to which she is subjected is conveyed here through the body part agency of Hanne’s ‘helper’: ‘The Wise Man.’ The agency of the adult ‘protector’ whom Hanne has created compensates for the failed equivalent processes of her actual family whose only actions towards the child are physically and sexually abusive (excepting Hanne’s mother, whose contact with her daughter is minimal.)

We have looked at several examples where the victim’s body parts are agents of material processes and we have seen that this type of agency can serve to highlight her disempowerment and physical entrapment. However, we also need to look at the other side of the coin. If the body part agency belongs to the individual in the dominant position of power, we would inevitably reach a different conclusion about the significance of the agency in the process

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<sup>63</sup> Thomas Kessel, ‘Etterord,’ *Vannliljen*, p.171.

<sup>64</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.69.

concerned. Body part agency in this case would not, for example, signify powerlessness, or a lack of physical autonomy. An analysis of body part agency is also crucially linked to focalization. In other words, body part agency will have varying meanings, dependent upon the point of view from which the process is perceived or experienced. We could argue that body part agency is an effective means of dehumanising either the victim or the perpetrator, depending on the identity of the character through which the narrative is related.

#### **5.2.4 Body part agency: the perpetrator**

The fragmentation of the perpetrator into isolated bodily parts that function as agents of material processes is an important element in the sexual abuse victim's conceptualisation of her abuser and the sexual violence to which she is subjected. Body part agency, particularly when focalized through the child victim, may serve to reinforce the non-humanness and deviance of her abuser. A body part that is perceived to act in isolation, and of its own accord, reflects the mind style of an individual who is unable to understand the motivation behind her traumatic experiences. Through the use of body part agency, the perpetrator is thereby dehumanised through his own process of dehumanising his victim. In all of the texts, the physical descriptions of the rapist are restricted to the specific body parts which particularly repulse his victim, or which are implemented in his abuse of her. I shall now proceed to look at specific examples from the texts, where body part agency can be identified as a linguistic feature of the abuse victim's mind style.

The perpetrator's hands are typically featured as agents of material processes in several of the texts. Commenting on the symbolism of the hand in Wassmo's

novel *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Rakel Christina Granaas observes its signification in Christian religion:

Guds hånd beskytter, men hvis noen krysser Guds vilje, kan hånden være ødeleggende. Derfor er det viktig å skille mellom den ene hånden som velsigner, og den andre som forbanner.<sup>65</sup>

(The hand of God protects but if anyone crosses God's will, the hand can be destructive. Therefore, it is important to differentiate between the hand that blesses and the other that condemns.)

In *Vannliljen*, we can find several examples of these diametric symbolic meanings of the hand. In the following extract, the locking of the kitchen door presages the grandmother's sexual abuse of her young granddaughter:

En benete og tynn damehånd vred om nøkkelen. Nå var de alene. Redd og farmor. Som hver formiddag.<sup>66</sup>

(A bony and thin lady's hand turned the key. Now they were alone. Frightened and grandmother. Like every morning.)

For Hanne/Redd, as the sexually victimised child who suffers abuse on a daily basis, the action of the disembodied, witch-like hand is a prerequisite element of her abuse. Its significance is further reflected in the temporal deictic adverb 'nå', which places both the victim and her abuser at the deictic centre of the narrative, and identifies the child's entrapment as a direct consequence of the hand's action.

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<sup>65</sup> Rakel Christina Granaas, 'Den kroppen som ikke var hennes,' in *Født av spindel og jern*, Randi Christina Krosveen (ed.), Oslo: Cappelen, 2000, p.33.

<sup>66</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.45

The depiction of the hand as a signifier of oppression reinforces Hanne's entrapment by her abusive 'gaolers':

En jernhånd grep henne rundt nakken og styrte henne oppover gården. Farmoren gikk ved siden av med hunden som hadde løpetid, på armen.<sup>67</sup>

(An iron hand grabbed her round the back of her neck and steered her uphill, over the farm. Her grandmother walked beside them, the dog who was on heat under her arm.)

The converse symbolism of protection is expressed through Hanne's longing for a grandfather figure which signifies the comfort and safety to which she is denied:

Alt hun ønsket seg var sterke bestefarmer som holdt rundt hele henne, trygt og godt, nært og varmt, en hånd som strøk henne over ansiktet og håret, - en hånd som ikke slo.<sup>68</sup>

(All she wished for were strong grandfather arms that held all of her, safe and well, close and warm, a hand that stroked her face and hair - a hand that didn't hit.)

Such a hand is ultimately defined by Hanne by what it is not. From the point of view of the systematically and seriously abused child, the hand that nurtures and protects is, most importantly, a hand that is not the agent of violence.

The hand is multiplied in the following depiction of sexual abuse in *Vannliljen*, where body part agency interacts with spatial deixis to convey the mind style of the terrified child protagonist:

Lukten var over alt, hendene kom fra alle kanter og latteren og alle de stygge manneordene kom ovenifra.<sup>69</sup>

(The smell was everywhere, the hands came from all sides and the laughter and all those ugly male words came from above.)

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<sup>67</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, pp.90-91.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid*, p.115.

<sup>69</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.94.

In the above extract body part agency underscores the deviance of the perpetrators' processes and when combined with proximal spatial deixis, it serves to reinforce both the physical and psychological aspects of the victim's abuse.

In Mette Sundt's *Som igår, som imorgen*, as in Wassmo's *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, the hand as a specific implement of abuse is a recurring motif. In the following extract its abusive power is conveyed through its commission of material processes:

Hånden hans fingrer på brystet mitt, se, sier han. Du har vorter. Pekefingeren og tommelen snurrer rundt på to små brune flekker.<sup>70</sup>

(His hand fiddles with my breast, see, he says. You have nipples. His index finger and thumb twist round two small brown spots.)

The representation of the hand and fingers as tools of abuse is again conveyed through body part agency in the following extract from the same novel:

En hånd som tar, fingrer som borer inn.<sup>71</sup>

(A hand that grabs, fingers that dig.)

A subtle but significant grammatical distinction between the body part agency of these two extracts from Sundt's novel tells us something specific about the protagonist's mind style. In the former the abuser's hand and fingers occur in the indefinite form and in the latter they have definite reference. Indefinite reference to the perpetrator's body parts appears to be specifically a feature of the protagonist's experiences of dissociation from her abuse and not just of the abuse itself, as it only occurs when the protagonist is distancing herself from her violation. i.e. the indefinite form appears to be specific to the protagonist's

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<sup>70</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.26.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid*, p.34.



processes of dissociation. Indefinite reference is again manifest in the following extract which occurs later in the same novel:

Et sted langt vekk kan jeg kjenne hender som tar. Stryker over bryst, drar i vorter. Jeg kjenner en hånd som beveger seg nedover en mage, inn under en buksestrikk, nedover.<sup>72</sup>

(Somewhere far away I can feel hands that are grabbing. Stroking breast, pulling at nipples. I feel a hand that moves down a stomach, in under a trouser elastic, downwards.)

There are several prominent linguistic features in this extract that express the mind style of the victim while she is being sexually abused by her father. Firstly, the juxtaposition of spatial deixis with the protagonist's mental processes and the material processes of the perpetrator's hands implicitly conveys her psychological distancing from the physical experience of her abuse. Secondly, all of the participants in the clauses (i.e. the nominal elements) - both animate and inanimate - occur in the indefinite form. This pattern when applied to the body parts of the abuser suggests that the child victim is experiencing them as fragmented, autonomous elements and, as discussed above, conveys a mind style that is specific to her processes of dissociation. Thirdly, the victim's own body parts (including with these the article of her clothing) also occur in the indefinite form, which further indicates her dissociation from her own body, exemplified in the following extract:

Den er ikke min, den er bare noe som henger fast i meg.<sup>73</sup>

(It is not mine, it is just something that clings to me.)

The victim thus experiences her body as an extraneous but dependent entity, a burden from which she is unable to free herself. The protagonist's language of denial and displacement is a salient feature of Sundt's novel, which I shall examine in more detail at the end of the chapter.

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<sup>72</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.32.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*

In the extracts above, we noted that the victim's distal relationship to her abuser expressed a compensatory strategy for her physical powerlessness; one of self protection, manifest in the distancing of her mind from the site of her abuse. In the following extract from *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, we find a converse relationship between agency and ownership to those discussed above:

Han la seg ved siden av meg, klappet meg. Klemte meg på brystet der det gjør vondt fordi det vokser. Jeg lå stiv, lot som det ikke skjedde. Hendene hans over kroppen min, fingrene hans på hemmelige steder.<sup>74</sup>

(He lay down beside me, patted me. Squeezed my breasts where it's sore because they're growing. I lay stiff, pretended it wasn't happening. His hands over my body, his fingers in secret places.)

Unlike the previous description from *Som igår, som imorgen*, the identity of the perpetrator's body parts is indicated ('Hendene hans [...] fingrene hans [...]'). The victim's ownership of her body is also emphasised, through the repetition of the first person objective pronoun and the possessive pronoun. In the above extract, the victim comments on the effect of the abuse on her body ('[...]det gjør vondt fordi det vokser') and specifically refers to her denial of the experience ('[...]lot som det ikke skjedde'). In both texts the victim dissociates herself from her abuse but the expression of her denial in each case is distinct. In Sundt's novel, it is implicitly conveyed through spatial deixis and indefinite reference to the body parts of both abuser and victim, but in Kolberg's narrative it is explicitly stated. In the latter text, there is thus a sense that the child experiences a more proximal relationship to her body than Sundt's protagonist. The two extracts describe a situation that is shared, but expressed in subtly diverse ways.

Referring to Peter Brook's work on 'the body as an object in literature,' Rakel

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<sup>74</sup> Trine Kolberg, *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, p.36.

Christina Granaas makes the following observation about our complex, polysemous relationship to our bodies:

Vi sier [...] at vi er i kroppen, at vi har en kropp, at vi er ett med kroppen, eller at kroppen er fremmed for oss. Kroppen er bade oss selv og noe annet, og som sådan er den både et objekt og en scene for hele spekteret av følelser fra kjærlighet til avsky.<sup>75</sup>

We say [...] that we are in our body, that we have a body, that we are one with our body, or that our body is alien to us. The body is both ourselves and something else, and as such, is both an object and a setting for the whole spectrum of emotions from love to loathing.)

Through an act of sexual violence, the rapist or abuser appropriates his victim's body: it becomes his. During her rape, the victim no longer experiences her body as her own but as 'something else' from which she is fundamentally detached. This disconnection between mind and body is described by Alice Sebold in her moving memoir:

All that remained unpossessed was my brain. It looked and watched and catalogued the details of it all.<sup>76</sup>

The rapist claims ownership of his victim's body, excluding the one part of her that remains autonomous.

In the next section I propose to further explore the feature of body part agency by looking specifically at representations of rape in the selected texts and to consider their similarities and differences, specifically with relation to transitivity choices and their function as a linguistic expression of the rape victim's mind style.

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<sup>75</sup> Rakel Christina Granaas, 'Den kroppen som ikke var hennes,' in *Født av spindel og jern*, Randi Christina Krosveen (ed.), Oslo: Cappelen, 2000, p. 27.

<sup>76</sup> Alice Sebold, *Lucky*, London: Picador, 2002, p.19.

### 5.2.5 Rape and Agency

We have seen that the transitivity model is particularly valuable in the analysis of a text depicting sexual violence as it helps us to interpret the processes of both victim and abuser and the extent to which these processes may contribute to the mind style of the victim of sexual abuse. Deirdre Burton argues that an analysis of processes and participants is only interesting to examine when we look at other options or 'ways of doing' available to us in the language. We can, for example, compare transitivity choices with those represented in other texts, or by looking at the 'absences' in the text; in other words, the alternative options that could have been selected by the writer.<sup>77</sup> A particular transitivity choice thereby becomes significant through a comparative process. A comparison of texts may be a useful exercise in identifying differing representations of sexual violence, so that we may appreciate, for example, why certain linguistic choices are more effective in conveying a representation of sexual abuse that is not gratuitous and that objectifies the victim. With Burton's argument in mind, I shall examine transitivity choices employed in the representation of rape, by means of a comparative analysis of rape representations in four of the texts: *Fange hele livet*; *Jenta bak den gule stolen*; *Vannliljen* and *Som igår, som imorgen*, with a view to examining linguistic differences and similarities and how these might affect our reading of a rape.

#### *Fange hele livet*

The following extract from Sverre Inge Apenes's text depicts the rape of the eleven-year old child 'Kate' by her uncle. I have included only those parts

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<sup>77</sup> Deirdre Burton, 'Through Glass Darkly: Through Dark Glasses,' in *Language and Literature*, p.200.

that I consider to be relevant to this discussion:

Nokså brutalt reiste han meg opp i sofaen og kysset meg hardt og krevende, og hardt og brutalt klemte han om armene mine og la seg over meg, vispet dyna til side, flerret av meg trusen [...]

Med et brøl brettet han meg ut og støtte pikken sin inn i meg, og begynte å bevege seg ut og inn.

Det gjorde så forferdelig vondt.

Det var som å bli levende sprengt.

Det sved og brant, og jeg kjente at noe varmt rant nedover lårene - og det forsto jeg etterpå var jomfruhinnen min.

Og samtidig var det hele uvirkelig.

Dette kunne ikke være meg.

Dette kunne da ikke være ham. [...]

Og mens han pustet og peste, lå jeg der og grein. [...]

Jeg skjønte at han snart ville være ferdig ved at han begynte å puste tyngre og tyngre, bevegelsene hans ble hurtigere og hurtigere, og grepet hans om meg ble hardere og rære og enda mer brutalt enn da han begynte. [...]

Så trakk han seg ut av meg uten et ord, og satte seg til å drikke igjen.<sup>78</sup>

(Somewhat brutally, he lifted me upright on the sofa and kissed me hard and needily, and hard and brutally, he pressed my arms and lay down over me, whipped the duvet aside, tore off my pants [...]

With a yell, he spread me out and thrust his prick into me, and began to move in and out.

It was so terribly sore.

It was like being blown up alive.

It stung and burned, and I felt something warm running down my legs - and I realised afterwards that it was blood from my hymen.

And at the same time everything was unreal.

This couldn't be me.

This couldn't surely be him. [...]

And while he huffed and puffed, I lay there and cried. [...]

I realised that he would soon be finished when he began to breathe more and more heavily, his movements became faster and faster and his grip on me became harder and rougher and even more brutal than when he began. [...]

Then he pulled himself out of me without a word, and settled down to drink again.)

If we look at the perpetrator's processes, we find that he is the agent in a total of fourteen in this extract, almost all of which are material processes of intention

<sup>78</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*, p.43.

involving the victim as object. Processes such as ‘klemte,’ ‘brettet ut’ and ‘støtte’ suggest actions that are violent and abusive and serve to highlight the victim’s objectification by her rapist. The victim could therefore be described as very much ‘acted upon.’ She is assigned only four processes, three of which are those of perception or cognition and the fourth (the verb ‘grein’) is a material process of supervision and thus not intentional. It might therefore be described as a reactive response to the abuser’s actions. In contrast to the other texts we will be looking at, the rapist’s sexual organ is referred to. Although it is mentioned as an element in the rape, it is not depicted as the agent of the process:

Med et brøl brettet han meg ut og støtte pikken sin inn i meg  
[...]

There is an unsettling tension here between the specific naming of the rapist’s sexual organ (through slang usage) and the victim’s reporting of her rape, which undermines the gravity of her experience. The emphasis is very much on the male member as a weapon, rather than the bodily experience of the victim. The language here is reminiscent of the violent imagery of the male sexual organ in pornography in phrases such as ‘rifle-like penis’ that was discussed in section 5. 2. 5. Following the transitivity system of grammar, the participants in the above clause are ‘han’ (the implicit agent) and ‘pikken’ (the object). The victim is represented as the circumstantial element of the clause:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Circumstances</i>
(han)	støtte	pikken sin	inn i meg

In most of the other processes, the victim is directly acted upon:

<i>Circumstances</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Circumstances</i>
Med et brøl	brettet	han	meg	ut

In this extract the preponderance of material processes assigned to the perpetrator might arguably be linked to the mode of narration. As we know, the narrator is Kate as an adult, recounting her experiences of rape and sexual abuse to ‘Randi,’ who is the other ‘I’ narrator of the text. She is describing events that occurred in her past and therefore her processes, and those of her rapist, are being recalled from the time of their occurrence. Because she is



disclosing her experiences to another character in the narrative rather than directly to the reader, Kate's narration does not convey an unusual or marked mind style, as we discussed earlier, and this is evident when we analyse the processes in the text. Although we are given some insight into the victim's consciousness (eg. 'Jeg skjønnte at han snart ville være ferdig'), her reactions to the rape itself are not expressed through processes of perception or cognition but in the form of statements expressing her rape in general terms ('Det gjorde så forferdelig vondt'; 'Og samtidig var det hele uvirkelig'), or as a simile, comparing the pain of her rape to an abstract concept ('Det var som om å bli levende sprengt').

We have seen that the rape representation in this text is characterised by the perpetrator's material processes of intention and I would like to now consider how this type of patterning may affect our reading of the rape. We might observe that little is left to the imagination with regard to the rapist's actions. At the same time, the low incidence of the victim's mental processes in relation to the numerous material intention processes of the perpetrator creates a style of narration that appears to objectify the victim - even although the narration is in the first person by the victim herself - precisely because we are given few insights into her consciousness. This apparent objectification can thus be specifically located in the proliferation of material intention processes in relation to the victim's mental processes. The high incidence of material processes contributes to a style of narration which serves to distance the reader from the character involved and which is reinforced through the occurrence of the spatial distal deictic adverb 'der.' This 'reporting' mode of narration can arguably be attributed to its documentary status but the excessive detail involved warrants further investigation. It might be argued that the stark details of Kate's rape in the extract from *Fange hele livet* serve to sensationalise the rape and to objectify the victim. Ellen Klosterman claims that a text about sexual abuse should only provide enough information to convince the reader that it is actual abuse, and not consensual sex, that is being described. She observes that '[...]too much detail risks sensationalism.'<sup>79</sup> While not suggesting that the text is pornographic, I would nevertheless argue that the language used to depict Kate's rape is suggestive of formulations in pornography. The basic power dynamic of male control and female submission that is promoted through

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<sup>79</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.188.

pornography (and which was discussed in Chapter 2) is suggested by a transitivity pattern which represents a high ratio of material processes with the rapist in the rôle of agent and the victim as 'goal' or object.

### *A Male Perspective?*

I would venture to suggest that the stark details of Kate's rape indicates that the narration - although ostensibly that of a female character - does not in fact convey a female perspective of sexual abuse and rape. The text is male authored, and while not wanting to imply that male authors and non-objectifying rape narratives are mutually exclusive, I would nevertheless argue that in the case of *Fange hele livet* the linguistic structures convey a traditional concept of women's sexual victimisation that sits unhappily with the female narrator, who is the victim of multiple rape and abuse. Sabine Smith makes the following observation regarding traditional viewpoints of sexual violence against women:

Feminist scholars and artists have begun to criticize traditional ways of conceptualizing women's sexual victimisation and continue to re-envision alternative rape narratives that represent women's experiences from women's points of view.<sup>80</sup>

A rape narrative that expresses the point of view of the victim is thus crucial to our understanding of her experience. As we noted in Chapter 4, if we see the world through the eyes of the character in the text we become actors in that world rather than mere observers. We might argue that in *Fange hele livet* the style of narration, whereby rape is represented by the material processes of the perpetrator, places the reader in the position of observer rather than actor.

I propose now to look at the rape representations of the other texts, all of which are written by women authors. As with my analysis of Kate's rape by her uncle, I shall explore the extracts in terms of their transitivity choices, commencing with Trine Kolberg's text.

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<sup>80</sup> Sabine Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture*, p.299.

*Jenta bak den gule stolen*

In the following extract, the protagonist is describing one of countless rapes perpetrated by her violent father:

Han lugget meg der nede hvor det har begynt å være litt hår, tok handa mi, jeg måtte kjenne. Den sto rett opp, stakk meg. Smerte, smerte, som ødela kroppen min. Han skjegget meg, pustet i øret mitt, det rant noe vått på meg. Han kastet meg på gulvet, sparket meg, slo med knyttnevene, kastet meg tilbake I sengen, gikk. Da kom mørket.<sup>81</sup>

(He pulled at me down there, where a little hair has begun to grow, took my hand, I had to feel. It stood right up, pierced me. Pain, pain, that destroyed my body. He rubbed his stubble against me, breathed in my ear, something wet was running on me. He threw me onto the floor, kicked me, beat me with his fists, threw me back onto the bed, went. Then came the darkness.)

In this short extract, there are thirteen material processes involving the perpetrator. However, he is only directly represented as the agent in nine of these: 'lugget; tok; skjegget; pustet, kastet; sparket; slo; kastet; gikk.' Each of these is a material intention process with the victim as object or 'goal,' excepting the last process: 'gikk,' which does not involve a second participant. Let us now look at the remaining four material processes, in which the perpetrator's agency is implicitly conveyed but not overtly expressed. I shall analyse each of these processes in turn, before examining their function in the representation of the protagonist's rape:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Circumstance</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
Den	sto	rett opp,	stakk	meg

Here we have two material processes of intention, but the agent is represented by the neutral form of the personal pronoun 'den.' We are not explicitly told in the text what 'den' refers to and so must deduce its meaning from our reading of the other processes. In contrast to the depiction of rape in *Fange hele livet*, where the rapist's sexual organ was represented by name, its identity as agent of the above material processes, 'sto opp' and 'stakk,' is implicitly conveyed, which

<sup>81</sup> Trine Kolberg, *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, p.36.

affects the representation of the victim. In the second process she is the goal or object but we can argue that she is not objectified because the agent of her rape is implied rather than expressly stated.

The third process may be analysed as follows:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
Smerte, smerte, (som)	ødela	kroppen min

In the above clause, the agent of the material intention process is represented by the acute physical pain experienced by the victim as she is raped, which is reinforced through the device of repetition. We saw in the extract from *Fange hele livet* that the victim's physical and psychological reaction to her rape was expressed in the form of pronouncements. As we discussed earlier, the victim in Apenes's text is narrating her experiences to the other narrator and the style of the narration is therefore more objective than Kolberg's narration, which has no intermediary addressee. In the above extract, the acute physical trauma of the victim is foregrounded through its agency, compared to the previous text, in which the agency of the perpetrator and his body parts are emphasised. We might argue that in *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, the victim's experience of rape is underscored through the emphasis on her physical responses.

As with the other examples, the final material process can again only implicitly be attributed to the rapist:

	<i>Process</i>	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Circumstance</i>
Det	rant	noe vått	over meg

In this clause, the agent of the process is represented by the indefinite pronoun 'noe' thereby signalling an unknown, or unspecified, entity. We can deduce its identity from the context of the passage as a whole, and more specifically, from its descriptive modifier 'vått.' As we have already seen, a very similar structure occurs in *Fange hele livet*: 'jeg kjente at noe varmt rant nedover lårene.'

If we look now at the victim's processes, we find there to be only one:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>
Jeg	måtte kjenne

The victim's material process is one of necessity, caused by the perpetrator's preceding material process of intention ('han tok handa mi'). The clause is without an object and we must therefore deduce its identity from the context. In this text, the victim's experience of her rape is not expressly indicated through her own processes but is implicitly conveyed by a nominal element that represents her reaction ('smerte'). The agent of the rape is also covertly expressed, through a juxtaposition of the victim's material process ('måtte kjenne') and the material processes with unspecified agency ('den sto rett upp, stakk meg'.) The rape is thus depicted through selected omissions which the reader is left to interpret.

### *Vannliljen*

In the following extract from Hanne Dahl's text, we can note that transitivity choices can function not only as a highly effective means of depicting the

intensely violent impact of rape on a young child's body but also as a linguistic feature of the mind style of dissociation:

Hanne trodde hun døde. Hun skjønte ikke hvem som skrek før hun kjente farens hånd over munnen. Farligheten delte henne i to. Rev henne i stykker. Hun prøvde å komme seg vekk, opp på Vismannens fang - bytte plass med Barnet, men Barnet klarte det heller ikke alene. Da kom Kattungen, en liten pike som ikke skriker, men bare piper svakt. Hun var myk og tøyelig i kroppen som en kattunge. Hun tålte de smertene som var så mye, mye større enn det Hanne og Barnet ikke klarte sammen. Kattungen skulle få de sterkeste fysiske smertene, de smertene Hanne og de andre ikke klarte.<sup>82</sup>

(Hanne thought she died. She didn't know who screamed before she felt her father's hand over her mouth. The dangerousness split her in two. Tore her into pieces. She tried to get away, up onto the Wise Man's lap - to change places with the Child, but the Child couldn't manage it alone either. Then came the Kitten, a little girl who doesn't scream, but only whimpers faintly. Her body was soft and flexible, like a kitten. She could endure the pains that were so much, much greater than what Hanne and the Child couldn't manage together. The Kitten would get the most powerful physical pains, the pains that Hanne and the others couldn't bear.)

We saw earlier in the chapter, when we looked at the material processes of the victims, that Hanne's failed material processes were compensated by those of her 'helpers.' Throughout the narrative, they help Hanne to withstand her abuse by allowing her to 'withdraw,' while they take over the rôle of victim, or in the case of 'Vismannen' and 'Hun Som Visger Ut,' function as her protectors while her other ego states endure the sexual violence that is an integral part of her daily life. In the above extract, the rôle of Hanne's helpers is particularly significant, because of the appalling nature of Hanne's abuse in this instance. Here, we note that even they are unable to withstand the pain of Hanne's rape, which is manifest in the repeated failed material process 'klarte ikke.' It is not until the new helper 'Kattungen' appears that Hanne is finally able to retreat to 'safety.' Kattungen is herself primarily defined by what she doesn't do, i.e. she does not react to her rape by 'screaming'. In the physical description of Kattungen we can perceive a displacement of Hanne's suffering, manifest in the

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<sup>82</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, pp. 38-39.



process 'pipte.' At this point in the narrative, Hanne has not yet reached her sixth birthday, when her father rapes her for the first time. Although, as we have seen, he has orally raped his daughter on a regular basis from the time she is two, this is the first time that he commits vaginal rape. The unimaginable pain of rape experienced by the young child is depicted here in language that can be analysed with relation to transitivity choices. As with the other texts we have looked at, we can examine the clauses in terms of processes and their participants.

In the entire passage, there are only two material processes: 'delte' and 'rev,' which share the same agent. As before, we can set out the clauses following the transitivity framework:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Circumstances</i>
Farligheten	delte	henne	i to
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Circumstances</i>
(Farligheten)	Rev	henne	i stykker

Although 'farligheten' is omitted from the second clause, it can nevertheless be understood as the source of the process 'rev.' The ellipsis is in itself an important feature, which we shall return to in a moment. Looking at the two clauses outlined above, we find there to be two material action intention processes. Taken in isolation, one would expect these processes to have inanimate objects. We talk of 'splitting' a cake, or 'tearing' a piece of paper. In these clauses that depict Hanne's rape, however, we can see that the goal, or object, is an animate participant, represented by the object of the pronoun, 'henne,' which refers back to 'Hanne.' The choice of these processes with an animate object highlights the child's fragility and vulnerability in relation to her adult rapist. The ellipsis at the beginning of the second clause, 'Rev henne i stykker,' serves to reinforce the physical impact of the rape on Hanne's undeveloped child's body. The emphasis, then, is on the experience of the victim (highlighted also by her cognitive processes) rather than the actions of her rapist, to whom there is only a single reference, in the form of his body part ('farens hånd.') The circumstantial elements in the above clauses, represented as

physical fragmentations of Hanne's body, serve to underscore the fragmentation of her consciousness, in the form of her 'splitting' into the numerous ego states that function as her support network.

In the representation of Hanne's rape, we have seen that the impact of rape on such a young body is not overtly expressed through the perpetrator's agency, but implicitly conveyed by the child's special term for her rapist's sexual organ: 'farligheten' and we will examine in more detail the implications of its usage later in this chapter in the section on 'lexical choices.' This indirect reference to the rapist's sexual organ reflects the mind style of the young child. We thereby perceive the rape through the victim's own consciousness. In contrast to the representation of Kate's rape in *Fange hele livet*, Hanne's pain is not verbally formulated as a statement but is subtly and powerfully conveyed through the use of specific linguistic patternings.

### *Som igår, som imorgen*

In the final example for discussion, taken from Mette Sundt's novel, we can note a number of shared linguistic features with the two previous rape

representations we have been looking at. Here, as in *Vannliljen*, the protagonist is describing the first time that she is raped by her father:

Noe tar tak i knærne og bender dem oppover, lenger og lenger opp. Kroppen min ligger nesten dobbelt, hva er det han gjør? Brått er ansiktet hans rett over mitt. Like plutselig skjærer det tvers gjennom meg. Det er en ond, fryktelig smerte som river gjennom hele meg, tvers gjennom, opp i halsen, ut i munnen. Jeg vil skrike den ut, men jeg kan ikke. Det ligger noe over munnen min. Han har lagt hånden over munnen min. Jeg får ikke puste, prøver å skyve ham vekk med armene, klarer det ikke. Merker at armene sitter fast. Han holder den ene med sin hånd. Den andre har han lagt albuen på.

Smerte. Endeløs, pløyende smerte.

Det finnes ingenting uten dette.<sup>83</sup>

(Something takes hold of my knees and bends them upwards, further and further up. My body is lying almost doubled, what is it he's doing? Suddenly his face is right over mine. Just as suddenly, something cuts straight through me. It is a bad, terrible pain that rips through the whole of me, straight through, up into my throat, out into my mouth. I want to scream it out, but I can't. There is something resting over my mouth. He has placed his hand over my mouth. I am unable to breathe, try to push him away with my arms, can't manage it. Notice that my arms are stuck. He is holding one of them with his hand. On the other, he has placed his elbow.

Pain. Endless, ploughing pain.

There is nothing but this.)

There are a total of eight material intention processes in this extract. Agency can be attributed to the rapist in each case, although in half of these he is not explicitly named. The victim's agency is continually impeded, manifest in linguistic structures that highlight her physical entrapment, notably in the form of failed material processes, as we noted also in the last extract from *Vannliljen*. There is thus a marked tension between the rapist's agency and his victim's subjection. In four of the material processes, we can observe an overt reference

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<sup>83</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.66.

to the agent as 'han.' For the purposes of clarity and simplicity, I have changed the order of the fourth clause:

	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Circumstances</i>
1) (hva er det)	han	gjør?		
2)	Han	har lagt	hånden	over munnen min
3)	Han	holder	den ene	med sin hånd
4)	Han		har lagt	albuen på den andre

In each case we can see that the perpetrator is clearly the agent. The first process occurs in an interrogative clause, where the agent is named, but his actions are internally questioned by his victim. The child has, at this point in the narrative, been sexually abused by her father on other occasions, but this is the first time he commits full rape against his only child. In the remaining three processes outlined above there is an emphasis on anatomical elements. In each case, the perpetrator uses a body part to overpower a bodily element belonging to his victim. We can note that these bodily parts fulfil the functions of both goal and circumstances, to create a sense that the fragmented body parts of both victim and perpetrator are somehow enmeshed and inextricable. This effect of 'layering' is reinforced through the repeated process 'har lagt', the victim's ensured entrapment conveyed by the process 'holder.' In all of these processes, the occurrence of the perpetrator as agent highlights his function as the instigator of these processes of oppression and violence. As we observed earlier, the father's silencing of his daughter is also represented in *Vannliljen*, ('hun kjente farens hånd over munnen').

If we examine now the remaining material processes, we can find shared syntactic features with the three previous texts we looked at. Again, as with the

four previous examples outlined above, I shall set out the clauses individually, to clarify the transitivity relations within each clause:

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Circumstances</i>
1) Noe	tar tak i	knærne	
2) og (noe)	bender	dem	oppover
3) det	skjærer		tvers gjennom meg
4) smerte (som)	river		gjennom hele meg, tvers gjennom, opp i halsen, ut i munnen

In the first three clauses the agent is unspecified and in the last example agency is assigned to the victim's physical sensation of pain. If we look at this last clause, we can compare it to the following clause from *Jenta bak den gule stolen*: 'Smerte, smerte, som ødela kroppen min.' In the latter example, however, 'smerte' occurs with the transitive verb 'ødela,' with 'kroppen' as the direct object. In the clause from *Som igår, som imorgen*, 'smerte' is used intransitively, the victim's body parts occurring as circumstantial elements. The omission of an object creates the effect of an infinite, interminable 'pain,' which is further heightened through the sequence of prepositional phrases that depict the passage of her 'pain' and which relates also to the protagonist's subsequent reiteration of her suffering: 'Smerte. Endeløs. pløyende smerte.' In clauses 1) and 2), the agent is unspecified, the indefinite pronoun functioning as the agent of a material process with the victim's 'knees' represented as objects. As in *Vannliljen*, the 'splitting', 'tearing' effect of rape is emphasised. In clause 4) above, the pain of the rape splits the victim into two, which counterpoints the rapist's manipulation of her body prior to raping her ('kroppen min ligger nesten dobbelt').

In the four material processes analysed above, as in the examples we looked at from the previous two texts, the agent of the rape is not, as in *Fange hele livet*, represented by the rapist or his sexual organ but by the victim's experience of her rape. We might argue, then, that the representation of rape in these last three texts is internalised; it is slanted through the mind style of the victim. In

*Fange hele livet*, as we have seen, the reporting mode of Kate's narration necessitates unmarked linguistic structures in which the perpetrator typically functions as the agent of material processes with the victim as object, but not in a fragmented form, i.e. not represented by her body parts. The fragmentation of the victims in the other three texts is an indication of the mind style of the child victim, in which the terrible and terrifying pain of her rape is foregrounded.

In this section on material processes we have looked at several aspects of agency, including the body part agency of both the perpetrator and the victim. We noted that the victim's physical entrapment by her abuser was sometimes manifest in disabling syntactic structures which could be identified as failed material processes. At other times, as in the case of *Vannliljen's* protagonist 'Hanne,' her powerlessness was redressed by the material processes of her other 'selves.' The body part agency of the perpetrator served to reinforce the victim's loss of autonomy over her own body, and was observed to function as a feature of the sexual abuse victim's mind style in several of the texts. We also examined the feature of agency specifically in the representation of rape in four of the narratives and looked at their similarities and differences with relation to transitivity choices. We observed that in three of the texts, the act of rape was implicitly conveyed through specific transitivity patterns, in which the perpetrator was not expressly identified as the agent. We compared these representations to the depiction of rape in *Fange hele livet*, where the rapist was explicitly indicated as the agent of material intention processes. We noted that it was arguable whether the representational differences between the rape scene in Apenes's text and the others in our text corpus could be attributed to its documentary status or whether they expressed a male-constructed ideology which promotes traditional concepts of female sexual victimisation.

### 5.2.6 Mental Processes

Processes involving the senses are termed 'mental processes' in Halliday's system. Before considering its function in the texts under discussion, I shall offer a brief outline of this process type. Mental processes are what Halliday defines as 'processes of sensing', i.e. 'clauses of feeling, thinking and



perceiving.<sup>84</sup> In an analysis of point of view in narratives, verbs such as ‘know,’ ‘feel,’ and ‘see’ signal inner processes and are therefore strong indicators of subjectivity.<sup>85</sup> Roger Fowler makes the following significant point concerning their revelatory function in fictional texts:

They designate unobservables of consciousness which in real life are only accessible if the subject reports them.<sup>86</sup>

Mental processes thereby allow the reader an insight into a character’s state of mind, which would otherwise be hidden. As Simpson states, mental processes are ‘internalised’ and are therefore qualitatively distinct from material processes, which may be described as ‘externalised.’<sup>87</sup> Mieke Bal makes this distinction clear when she observes:

Every verb of perception[...] indicates an activity of focalization. Every verb of action indicates an event.<sup>88</sup>

In chapter 4, we saw that focalization can be observed to correspond with the category of psychological point of view: it tells us something about the consciousness of the individual through which the narration is mediated. We noted that the use of mental process verbs such as ‘seeing’ and ‘knowing’ gives the reader access to a character’s inner world of cognition, evaluation and perception, allowing an insight into the consciousness of what is referred to as ‘the reflector’ of the fiction, i.e. the character from whose viewpoint events are related.<sup>89</sup> Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short emphasise the important rôle of

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<sup>84</sup> M A K Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, pp.106-107.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid*, p.172.

<sup>86</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistics and the Novel*, London: Methuen, 1977, p.92.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, p.40.

<sup>88</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1985, p.104.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Simpson & Martin Montgomery, ‘Language, Literature & Film’ in Peter Verdonk & Jean Jacques Weber (eds), *Twentieth Century Fiction : From Text to Context*, London: Routledge, 1995, p.149.

these processes in establishing a relationship between the reader and the character:

The very exposure [...] to a character's point of view – his thoughts, emotions, experience - tends to establish an identification with that character, and an alignment with his value picture.<sup>90</sup>

I would argue that in narratives concerning sexual victimisation, the reader's identification with the character is imperative if we are to gain an insight into the inner world of the sexual abuse victim and thereby try to gain some understanding of her trauma. In these narratives, mental processes therefore fulfil a crucial function. Ellen Klosterman emphasises the important rôle of mental processes in what she terms as 'pro-survivor writing', i.e. narratives that 'do not objectify the victim':

The cognitions, emotions and perceptions of the victim are vital in pro-survivor writing. When they are omitted, it is easier to blame the victim for individual pathology because the context for her decisions, perceptions, and behaviours - crucial for the audience's understanding - are omitted.<sup>91</sup>

While I would agree that references to the victim's inner life are crucial to an understanding of the abuse from the victim's perspective, it does not necessarily follow that an omission of her perceptive and cognitive processes would entail a viewpoint of blame on the reader's part. This would also be dependent on other linguistic strategies such as the types of material processes assigned to both victim and perpetrator, for example, which we have already examined in the section on rape and agency. Mental processes assigned to the abused character in the narrative are, however, relevant to our perception of the abuse from the point of view of the victim, which we shall now examine with respect to the texts.

Of the four narratives we have been looking at, mental processes occur most frequently in *Vannliljen* and *Som igår, som imorgen*. This is unsurprising, for as we have seen, the psychological point of view in these two narrative works is

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<sup>90</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction*, London: Longman, 1981, p.275.

<sup>91</sup> Ellen F. Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.140.

particularly prominent and both texts demonstrate mind styles that are highly individual. The emphasis on the character's inner life is thereby expressed through the use of verbs that denote her perceptive and cognitive processes. These processes typically feature in scenes depicting the sexual abuse of the protagonist. In the following extract from *Som igår, som imorgen*, the protagonist's mental process of perception occurs with her abuser's material process of supervision:

Han puster, jeg kan høre det.<sup>92</sup>

(He's breathing. I can hear it.)

The following extract from *Vannliljen* exemplifies the child victim's knowledge of what she is about to be subjected to and her memory of what that entails:

Inne på låven ventet farmoren og en mann. Hanne hadde sett han før. Hun visste hvordan han luktet. Hun visste hvordan han smakte. Hun visste hvor vanskelig det var å puste.<sup>93</sup>

(Inside the barn, grandmother and a man were waiting. Hanne had seen him before. She knew how he smelt. She knew how he tasted. She knew how difficult it was for her to breathe.)

Here, the repetition of the cognitive process 'visste' serves to affirm the extent of Hanne's abuse prior to this point in the narrative. Almost all of Hanne's senses are involved in her memory of that abuse, and with each repetition of her inner declaration of knowledge, her violation is symbolically re-enacted.

Mental processes of cognition serve to express the victim's complex and

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<sup>92</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.34.

<sup>93</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.31.

contradictory feelings when she is sexually abused by her father, in the following extract from *Som igår, som imorgen*:

En hånd som tar, fingrer som borer inn i meg. Et sted dypt inne i hodet mitt vet jeg at det er han. At det er min kropp. Men jeg vil ikke vite det.<sup>94</sup>

(A hand that grabs, fingers that bore into me. A place deep inside my head, I know that it is him. That it is my body. But I do not want to know it.)

The respective representations of abuser and victim are powerfully differentiated by their corresponding processes. Agency is invested in the male abuser's body parts through material processes that express brutality and violence and the child victim's reaction to her father's abuse of her body is conveyed through a mental process of cognition. The contrast between the abuser's sexually violent actions and his daughter's vulnerability is further highlighted in the circumstantial element that occurs with each of these processes. The material process 'borer seg' is attended by only a single element: the preposition 'inn'; there is no final point to the 'drilling' of the abuser's fingers. In contrast, the circumstantial element that accompanies the mental process *vet* is specific and distal to the abusive body parts of the rapist. The mindlessness inherent in the violent actions of the abuser's body parts, and which is embodied in the material process usually associated with machinery, is offset by his victim's process of dissociation; the escape from her physical body into her mind, which is expressed through the juxtaposition of cognitive processes with spatial deixis.

### *The Mind/Body Split*

As we have already observed, a frequent coping strategy for a rape victim is that of dissociation: a distancing from the abuse as it is occurring, which she may describe as 'leaving my body' or 'going up into my head.'<sup>95</sup> A preponderance of mental processes would therefore be expected in a text describing an act of sexual violence from the victim's perspective. Her physical powerlessness combined with feelings of repulsion and alienation from her own body is

<sup>94</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.36.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid*, p.30.

compensated by a need to escape into her mind. In scenes of sexual violence, mental processes can thereby serve to convey the victim's urgency to escape from the physical invasion of her body. Although we have already looked at several examples from both texts of the protagonists' means of splitting their perceptive and cognitive processes from their physical experiences of abuse, I would like to return now to the following extract from Sundt's novel, as it powerfully depicts the split between the physical and the perceptual realm which occurs during the victim's process of dissociation:

Jeg ligger i hodet mitt og tenker, la kroppen ligge stille. Den er ikke min, den er bare noe som henger fast i meg.<sup>96</sup>

(I lie down inside my head and think, allow my body to lie still. It is not mine, it is just something that clings to me.)

In the first sentence, the mental process 'tenker' is framed by two material processes involving the verb 'ligge,' which is in itself a passive rather than an active process. The two separate occurrences of the same verb convey the dual nature of the protagonist's perception of her self while she is being abused. This dichotomy is further highlighted in the subsequent sentence, where her body becomes more agentive. Her denial of the abuse to which she is subjected is manifest in her perception of her body as no longer her own, through its appropriation by her abuser. As a consequence, she experiences a split between body and mind.

In her exploration of the concept of the 'split self' in works of fiction and in autobiographical writings by stroke victims, Catherine Hammet argues that the split self is 'a pervasive theme in narrative texts' and that metaphorical descriptions of the split self commonly occur in depictions of crisis and trauma. In an extreme situation, the continuity of an individual's self-identity collapses, and may result in the experience of a mind-body split.<sup>97</sup> In the case of sexual abuse, this division originates in denial, creating a separation between the victim and her abuse. As we have observed from the above extracts, the victim's mind-

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<sup>96</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.32.

<sup>97</sup> Catherine Emmott, "Split selves" in fiction and in medical "life stories" in E.Semino & J.Culpeper (eds.), *Cognitive Stylistics: language and cognition in text analysis*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins 2002, pp. 153 -168.

body split may be linguistically manifest in a tension between material and mental processes.

The contrast between the victim's mental processes and the abuser's material processes in the following extract from *Vannliljen* highlights the immense imbalance of power between the child victim and her violently abusive father:

Hanne sprellet. Ville ikke være på låven. Torde ikke å være der. Men hun måtte. Faren tok tak i armene hennes, løftet henne opp - og holdt henne utfor laet.<sup>98</sup>

(Hanne flailed. Didn't want to be in the barn. Didn't dare to be there. But she had to. Her father took hold of her arms, lifted her up - and held her out over the wall.)

The abuser and his victim are each represented through a polarisation between mind and body which occurs in diametric opposition: the abuser is represented by strongly agentive material processes, while the victim's agency is restricted or altogether removed. The sequence of parallel clauses, 'Ville ikke være på låven. Torde ikke å være der,' where the mental processes are repeated in their negative form, highlights the victim's feelings of dread that she associates with the 'barn.' The final occurrence of Hanne's mental process 'måtte' functions as an endpoint to her attempts at escape from her imminent abuse.

The tension between the relentless, violent brutality of the rapist and the physical powerlessness of his child victim is exemplified in the following extract from *Som igår, som* :

Jeg har kjent det før, mange, mange ganger. Fingrer som graver, som åpner og pirker, klorer og tar. Lår som blir bendt ut.<sup>99</sup>

(I have felt it before, many, many times. Fingers that dig, that open and poke, scratch and pull. Thighs that are prised apart.)

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<sup>98</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.28.

<sup>99</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.65.



The conspicuous contrast between the protagonist's mental process of cognition and the body part agency of the perpetrator is reinforced by the adverb phrase expressing frequency ('mange, mange ganger') and the parallel structuring of the perpetrator's material processes of intention ('som graver, som åpner og pirker').

We have looked at examples where the victim's mental processes occur in contrast to the material processes of her abuser, which emphasises the vast imbalance of power that exists between them. In the following extract the sequence of negative mental processes assigned to Hanne conveys her feelings of denial and highlights also the material process of her 'protector':

Hun ville ikke klare å leve med smerten, med vissheten, med alle følelsene hun ikke visste hva var. Sakte, sakte kom det derfor fram en dame fra en eller annen krok.<sup>100</sup>

(She wouldn't be able to live with the pain, with the certainty, with all the feelings she didn't have knowledge about. Therefore, slowly, slowly, a lady came forward from one corner or another.)

The sequence of negative mental processes not only reinforces Hanne's innocence - her horrific experiences of sexual and physical abuse are, after all, beyond the limits of a child's normal world - but also presage the arrival of Hanne's new 'helper' who 'stands beside the door to reality' and 'wipes out' the child's painful memories.

In the following extract the difference in size and strength between the child and her adult abuser is conveyed through the perpetrator's body part agency and the mental process with Hanne's legs in the rôle of 'Sensor':

Bena hennes ville ikke inn dit, men farens føtter var store, og hånden som holdt var sterk.<sup>101</sup>

(Her legs didn't want to go in there, but her father's feet were large and the hand that held was strong.)

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<sup>100</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.30.

<sup>101</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.26.

The representation of both victim and abuser by their isolated body parts emphasises the abusive nature of their relationship. The autonomy of the child's legs through the mental process 'ville' in its negative form reinforces her physical resistance: we can almost picture her little legs holding themselves bravely against her father's overpowering strength, which is conveyed through his material process and its descriptive modifier and which is also highlighted by the use of alliteration.

Up until this point, the mental processes that we have studied from the selected texts have been those of the protagonist. We looked at examples where these inner processes allowed us an insight into the consciousness of the child victim of sexual abuse and we considered also these perceptive and cognitive processes in relation to the material processes of her abuser. We shall now examine the rôle of the mother in these texts, specifically with relation to her mental processes and their function in the narrative.

### **5.2.7 The Mother's Gaze**

In the texts we have been studying so far, except in the case of *Fange hele livet*, the victim's abuser and rapist is her biological father. Marit Hoem

Kvam observes the complex and conflicting feelings of the mother who believes that her husband is abusing their child:

Hvis paret fremdeles er gift, risikerer mor å miste sin ektefelle når hun taler barnets sak. Barnet vil tilsvarende miste sin far, og familien kanskje sin hovedforsørger. Mor vil føle et enormt traume. Hun ser kanskje mange kvaliteter ved ektefellen som *far*, men samtidig er det en enorme skuffelse: den mannen hun har stolt på og levd sammen med, har bedradd henne, og det med deres felle barn!<sup>102</sup>

(If the couple are still married, the mother risks losing her husband when she pleads the child's case. Equally, the child will lose its father and perhaps the family its main breadwinner. Mother will feel an enormous trauma. She perhaps sees many qualities in her husband as a *father* but at the same time it is an enormous disappointment: the man she has trusted and lived with has deceived her, and with their joint child!)

Mothers in such a position will also experience feelings of guilt at not having realised that the abuse was happening, and Kvam blames their misinterpretation of the abused child's problems on a general lack of knowledge about sexual abuse. Although some mothers demonstrate overwhelming feelings of anger towards their husbands or partners and risk poverty rather than staying in the marital home, others choose to ignore the 'reality':

Enkelte mødre orker ikke å ta inn over seg den virkelighet de lever i. De 'ser' ikke overgrepene, eller de trøster seg med at det ikke kan være så skadelig for barnet. På den måten kan barnet føle seg dobbelt sviktet, både av mor og far.<sup>103</sup>

(Some mothers can't bring themselves to take in the reality they're living with. They don't 'see' the abuse, or they console themselves with the thought that it can't be so harmful for the child. In this way, the child can feel doubly betrayed, by both mother and father.)

The mother who doesn't 'see' that her child is being abused by her own husband may be regarded as collusive in the abuse, through her inability or disinclination to protect her child. The notion of 'collusion' is associated with

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<sup>102</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001, p.49.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid*, p.50.

the relations of power that operate within the home where the abuse occurs. A woman may feel unable to leave her husband for a variety of reasons, principally regarding economic status, as cited above. She may also herself be abused by her husband and feel trapped through fear.<sup>104</sup> There are also mothers who are themselves abusers, but the real extent of this type of abuse is unknown.<sup>105</sup>

Of the four texts we have been studying so far, the mother figure is most prominent in *Vannliljen* and *Som igår, som imorgen*, though particularly so in the latter novel. The mother is only briefly mentioned by her daughter in *Fange hele livet* and in *Jenta bak den gule stolen* she is also a fairly peripheral figure. In the latter text, towards the end of the narrative, the victim expresses her sense of the 'double betrayal' caused by her mother's 'choice':

Hun har valgt ham framfor meg, har ham fremdeles hos seg.  
Hun fortjener ham, hun har gjort sitt valg.<sup>106</sup>

(She has chosen him before me, still has him at home. She  
deserves him, she has made her choice.)

In *Vannliljen*, the protagonist's mother is herself abused by her husband, both emotionally and physically, and from Hanne's birth she is prevented by her husband and his family from properly caring for the baby. Her knowledge that

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<sup>104</sup> Jean LaFontaine, *Child Sexual Abuse*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, p. 193.

<sup>105</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, p.49. (As we discussed in Chapter 3, research suggests that the 'majority' of 'known' sex abusers are male.)

<sup>106</sup> Trine Kolberg, *Jenta bak den gule stolen*, p.158.

her husband is regularly abusing their baby daughter is conveyed in the following extract, which takes place on Hanne's second birthday:

Maria sto på kjøkkenet og pyntet bløtkake. Med to lys.  
Engstelig så hun opp da Åsmund tok Hanne på armen og gikk ut. Hun så det slørete blikket. Hun så det fårete smilet. Hun visste. Hun hadde vasket Hannes ansikt mange ganger.<sup>107</sup>

(Maria stood in the kitchen, decorating a layer cake. With two candles. She looked up anxiously when Åsmund took Hanne by the arm and walked out. She saw the veiled glance. She saw the sheepish smile. She knew. She had washed Hanne's face many times.)

The repeated use of the perception process 'så' emphasises the mother's understanding of the situation which is confirmed by the cognition process 'visste'. The proof of her knowledge is conveyed in the final clause, which alludes to the terrible reality of Hanne's sexual abuse by her father.

In the following extract from the same text Hanne is returning home from a so-called 'fishing trip' with her father, during which he has thrown her overboard and raped her:

Moren så på Hanne's klær. Hanne så også på klærne. Hun Som Visker Ut hadde fjernet hukommelsen, så Hanne undret seg også hvorfor de var så våte. Hun så på moren. Hun måtte passe på mor. Være stor. Være sterk. Være flink. Være snill. Ikke til bry.<sup>108</sup>

(The mother looked at Hanne's clothes. Hanne also looked at the clothes. She Who Wipes Out had removed the memory, so Hanne wondered too why she was so wet. She looked at her mother. She had to look after her mother. Be big. Be strong. Be clever. Be good. Not be trouble.)

Hanne's mother sees the state of her daughter's clothes, but doesn't dare to look beyond the surface. Hanne, however, observes her mother with a solicitude which is never reciprocated. The child's process of perception is

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<sup>107</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.20.

<sup>108</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.104.

evaluative; she not only 'sees' her mother, but understands also her mother's emotional fragility.

The protagonist's mother in *Som igår, som imorgen* is the 'collusive' type, as the following extract clearly shows:

En smal stripe lys faller inn på gulvet. Det står en stor, svart skygge i midten av den. Jeg glemmer å tenke, snur meg, ser at det er hennes skygge.

Hun står i døra og ser på meg.

Ser på ham.

Han sitter helt stille.

Det sitter en isklump mellom beina mine. Den fryser seg fast i huden min.

Stille.

Hun lukker døra og går.<sup>109</sup>

(A thin strip of light falls in, onto the floor. A large, black shadow stands in the middle of it. I forget to think, turn around, see that it is her shadow. She stands in the door and looks at me.

Looks at him.

He is sitting completely still.

A lump of ice is sitting between my legs. It freezes solid on my skin.

Still.

She closes the door and goes.)

We can compare the above description of the mother's 'large, black shadow' to the earlier nightmare vision of the 'white lady,' that we discussed in Chapter 4. The mother appears here in the protagonist's living nightmare to witness her husband's rape of their daughter, only to leave the scene as a figure in a dream. There are many compelling linguistic features in this extract. Repeated words occur in parallel syntactic structures as a linking device, heightened by alliteration ('står,' 'ser,' 'sitter,' 'stille'). The repetition of these key words serves

<sup>109</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.37.



to 'freeze' the moment when the victim and her rapist are caught in the mother's gaze. The final sentence, occurring as it does in isolation, emphasises the finality of the mother's action and signals her ultimate betrayal of her daughter. We shall take a closer look in the next section at Sundt's use of metaphorical language as a prominent feature of the protagonist's mind style.

### **5.3 Metaphors of Denial and Displacement in *Som igår, som imorgen***

Elena Semino and Kate Swindlehurst make the following observation with regard to the use of metaphor as a projection of mind style:

We suggest that, at an individual level, the systematic use of a particular metaphor (or metaphors) reflects an idiosyncratic cognitive habit, a personal way of making sense of the world in other words, a particular mind style.<sup>110</sup>

Their cognitive approach to metaphor focusses on the 'experiential' aspect of meaning. Metaphorical patterns can thus be identified as a manifestation of the narrator or character's conceptualisation of experience. Semino and Swindlehurst show in their analysis of metaphor in Ken Kesey's novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* that consistent 'metaphorical patterns' relating to images of machinery reveal a highly unusual mind style.<sup>111</sup> I would argue that in Mette Sundt's novel, the protagonist's mind style is manifest in metaphors of denial and displacement, which reflect the sexual abuse victim's mechanisms for her survival, most notably in the recurring image of the 'doll.'

In the following extract, metaphor is employed in the expression of speech as a

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<sup>110</sup> Elena Semino and Kate Swindlehurst, 'Metaphor and Mind Style in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, p.147.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, p.164.

medium of abuse; the rapist's speech and actions are interrelated, both constituting his sexual violation of the child:

Vorter, sier han, og skjærer sår i stillheten.  
 Du har vorter.  
 Ordene henger seg fast i mørket, de går ikke vekk.  
 Hånden hans fingerer på brystet mitt, se, sier han.  
 Du har vorter.<sup>112</sup>

(Nipples, he says, and cuts a wound into the stillness.  
 You have nipples.  
 His words cling to the darkness, they don't go away.  
 His hands pick at my breast, see, he says.  
 You have nipples.)

The metaphorical description of the 'words' in the third line are repeated several lines later, in a parallel clause which emphasises the abusive, oppressive and relentless nature of the child's experiences:

Over sengen, midt i luften, henger ordene hans. Du har vorter.<sup>113</sup>

(Over the bed, in the middle of the air, his words are hanging. You have nipples.)

These metaphorical patterns reflect the protagonist's disownership of her body that we discussed earlier, in the section on body part agency:

Den er ikke min, den er bare noe som henger fast i meg.<sup>114</sup>

(It is not mine, it is just something that clings to me.)

The victim's 'body' and the abuser's 'words' are thus linked through the shared metaphor, in which both are expressed as disembodied elements. In the previous extract, the abuser's 'words' are always present, for they do not merely constitute an act of speech. Their utterance by the abuser is performative; the action and the speech are inseparable. Alice Sebold describes the victim's

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<sup>112</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.26.

<sup>113</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.26.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*

metaphorical fragmentation of her own body as each part is verbally and physically appropriated by her rapist:

“Nice white titties,” he said. And the words made me give them up, lobbing off each part of my body as he claimed ownership - the mouth, the tongue, my breasts.<sup>115</sup>

Sebold’s metaphorical expression of self-dismemberment is, like Sundt’s language, a conscious strategy of dispossessing the body that is being claimed by the rapist.

From her interviews with rape victims, Cathy Roberts found that ‘detachment’ from the rape as it was happening was a typical reaction of self-protection:

For some women, the detachment was worked at, a determined effort to prevent the rapists taking control completely. For others, it was an automatic response, an attempt by the mind to protect itself from overwhelming pain.<sup>116</sup>

We saw in *Vannliljen* that the victim’s survival strategy was manifest in a ‘splitting’ of her self into numerous other ‘selves,’ some of whom functioned as protectors who shielded her from abuse, others taking over Hanne’s rôle of ‘victim.’ It might be argued that Hanne’s dissociation is expressed through a process of ‘multiplicity.’ In *Som igår, som imorgen*, the protagonist’s dissociation is manifest as a process of ‘transference’ from one state of ‘being’ to another. In the scenes that depict the father’s rape and sexual abuse of his daughter, the protagonist’s frequent references to her ‘doll’ reflect her defence mechanism for surviving her abuse. In the following extract, the language of

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<sup>115</sup> Alice Sebold, *Lucky*, London: Picador, 2002, p.16.

<sup>116</sup> Cathy Roberts, *Women and Rape*, p. 119.

the rapist precipitates the victim's process of displacement, which finds its expression in the 'doll' metaphor:

Det hugger ord i stillheten rundt meg. Er det han som snakker? Lett på rompa, sier ordene.

Jeg er en dukke i en seng. Jeg skal ta av meg buksen. Jeg løfter opp noen hofter, og lar hendene hans dra pyjamabuksen ned.<sup>117</sup>

(Words cut into the stillness around me. Is it him who's talking?  
Lift your bottom, the words say.

I am a doll in a bed. I will take off my trousers. I lift up some hips, and let his hands pull my pyjama bottoms down.)

The language in this extract has several striking features. First of all, we can note the opening metaphor which vividly captures the abusive commands of the father. The words are concretised, their action of 'cutting' reflecting the imminent, invasive actions of the rapist. Judith Butler cogently describes the power of language to injure:

If language can sustain the body, it can also threaten its existence. Thus, the question of the specific ways that language threatens violence seems bound up with the primary dependency that any speaking being has by virtue of the interpellative or constitutive address of the Other.<sup>118</sup>

Butler's argument that we are to a large extent socially defined (and thus 'sustained') by the act of interpellation, is relevant to the present analysis. The father's words in Sundt's novel not only prefigure his abusive actions, but have also the power to set in motion the child's dissociation from her self/identity. In the extract we have been looking at, the child's own sense of objectification is inherent in the doll metaphor and also in the use of the indefinite pronoun ('Jeg løfter opp noen hofter'), which serves to underscore the protagonist's disownership of her body, through a process of inanimation.

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<sup>117</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.33.

<sup>118</sup> Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, London: Routledge, 1997, p.5.

The following extract exemplifies the protagonist's detachment from her abused body, her denial manifest in her displacement from human to inanimate:

Dukken min er stille og stiv. Den smiler alltid, selv når jeg legger den ned og øynene lukker seg. [...] Dukken kan ikke bøye seg. Jeg er også en dukke, jeg kan være helt stiv og ikke røre noenting.<sup>119</sup>

(My doll is still and stiff. It always smiles, even when I lay it down and its eyes close. [...] The doll can't bend itself. I am also a doll, I can be completely stiff and not move anything.)

The doll's characteristics are adopted by the protagonist as a mechanism for her survival when she is raped and sexually abused by her father, the repetition of key words serving to reinforce her process of displacement. The protagonist's observation of the doll's inability to 'bend' takes on a particular significance in the reading of her rape:

En stram smerte skjærer gjennom lårene mine. Han bender dem ut, til siden. Jeg ligger og gaper med beina.

Jeg er en dukke, dukker kan ikke ta beina ut til siden. Jeg kjenner en hånd mellom beina, den stryker og drar, det er noe som stikker, det gjør vondt...<sup>120</sup>

(A sharp pain cuts through my legs. He bends them outwards, to the side. I am lying down, gaping with my legs.

I am a doll, dolls cannot take their legs out to the side. I feel a hand between my legs, it brushes and pulls, there is something that stabs, it is painful...)

The protagonist's dissociation is manifest in her metaphorical expression of identity as a 'doll' and in her assertion of the doll's immobility. Her objectification by the rapist is further highlighted through the material processes of intention in which the perpetrator, or his body part, is functioning as agent, acting upon the doll/victim. The failure of the protagonist's

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<sup>119</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.33.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

displacement is expressed through her cognition process and the body part agency of her rapist. The depiction of the victim's physical pain is heightened by the occurrence of aposiopesis, which suggests also the onset of dissociation processes.

In Semino and Swindlehurst's essay on the link between metaphor and mind style in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which I quoted from at the beginning of this discussion, they posit the following argument concerning the mind style of the character/narrator, 'Bromden':

[...] the linguistic realization of the conceptual machinery metaphors in Bromden's narrative correlates with the variations in his mental state.<sup>121</sup>

They observe that Bromden's 'mechanistic world view'<sup>122</sup> is variably underscored, according to his internal processes. This observation is highly relevant to an analysis of mind style, particularly with respect to characters whose experience of the world is in some way distorted or rendered unfamiliar. In Mette Sundt's novel, the 'doll' metaphor occurs exclusively during the protagonist's experiences of sexual abuse and rape, and thus may arguably be identified as the linguistic manifestation of her emotional and psychological distancing from the abuse, *while it is occurring*. It can thus be taken as a direct manifestation of the victim's consciousness at the time of her violation. The same metaphor occurs in a true account of child abuse related by the survivor as an adult:

Jeg var unormalt stille, som en død dukke.<sup>123</sup>

(I was unnaturally still, like a dead doll.)

The above extract illustrates not only the victim's dissociation process but also her dehumanisation, exemplified through the metaphor of the 'dead doll.'

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<sup>121</sup> Elena Semino and Kate Swindlehurst, 'Metaphor and Mind Style in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*,' p.162.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid*, p.147.

<sup>123</sup> Marit Hoem Kvam, *Seksuelle overgrep mot barn*, p.95.



Sabine Smith clarifies a number of distinctions between what she terms as 'innovative' texts and those that exhibit more conventional representations of sexual violence. With reference to the former, she writes:

They tend to disrupt familiar patterns, employing distancing techniques that defamiliarize the familiar, and adopting models of subversive speech.<sup>124</sup>

In *Som igår, som imorgen* the doll metaphor serves to convey the child protagonist's dissociation processes and loss of identity, expressed through a highly defamiliarized mind style which reflects the horrifying nature of her experiences. The first-person, present tense narration establishes a closeness between the protagonist and the reader, which reinforces the powerful impact of the text's metaphorical language.

#### **5.4 Grammatical Features: Summary**

In this section on the grammatical features of mind style we have observed several linguistic strategies that combine to express the defamiliarised world view, or mind style, of the sexual abuse victim. We explored ways in which transitivity choices might affect our reading of rape representations, notably with respect to the material processes of the perpetrator in relation to the mental processes of his victim. Body part agency was considered to be a salient feature of several of the texts. We noted that this type of agency was crucially linked to focalization, which determined the identity of the experiencer and thereby also the meaning of the agency. The body part agency of the victim was interpreted as a linguistic feature of her disempowerment, in contrast to that of the perpetrator, which was observed to indicate his extreme deviance and was recognised as a linguistic manifestation of the victim's mind style. We also looked at the function of mental processes, notably in the tension between the internalised processes of the victim and the externalised, material processes of the perpetrator. In our study of mental processes, we also examined the function of perception processes in the representation of the victim's mother and her rôle in the narrative. In the next section, which concludes this chapter on mind style, I

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<sup>124</sup> Sabine Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture*, p.304.

shall briefly consider a number of prominent lexical features in the texts we have been studying.

## 5.5 Lexical Features

The lexical features of mind style are generally realised through occurrences of underlexicalisation or overlexicalisation and ‘value-laden vocabulary.’<sup>125</sup> We shall begin with a brief look at the feature of underlexicalisation and its usage in two texts: Herbjørg Wassmo’s *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* and Hanne Dahl’s *Vannliljen*.

### 5.5.1 Underlexicalisation: ‘Farligheten’

Roger Fowler defines underlexicalisation as ‘the lack of a term or a set of terms’ and suggests that in literary texts it is linguistically manifest as either the ‘suppression of a term’ or ‘the substitution of a [...] complex expression’ for what would otherwise be a straightforward term.<sup>126</sup> Underlexicalisation can function as a strategy of defamiliarization, to encourage us to examine something more carefully, perhaps in a different light.<sup>127</sup> The openness of lexical items as a class not only ensures a constant flux in terms of changes in meaning, but also allows for the invention of new words.<sup>128</sup> In both *Vannliljen* and Herbjørg Wassmo’s novel *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, we can find an example of an innovative term in the form of the neologism ‘farligheten.’ The Norwegian adjective ‘farlig’ (‘dangerous’) has been transformed into a noun, ‘farlighet,’ which one might translate as ‘dangerousness.’<sup>129</sup> We can perhaps acknowledge here an intertextual link between the two texts, as *Vannliljen* was published eighteen years after Wassmo’s novel. In the following extract from *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* the definite form of the term

<sup>125</sup> Jonathan Culpeper, *Language and Characterisation*, p.287.

<sup>126</sup> Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*, p.216.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid*, p.57.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid*, p.12.

<sup>129</sup> I am indebted to Randi Eden, who suggested this translation during her teaching of a course on Wassmo’s novel, when I was studying as an undergraduate.

indicates that it is something which the protagonist has previously experienced. The neologism represents the child's perception of her abuser and her experience of the sexual abuse he regularly inflicts upon her:

Hender. Hender som kom i mørket. Det var farligheten.<sup>130</sup>

(Hands. Hands that came in the dark. That was the dangerousness.)

The child protagonist has a physical knowledge of what it means to be abused, and her special name for that experience embodies the danger that is specific to the child victim of sexual abuse, who never knows when her abuser will next attack her. 'Farligheten' thus embodies not only the characteristics of the abuser and the sexual abuse he perpetrates on his child victim, but also the insecurity, terror and shame that is central to the victim's experience.

As we noted in section 5.2.5., the term 'farligheten' also occurs in Hanne Dahl's *Vannliljen*. In the following extract, the protagonist's father is preparing to rape his five-year old daughter:

Uten et ord løsnet faren på beltet og knappene, døren som viste vei inn til farligheten.<sup>131</sup>

(Without a word, her father undid his belt and buttons, the door that showed the way into the dangerousness.)

In Dahl's text, the term refers specifically to the male sexual organ, which the child is familiar with as an instrument of abuse:

Mennene satt med fårete uttrykk i ansiktet og hadde blottlagt farligheten.<sup>132</sup>

(The men sat with sheep-like faces and had exposed the dangerousness.)

Through the occurrence of the neologism, the sexually abusive nature of the men's actions is achieved through reference to the threat to the child rather than by means of explicit description.

<sup>130</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981, p.6.

<sup>131</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.38.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid*, p.94.

In each of the above examples, the term 'farligheten' embodies a danger that is specific to the child victim of rape and sexual abuse. It is not hypothetical or potential, in the sense of the abstract noun 'fare,' but a concrete implement of abuse, devastating in its impact on a young child's body.

### 5.5.2 Value-laden Lexis

Value-laden lexis is recognised as a feature of mind style as it conveys a subjective viewpoint. As an example of the ideological assumptions implicit in certain formulations, Mick Short argues that the 'value-laden expressions' 'terrorist' and 'freedom fighter' might refer to the same individual if the speakers have diametrically opposed political views.<sup>133</sup> Each of these terms can thus be recognised as having an ideological bias. Short clarifies the function of value-laden language as a linguistic indicator of point of view:

Besides indicating viewpoint by choosing what to describe, novelists can also indicate it by how it is described, particularly through expressions which are evaluative in nature.<sup>134</sup>

We saw earlier that a subjective viewpoint can be achieved through grammatical features in the form of unusual transitivity patterns which express the protagonist's conceptualisation of her abuser and her experiences of sexual victimisation. The mind style of the character may also be identified through value-laden lexis, as illustrated in the following extract from *Vannliljen*. Evaluative adjectives convey the mind style of the protagonist, for whom the sight of fish and the experience of sexual abuse are inexorably linked:

På kjøkkenbenken lå fiskene. Ekle, slimete, gufne vesener som lå og så på henne og som luktet vondt.<sup>135</sup>

(On the kitchen counter lay the fish. Nasty, slimy, puffy creatures that lay there watching her, and that smelled bad.)

The scene depicts a ritual that precedes the child's abuse by her paternal grandmother. From the child's perspective, the fish are an integral part of her

<sup>133</sup> Mick Short, *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*, p.277.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid*, p.265.

<sup>135</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.44.

violation, the cleaning and preparation of the fish a central element in the sexually abusive ritual enforced upon the young child by the old woman. Seen through the child's eyes, the fish are accomplices to the grandmother, as they 'watch' Hanne from the kitchen counter. The evaluative adjectives used in the description of the fish reflect the child's perception of her female abuser:

Farmoren så ekkel ut. Luktet vondt.<sup>136</sup>

(Grandmother looked nasty. Smelled bad.)

In a text concerning sexual violence, especially if focalized through the victim, one would expect to find examples of negatively-shaded evaluative language, particularly in the depictions of the abuse and its perpetrator, as in the above extract. In her research on writings about childhood sexual abuse, Ellen Klosterman has found variable modes of description concerning the abuser, claiming that some writers choose to portray the physical appearance of the perpetrator as 'repulsive.'<sup>137</sup> Klosterman argues that an exaggeratedly negative portrayal may signify the perpetrator's implausibility as a character:

In the reader's mind, the abusive character becomes increasingly confirmed as abusive. If the starting point in this process is claiming the abuser is a monster, by the end of the novel the description is going to be fairly extreme and less believable to average readers.<sup>138</sup>

It would be reasonable to argue that credibility is linked to narrative point of view. If the perpetrator is consistently represented from the perspective of the victim, his depiction as a 'monster' may be credible, especially if seen through the eyes of a child. In *Fange hele livet*, the perpetrator's reference to her abuser as a 'werewolf' signifies her uncle's terrible transgression, through which he has

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<sup>136</sup> *ibid*, p.45

<sup>137</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.181.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid*, p.182.

forfeited his humanness, becoming the terrifying folkloric figure that inhabits children's storybooks and preys on innocent young girls:

For meg var det ikke bare en anonym voldsmann som kom  
brølende ut fra et mørkt buskas og voldtok meg som barn.  
For meg var det det beste i livet mitt, som plutselig ble en varulv  
som jeg vel aldri kan slippe unna.<sup>139</sup>

(For me it wasn't just an anonymous rapist who came roaring  
out of the dark undergrowth and raped me when I was a child.  
For me, it was the best thing in my life, which suddenly became  
a werewolf that I can never escape from.)

This description of the perpetrator is related by the victim as an adult and thus involves the narration of a distal experience, which will inevitably affect lexical choices, particularly as the narration is addressed to another character in the story. We shall now consider the rôle of value-laden vocabulary in the other texts we have been looking at, where much of the narration - or in some cases, all of it - is mediated through the consciousness of the child protagonist. We shall begin by looking specifically at lexical choices concerning the representation of the abuser.

### 5.5.3 Lexical Choices: the perpetrator

We saw earlier that the evaluative adjective 'ekkel' was used in the depiction of Hanne's grandmother in *Vannliljen*. It recurs throughout the narrative to describe the numerous individuals who abuse Hanne, many of whom are strangers to the young child:

Den ekle mannen lo.<sup>140</sup>

(The nasty man laughed.)

<sup>139</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*, p.29.

<sup>140</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.27.



The adjective is also utilised in *Som igår, som imorgen* to describe the abuser and the sexual abuse he perpetrates on his child victim:

Det pirker, det stryker, det fømpler, det er vått og ekkelt,  
ekfelt.<sup>141</sup>

(It pokes, it strokes, it fumbles, it is wet and disgusting,  
disgusting.)

The repetition of the evaluative, descriptive word in the above extract echoes the relentless actions of the abuser and serves also to underscore the protagonist's feelings of revulsion.

In the discussion on body part agency in the section on grammatical features we saw that the perpetrator was characterised mainly in terms of his actions (typically involving parts of his body as agents) which effectively depicted the abused child's point of view. The protagonist's mind style may also be expressed through evaluative lexis, as noted above, which again typically involves fragmented physical descriptions of the perpetrator as in the following extract from *Vannliljen*:

Den ekle mannen lo. Han ble rar i øynene og bøyde seg mot  
henne med åpen munn.<sup>142</sup>

(The nasty man laughed. His eyes became strange and he bent  
down towards her with his mouth open)

The narrator is describing temporally distal events but the depiction of the perpetrator is focalized through his child victim. The child's abuser in this instance is a stranger to the child, one of many men whom she is forced by her family to service sexually. The language reflects the innocence of the victim, who in this extract is of pre-school age. The choice of vocabulary is simple and direct, but to the adult reader the connotations are grimly evident. The man's sexual craving and expectation is observed by the child as an alteration in the expression of his eyes, which immediately precedes his physical action of advancing towards her, his 'nasty' physical appearance rendered all the more grotesque by the depiction of his 'open mouth.' The fragmentation of the

<sup>141</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.34.

<sup>142</sup> Hanne Dahl, *ibid.*

perpetrator serves to convey the child's feelings of fear and revulsion, further reinforced through the evaluative adjectives that describe his isolated body parts.

In *Som igår, som imorgen*, we find the same evaluative adjective used in the child victim's description of her abuser's eyes:

Han er blank og rar i øynene.<sup>143</sup>

(His eyes are glazed and strange.)

As in the extract from *Vannliljen*, the description immediately precedes the perpetrator's abuse of the protagonist, the adjective 'rar' clearly associated with his sexual arousal and his motivation to carry out the sexual abuse of his young victim.

Evaluative adjectives that convey the size of the perpetrator from the child victim's point of view are also to be found in a number of the texts, as for example in the following extract from *Vannliljen*:

Den store dobbelthaken hans var fult av skjeggstubber og leppene var tykke og våte.<sup>144</sup>

(His big double chin was full of stubble and his lips were thick and wet.)

The repulsive aspects of the perpetrator are emphasised, the adjectives used in his description clearly expressing the point of view of the child protagonist. The fragmented physical description of the abuser is also reinforced through size in *Fange hele livet*:

Jeg var ti år og kjente onkels grove, svære hender over hele kroppen min.<sup>145</sup>

(I was ten years old and felt uncle's coarse, massive hands over my entire body.)

<sup>143</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.64.

<sup>144</sup> Hanne Dahl, *Vannliljen*, p.78.

<sup>145</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*, p. 29.

In the above examples, we can note that the perpetrator is typically fragmented into isolated body parts and that the adjectives utilised in their description are indicative of the child's mind style. These evaluative, descriptive words emphasise the grotesque aspects of the perpetrator, that express the mind style of his terrified child victim.

As a conclusion to this discussion on lexical features, I propose now to explore the notion of lexical sets, with a view to examining their function in the depiction of the physical and emotional effects of sexual abuse on the victim, as depicted in the texts.

#### 5.5.4 Lexical Sets: the victim

Peter Verdonk provides the following definition of a 'lexical set':

[...] a grouping of lexical items that are not semantically synonymous but associatively related because they tend to recur in similar contexts. [...] They are called a 'set' because they give linguistic structure to a conceptual or semantic field.<sup>146</sup>

In the following extract from *Fange hele livet*, the physical and emotional effects of sexual abuse on the victim are conveyed by two separate lexical sets:

Den grusomme kvalmen fra natten hang ved hele meg - smaken, pusten, min egen kropp. Og alt var der: Rommet, gardinene, møblene, lukten.<sup>147</sup>

(The horrible nausea from the night clung to the whole of me - the taste, the breath, my own body. And it was all there : the room, the curtains, the furniture, the smell.)

Each of the two groupings of lexical items quoted above can be said to form a lexical set as the words are 'associatively related.' Together, these words give form to a particular semantic field. Peter Verdonk shows that words such as 'appeal', 'prosecution' and 'defence', for example, are 'lexical categories relating

<sup>146</sup> Peter Verdonk, 'Lexical Repetition,' in Peter Verdonk & Jean-Jacques Weber (eds), *Twentieth-Century Fiction*, p.22.

<sup>147</sup> Sverre Inge Apenes, *Fange hele livet*, p.44.

to the concept of a court of law.’<sup>148</sup> In the above extract from *Fange hele livet*, however, the final lexical item in each case appears anomalous. The first lexical set concerns the human body, the first two words referring to isolated aspects of the abuser. The occurrence of the victim’s reference to her ‘own body’ at the end of the set conveys the extent to which she feels that she has been invaded by the perpetrator. Through his rape of the protagonist, the rapist and his victim have become elements of the same conceptual field. The second lexical set seemingly pertains to the concept of ‘home,’ until we come to the final word, which like the items from the previous set relate to the abuser. The ‘smell’ that belongs to ‘the night’ thus becomes inseparable from the permanent, concrete elements of the house where the abuse takes place.

In the following extract from *Som igår, som imorgen* (as in the above extract from *Fange hele livet*), isolated parts of the abuser’s body are juxtaposed with elements pertaining to the space in which the child is brutalised, to form a list of fragmented aspects of the abuse to which she is subjected:

Hender, øyne, luften, lyset. Han.<sup>149</sup>

Hands, the eyes, the air, the light. Him.

The perpetrator’s body parts and the elements of the room thereby appear to be hyponyms, items in a set governed by a superordinate term. The personal pronoun which refers to the abuser, although appearing in the same line as the preceding lexical items, is separated by a full stop. It is not an element in the sequence, but the superordinate word which pieces together the isolated elements of the protagonist’s abuse into a whole. The fragmented formulation reflects the mind style of the protagonist, her perceptions seemingly projecting directly to the reader as they occur.

In the following extract from the same novel, the intense physical pain

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<sup>148</sup> Peter Verdonk, ‘Words, words, words : A pragmatic and socio-cognitive view of Lexical Repetition,’ in Verdonk & Weber (eds.), *Twentieth Century Fiction: From Text to Context*, London: Routledge, 1995, p22.

<sup>149</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.65.

experienced by the child protagonist is expressed in a grouping of lexical items which belong to the semantic field of the human body:

Alt verker. Armene, leggene, halsen, magen, der nede. Alt. Inni er jeg sprenget i stykker. Ingenting er helt.<sup>150</sup>

(Everything hurts. My arms, legs, throat, stomach, down there. Everything. Inside I am shattered into pieces. Nothing is whole.)

The lexical set that gives structure to the protagonist's fragmented body parts exemplifies the impact of rape on her immature body, which is confirmed by her acknowledgment of the internal damage caused by the rape.

## 5.6 Summary

My main emphasis in this chapter has been focussed on the grammatical features of mind style, specifically with relation to the system of transitivity, which I summarised in section 5.5. In the last section we noted that lexical features can also function as linguistic indicators of mind style. We examined the usage in two of the texts of the neologism 'farligheten' by the child protagonist as a name for her abuse and the abuser's sexual organ. We also looked at value-laden lexis, which reflected the child victim's perception of her abuser through the use of adjectives emphasising the abhorrent aspects of the perpetrator. The victim's negative perceptions of her body and of the physical space where she is abused were briefly explored with relation to lexical sets. The lexical groupings of isolated body parts were found to reflect the fragmented consciousness of the victim and the physical rupturing of her body on the impact of rape.

I have aimed to show that because this system of grammar is concerned with processes and their participants, it is a highly useful framework for identifying point of view in representations of sexual abuse and rape. We have seen from the analysis of specific passages from the selected narratives about sexual violence that a study of the linguistic manifestations of mind style is

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<sup>150</sup> Mette Sundt, *Som igår, som imorgen*, p.66.

constructive in terms of character analysis. 'Mind Style,' Jonathan Culpeper argues, 'is a particular aspect of characterisation' as it presents an individual character's view of the world.<sup>151</sup> In Part III, we shall examine the protagonist's conceptualisation of her experiences of sexual victimisation in Christian Krohg's *Albertine* and Herbjørg Wassmo's *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*.

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<sup>151</sup> Jonathan Culpeper, *Language and Character*, p. 288.



Part III:  
The Language of Rape  
in  
Christian Krohg's  
*Albertine*  
and  
Herbjørg Wassmo's  
*Huset med den blinde  
glassveranda*

## Chapter 6

### The Adult Victim: 'Albertine'

Man kommer ved læsningen af 'Albertine' ofte til at tænke på, at det er en maler, som har forfattet bogen.<sup>1</sup>

#### 6.1 Introduction

##### *Christian Krohg*

Christian Krohg was born in 1852 in Aker, near Norway's capital of Kristiania as it was known then. His father Georg Anton Krohg was a government clerk and the son of a cabinet minister and his mother Sofie Amalie Holst was a minister's daughter from Denmark, who died when Krohg was only nine years old. Although Krohg wanted to become a painter he obeyed his father's wish that he should study law, graduating several months after his father's death in the autumn of 1873. With a small inheritance, he was now free to fulfil his dream to be a painter. He studied in Berlin, returning to Kristiania in 1879. In the following years he spent a good deal of time abroad, exhibiting paintings in the Paris Salon in 1882. He married the painter Oda Engelhart in 1888 and they moved to Copenhagen in the following year. In 1901 they went to live in Paris where Krohg taught at the Académie Calarossi in order to supplement his income from painting. They returned to Norway in 1909 and Krohg became a director and a professor at the Academy of Art in Kristiania. From the eighties until his death in Oslo in October 1925, Krohg was also prolific as a writer and journalist.<sup>2</sup>

##### *Albertine*

When his novel *Albertine* was published in 1886, Krohg was already a highly respected and well-established painter. His biographer Pola Gauguin claims

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<sup>1</sup> Amalie Skram, 'Om Albertine', in Irene Engelstad(ed), *Optimistisk Læsemaade. Amalie Skrams litteraturkritikk*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1987, p.105.

<sup>2</sup> Pola Gauguin, *Christian Krohg*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1932.

that the idea of writing the book had been occupying Krohg's thoughts for several years and he painted a series of paintings of Albertine while he was working on the novel.<sup>3</sup> Set in Kristiania, it tells the story of the seamstress Albertine, a young woman born into a life of poverty who is raped by a high-ranking police officer named Winther. *Albertine* created one of the most extensive and heated cultural debates in Norway's history.<sup>4</sup> Through his depiction of the rape and sexual humiliation of the novel's protagonist and her consequent passage into prostitution, Krohg revealed his condemnation of a society of dual morals and sexual hypocrisy. When the novel was published in 1886, the sexual morality debate was at its height. In *Albertine*, the power/gender imbalance is particularly salient, where the rape victim is a young, impoverished seamstress and her rapist a middle-aged, high-ranking police officer. Krohg's powerful portrayal of male brutality and sexual and social injustice highlighted the evils lurking beneath the surface of a so-called moralistic society. Furthermore, in his portrayal of Albertine's sexual victimisation, Krohg illustrated a causal link between rape and prostitution.

### *The Prostitution Debate*

At the time of publication, *Albertine* was considered obscene. It was immediately confiscated and Krohg was brought to trial. On Sunday, 16th January 1887, four thousand protestors marched to the Prime Minister's house demanding that the ban on the book be lifted. The appeal was rejected and in March 1887 Krohg was fined. However, his novel and series of paintings of Albertine were considered major contributing factors in the abolition of government-controlled prostitution in 1888.<sup>5</sup> One of Krohg's more well known supporters, Amalie Skram, wrote an article in 1887 in defence of Krohg's novel, in which she expressed her views on the hypocrisy concerning society's attitudes towards prostitution. She observed that the female prostitute was stigmatised, denounced by society for her actions, while the male client was absolved of any blame. Skram's detailed commentary *Om Albertine* praised

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<sup>3</sup> Pola Gauguin, *Christian Krohg*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 1932, p.118.

<sup>4</sup> Halvor Fosli, *Kristianiabohemen: Byen, miljøet, menneska*, Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget 1994, p.381.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

Krohg not only for his artistry as a writer, but also for the ‘ethical values’ embodied in his novel:

[Denne bok] har [...] fremlagt et troværdigt dokument for, hvordan det går til, at en ung kvinde med gode instinkter og sædeligt alvor i sit sind på utroligt kort tid forvandles til en offentlig skjøge.<sup>6</sup>

([This book] has [...] produced an honest document showing how it can come to pass that a young woman with good instincts and a disposition of virtuous sincerity can in an unbelievably short time turn into a public prostitute.)

Skram praised Krohg’s skill in directly relating the protagonist’s ruin to her social environment.<sup>7</sup> Her own novel *Lucie*, which was published two years after the publication of Krohg’s novel, also depicted rape as a catalyst in the protagonist’s tragic fate. The writer Hans Jæger, who had the previous year written *Fra Kristiania-Bohêmen* (which had been confiscated on grounds of ‘blasphemy and immorality’) was, however, scathingly dismissive of Krohg’s depiction of Albertine’s moral descent:

Som bogen nu foreligger er den bare blet et stakkars indlæg i prostitusjonssagen -<sup>8</sup>

(As the book now stands, it has become merely a pitiable contribution to the case of prostitution -)

Halvor Fosli argues that Krohg’s humanistic and moral beliefs and Jæger’s

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<sup>6</sup> Amalie Skram, ‘Om Albertine,’ p.107.

<sup>7</sup> Janet E. Rasmussen, ‘Amalie Skram as Literary Critic’, *Edda*, vol 1, 1981, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Hans Jæger, ‘Albertine og naturalisme’, in Anne Siri Bryhni (ed.) *Bohem mot Borger*, Oslo, Bergen: Tromsø, 1971, p.72.

deterministic standpoint were manifest in their respective views on prostitution, which were rooted in distinct social and political doctrines:

Krohgs roman var ein kritikk av prostitusjonensvesenet frå ein kristen-humanistisk synsvinkel, med vekt på prostitusjonens forrående verknad på kvinna's sjølvforståing. Jægers kritikk av prostitusjonen var alltid frå ein seksualpolitisk og sosialistisk ståstad, med vekt på prostitusjonens nødvendige eksistens under ekteskapets og kapitalismens 'tvang.'<sup>9</sup>

(Krohg's novel was a criticism of the prostitution system from a christian-humanistic viewpoint, with emphasis on the brutalizing effect on the woman's self-realisation. Jæger's criticism of prostitution was always from a sexual-political and socio-political standpoint, with emphasis on the necessary existence of prostitution under the 'tyranny' of marriage and capitalism.)

Fosli stipulates that Krohg did not perceive prostitution chiefly as an issue concerning 'stigmatisation' but as an 'ethical and humanistic problem.'<sup>10</sup> Krohg, he argues, was concerned with the woman's feelings of self-worth, of her value as a human being. Krohg's biographer Pola Gauguin was insistent that Krohg did not intend *Albertine* to be read as a tract against prostitution as such, but as a criticism of the unjust and violent treatment suffered by women trapped in poverty:

Det var selve problemet om den fattige kvinnes urettferdig og vanskelige stilling, som hadde opptatt ham, og den brutalitet, som disse kvinner ofte blev behandlet med, hadde opprørt ham.<sup>11</sup>

(It was the problem of the impoverished woman's unjust and difficult standing that had preoccupied him, and the brutality with which these women were often treated had shocked him.)

Halvor Fosli attributes the overwhelmingly positive public support of Krohg's 'Albertine-prosjekt' (which included a series of his paintings) to the fact that Krohg shifted the focus of the public away from 'the unhappy client of the prostitute' to the 'innocent prostitute.'<sup>12</sup> Krohg thus demonstrated the sexual

<sup>9</sup> Halvor Fosli, *Kristianiabohemen: Byen, miljøet, menneska*, Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1994, p.385.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Pola Gauguin, *Christian Krohg*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1932, p.133.

<sup>12</sup> Halvor Fosli, *ibid.*, p.382.

victimisation of young women born into poverty, abused by men in power and ultimately betrayed by the system. It is known that Krohg lived in extreme poverty while studying art at the Akademie in Berlin from 1875 until 1878,<sup>13</sup> and his experiences there may well have contributed to his compassion for Christiana's prostitutes.

### *The Medical Examination*

Not surprisingly, the female readers of *Albertine* sanctioned the book and regarded it as a major contribution to the war against prostitution laws, notably the compulsory medical examination of prostitutes.<sup>14</sup> Irene Iversen comments on the implications for young female workers of 'reguleringsystemet,' (the regulation system') which empowered the police to summon for compulsory examination anyone suspected of being infected with syphilis:

Men det var verken de mennene som gikk til de prostituerte, eller deres koner som ble kontrollert. Som i andre storbyer I Europa konsentrerte politiet seg om de unge arbeiderjentene, som ble regnet som potensielle prostituerte. De ble holdt under kontinuerlig oppsikt og kunne når som helst bli innkalt til politi-og legekontroll.<sup>15</sup>

(But it was neither the men who went to prostitutes, nor their wives, who were under observation. As in other large cities in Europe, the police concentrated on the young female workers, who were regarded as potential prostitutes. They were kept under continual surveillance and could be called in at any time to the police and medical control.)

As Iversen points out, this system, which had been implemented as a means not only of preventing the spread of venereal disease but also to combat prostitution, in reality legitimised it. The working class woman who was forced into a life of prostitution was continually victimised and severely exploited by male power. The men who used her were spared the humiliation and stigma of these enforced examinations in police headquarters, while she was treated like a criminal. If 'potential prostitutes' were subjected to enforced gynaecological

<sup>13</sup> Halvor Fosli, *Kristianiabohemen: Byen, miljøet, menneska*, p.41.

<sup>14</sup> Irene Iversen, 'När driften hotar,' *Nordisk Kvinolitteraturhistoria* 2. Höganäs: A B Wiken, 1993, p.445.

<sup>15</sup> Irene Iversen, 'Etterord', in Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1994, [1886] p.125.



examinations, the implication was, of course, that prostitution was the path that working class women were expected to follow. In Norway during this period, there were around 50,000 female workers. Low wages saw many of these women turn to prostitution: the number of prostitutes living in Kristiania in the 1880's is thought to have been in the region of one thousand.<sup>16</sup>

### *The 'real' Albertine*

Krohg is believed to have based the character of Albertine on an artist's model named Sørine, who played herself in a theatre revue titled 'Albertine,' which ran for several performances in the Victoria Theater in Kristiania in January and February 1887, a year after the book's publication.<sup>17</sup> In his defence speech to the Supreme Court in October 1887, Krohg reported that he had written the book as a response to the detrimental change that he had witnessed in the 'real' Albertine (whom he had lost sight of for two years). In his speech, Krohg specified the 'three events in Albertine's life' that had engendered a transformation in his entire being:

Først denne Politiretsel som dengang oppe hos Winther fuldstændig havde bedøvet hennes kvindelige Blufærdighed - saa Politivisitasjonen deroppe paa Radstuen, som for bestandig havde gjort det af med denne samme Blufærdighed, og saa det endelige Resultat, Enden paa det Hele - det som jeg havde seet dernede i Vika. Saa sterkt havde de grebet mig, disse tre Begivenheder i Albertines Liv [...] at hele mit Livsyn var blet et andet og jeg selv en anden.<sup>18</sup>

(First, this fear of the police, which on that occasion up in Winther's had entirely numbed her female modesty – then the police examination up in the prison, which had permanently brought this same modesty to an end, and then the final result, the end of the whole thing - that which I had seen down in Vika. So strongly had these three events in Albertine's life affected me, that my entire view of life changed and I became another person.)

In this chapter I shall be focussing on the first of these 'events': Albertine's visit to Winther's apartment, which culminates in his rape of her. I shall be arguing

<sup>16</sup> Wenche Fossen, 'Om Amalie Skram og Lucie,' in Amalie Skram, *Lucie*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1991, p. 191.

<sup>17</sup> Halvor Fosli, *Kristianiabohemen: Byen, miljøet, menneska*, p.383.

<sup>18</sup> 'Christian Krohgs forsvarstale', *Albertine*, p.123.

that the self-confessed impact of the real Albertine on Krohg's outlook on life - as mentioned above in his defence speech - and his personal involvement with her as a character can be identified in certain aspects of the language, most notably in patterns of focalization in what might be termed as 'the pre-rape scene.' I shall also consider the use of focalization as a means of identifying the conflicting power rôles of the rapist and his victim. In my analysis of the pre-rape scene, I shall comment on other readings of the text, particularly with relation to arguments regarding rape and seduction. I shall suggest that Albertine's sexual victimisation can be identified in specific linguistic features, including the use of transitivity patterns, free indirect discourse and focalization. Before commencing my analysis of Albertine's visit to Winther's apartment, however, I shall identify the extent to which Albertine's rape may be viewed in terms of a 'conspiracy' between Helgesen, the idle dandy who betrays Albertine, and Winther, the police officer who rapes her.

## 6.2 Male Conspiracies

When Albertine is first approached by Winther, she is in a vulnerable situation both physically and emotionally. Not only is she out alone late at night but she has been abandoned by Helgesen, with whom she has fallen in love. Tove Brit Haugstveit articulates the concern shared by most 'respectable' women of that era with respect to being seen alone in the street:

Forholdene var omtrent like ille som boken fremstiller dem. Skulle en dame spasere på Karl Johan, burde det skje om ettermiddagen, de par timene musikkparaden varte. [...] Men også da måtte en dame være forsiktig med hva hun gjorde [...] <sup>19</sup>

(The circumstances were almost as bad as represented by the book. If a lady were to walk along Karl Johan, it should take place in the afternoon, for the couple of hours the music parade lasted. [...] But even then a lady had to be careful about what she did [...])

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<sup>19</sup> Tove Brit Haugstveit, *Christian Krohg's 'Albertine,'* University of Oslo, 1972, p.52.

Albertine's physical situation thus places her at considerable risk. More importantly, perhaps, is her emotional vulnerability on being discarded by Helgesen. I agree with Torunn Sanborn and Arild Haaland's suggestion that Helgesen's departure from Albertine's life is the catalyst that sets in motion the rapid chain of events that eventually destroy her. They point out that for Albertine, there is no turning back:

Hun har brutt med sin bakgrunn. Den nye hun har oppsøkt, har til gjengjeld sviktet henne grovt. Albertines skuffelse over Helgesen gir henne det første, alvorlige skubb imot avgrunnen.<sup>20</sup>

(She has broken with her background. The novelty she has sought out has, in return, failed her harshly. Albertine's disappointment over Helgesen gives her the first serious push towards the abyss.)

Although their liaison is never consummated, Helgesen has misled Albertine and manipulated her emotions, his true sights set on the unattractive but wealthy 'frøken Møller.' During their final meeting, Albertine perceives the connection between the new boots Helgesen is wearing and his termination of their liaison:

Han hadde nye, spisse støvler - å, hvor fine og spisse. - "Si meg en ting da, Helgesen, er det fordi - at Di [...] skal forlove Dem med den pene frøken Møller - at vi -?"<sup>21</sup>

(He had new, pointed boots - oh, how fine and pointed. - "Tell me one thing, now, Helgesen, is it because you are going to be engaged to the pretty Miss Møller- that we -?")

Albertine recognises the function of Helgesen's new boots in impressing frk. Møller (who, according to Albertine, is only regarded as 'pretty' because her sister is so ugly.) The boots also serve as a painful reminder to Albertine of her exclusion from the upper echelons of society. Helgesen has given her a glimpse of this social stratum: a way of life she has hitherto not known, but to which she secretly aspires. He corrects her speech and suggests to her that she has the potential of rising above her station through marriage. Critically, in the light of her subsequent approach by Winther, he awakens her sexually:

<sup>20</sup> Torunn Sanborn og Arild Haaland, "Albertine' i dag", in *Edda*, vol 1, 1974, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.80.

Nei, aldri før hadde han kysset henne slik. - Hun var jo blett rent hugælen- og med en gang kom tårene igjen [...] <sup>22</sup>

(No, never before had he kissed her like that. - She was quite beside herself - and suddenly, the tears came again [...])

Having aroused Albertine's sexual feelings towards him, Helgesen's abrupt withdrawal from their relationship damages her sense of self-preservation. What can be viewed as his 'grooming' of Albertine has left her vulnerable to Winther's abuse of her. It is in this highly aroused and emotional state that Albertine is approached by the police officer. When he questions her about her presence alone in the street late at night and mentions that he has met Helgesen, her feelings of resignation are evident:

Så hadde han sett at hun kysset ham her ute - ossa skulle hun vel på stasjonen - Å ja, det kunne være det samme med alltingen. - Han tenkte vel hun var Helgesens holddame.<sup>23</sup>

(So he'd seen that she kissed him out here - she'd have to go to the station then - Oh, nothing mattered now - he must think she was Helgesen's mistress.)

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.82. 'Holddame' is an archaic term from the French 'femme entretenue' ('kept woman'). The verb 'holde' means, in this sense, to 'maintain, provide financial support' (lit: 'A lady who is supported')

When Winther summons Albertine to his apartment, her sense of predestination is again manifest in her thought processes:

“Gå hjem nå og legg deg, osså kom opp til meg i morgen aften kl.8. Tollbodgaten 5, 3dje etasje. Hvordan lever Oline?” Hun reiste seg fort og gikk bortover alléen. - Å ja, nå kunne det være det samme. Tollbodgaten 5, 3dje etasje. -<sup>24</sup>

(“Go home now, and go to bed. Then come up and see me tomorrow evening at 8.00. Number 5, Tollbodgaten, 3rd floor. How is Oline living?” She got up quickly and walked along the street - Oh, yes, it was all the same now. Number 5, Tollbodgaten, 3rd floor. -)

Winther’s calculated reference to Albertine’s sister Oline, who has worked as a prostitute in the past, is obviously intended to intimidate his chosen victim into submission and has the desired effect, manifest in Albertine’s internalized reaction which conveys her sense of inevitability and predestination.

### *The Trap*

The first evidence of Albertine’s sexual victimisation, and the implication of complicity between those males who view her as a sexual commodity, is expressed in an earlier chapter which introduces us for the first time to Helgesen and his friend Smith and to the police officer Winther. On catching

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<sup>24</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.80.

sight of Albertine from a window in the Grand Hotel, the two friends question Winther about her identity.

“Hun” - sa han og så ut - “hun derover - ja, det skal jeg si Dem, det er en pike som heter Albertine Kristiansen -”  
 “Søster av Rosalie som bodde i Mellemgaten?”  
 “Søster av Oline, ja, som kalte seg Rosalie.”  
 “Er hun også...? - Har hun vært oppe hos Dem?”  
 “Ikke ennå.”  
 “Kommer hun snart?” spurte Smith smilende.  
 “Sannsynligvis,” svarte den annen, likeledes smilende.<sup>25</sup>

(“Her” he said, and looked out, “her over there - yes - that, I can tell you, is a girl called Albertine Kristiansen.”  
 “The sister of Rosalie who lived in Mellem Street?”  
 “The sister of Oline, yes, who called herself Rosalie.”  
 “Is she also...? - Has she been up at your place?”  
 “Not yet.”  
 “Will she be coming soon?” asked Smith, smiling.  
 “In all likelihood,” replied the other, also smiling.)

Smith’s conversation with Winther discloses a tacit understanding between the two men concerning Albertine’s fate and reveals the extent to which the young woman is defenceless against male, middle-class power. At this stage in the novel, the reader assumes the phrase ‘oppe hos Dem’ to signify the police station where Winther is employed as deputy chief. It is not until four chapters later, in the scene where Albertine is raped by Winther in his apartment, that Smith’s wording takes on a more sinister connotation. The above dialogue indicates a degree of collusion between the two men which is reinforced through the final phrase ‘likeledes smilende.’ It also reveals the impossibility of anonymity for the prostitute who attempts to change her identity. Although Helgesen is not a party to this specific verbal exchange between Smith and Winther, his friendship with Smith and the evident weakness of his character suggests his involvement in Winther’s plans to entrap Albertine.

The full extent of the collusion between Helgesen and Winther is finally revealed in the protagonist’s fateful visit to Winther’s private apartment the subsequent evening. Earlier, we saw that Albertine assumed Winther to believe that she was

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<sup>25</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, pp. 40-41.



Helgesen's mistress, but the chilling truth emerges as Winther is appraising the sleeping woman, prior to raping her:

Helgesen var en stor, stor tosk hvis det var sant hva han hadde fortalt ham, at han ikke hadde rørt henne, en stor, stor tosk. Han bøyde seg frem og så riktig nøye. Skulle nesen være litt for spiss? - nei, Helgesen var en stor tosk.<sup>26</sup>

(Helgesen was a huge, great fool if it was true what he had told him, that he hadn't touched her - a huge, great fool. He leaned forwards and looked really closely. Was the nose a little too pointed? No - Helgesen was a great fool.)

To Winther's scornful astonishment, Helgesen has not claimed what Klaus Theweleit refers to as the upper-class male's 'right of access to women of the lower classes.'<sup>27</sup> Although Helgesen's betrayal of Albertine is not explicit, it is evident from the above excerpt that he has discussed her with Winther, assuring the police officer of her chastity and delivering to him a commodity that is 'intact.' The narration in this extract is focalized through Winther, allowing us an insight into the thought processes of Albertine's rapist before he commits the rape. Before considering the use of focalization in this pre-rape scene in some detail, I would like to briefly discuss distinctions between rape and seduction, and why I consider these to be of importance in my analysis of *Albertine*.

### 6.3 Rape and Seduction

In the introduction to his bibliography on Christian Krohg's writings, Oscar Thue states that Krohg's 'intention' in *Albertine* became 'coarser' than the author had originally intended because of Krohg's anger over the confiscation of Hans Jæger's *Fra Kristiania-Bohêmen* in 1885 and the ensuing court case

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<sup>26</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.85.

<sup>27</sup> Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies: Women, floods, bodies, history*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987, p.372.

against Jæger. Thue clarifies the specific scenes of the novel which most offended the authorities:

Krohg besluttet seg til å skjerpe tendensen både i det han skrev og det han malte og tilføyet de avsnittene av boken som senere ble forbudt: forførelsesscenen i politifullmektig Winther's leilighet, visitasjonen hos politilegen og avslutningsscenen i Vika.<sup>28</sup>

(Krohg made up his mind to reinforce his intention both in his writing and in his painting and added the sections of the book which were later banned: the seduction scene in the police officer Winther's apartment, the police surgeon's examination and the final scene in Vika.)

Thue's reference to 'the seduction scene' is perhaps unsurprising given that his publication came out in 1968, at a time when rape was not yet discussed from the victim's perspective as Cathy Roberts points out:

Read any of the textbooks on criminology or sexual offences prior to the 1970's, and the victim is rarely acknowledged [...]<sup>29</sup>

More surprising however, is the description on the back cover of the 1994 Gyldendal edition of *Albertine* :

Romanen *Albertine* [...] handler om den fattige sypiken Albertine som styrtes ut i fornedrende prostitusjon etter å ha blitt forført av en politifullmektig.

(The novel *Albertine* [...] concerns the poor seamstress Albertine who was driven into the degradation of prostitution after being seduced by a police officer.)

According to *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, to 'seduce' is 'to tempt or entice into sexual activity.' A seduction thus implicitly involves a degree of attraction. Desire may initially be absent on the part of the person being seduced, but it is the seducer's objective to instil, or 'awaken' sexual desire

<sup>28</sup> Oscar Thue, *Christian Krohg: En Bibliografi av Oscar Thue*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968, p.8.

<sup>29</sup> Cathy Roberts, *Women and Rape*, p.2.

in the other. As Helena Kennedy wryly observes in her exposé of the treatment of women within the British legal system:

Where does seduction end and rape begin? [...] it is all supposed to be a matter of technique. Getting a woman to submit is an acceptable part of the game plan, and straying across the line a ready peril for any man with a healthy sexual appetite.<sup>30</sup>

With regard to Krohg's novel, I would argue that seduction is a misleading and inaccurate term to describe Albertine's experience as it masks the violent and degrading elements inherent in coercive sex which, as we shall note in chapter 8, are evident in Krohg's portrayal of the protagonist's sexual victimisation. The term 'seduction' also obfuscates the premeditated nature of Winther's crime. As was noted in Chapter 1, studies show that rape frequently involves a degree of planning by the perpetrator.<sup>31</sup> We observed earlier that in *Albertine*, Winther's intention to lure the young seamstress was implicit in his conversation with Helgesen's friend Smith, thus proving the calculated nature of his behaviour.

### *Female passivity*

Tove Haugstveit makes a distinction between what she refers to as 'the seduction scene' and Albertine's subsequent rape. She argues that a combination of powerlessness induced by Helgesen's rejection of Albertine and the protagonist's own 'awakening' sensuality leads to her 'active passivity' in the scene with Winther:

Hun kan ikke være direkte aktivt medhandlende, derfor ender forføringsscenen med en voldtekt - men hun er medhandlende ved sin 'aktive' passivitet.<sup>32</sup>

(She cannot outrightly be actively participating, therefore the seduction scene ends with a rape - but she is participating through her 'active' passivity.)

Haugstveit cites Albertine's acceptance of the sherry offered to her by

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<sup>30</sup> Helena Kennedy, *Eve was Framed: Women and British Justice*, London : Vintage, 1992, p.111.

<sup>31</sup> Cathy Roberts, *Women and Rape*, p.30.

<sup>32</sup> Tove Brit Haugstveit, *Christian Krohg's 'Albertine.'* 3-måneders hovedoppgave, University of Oslo, 1972, p. 19.

Winther as a signal of her 'passive participation' and argues that Albertine's will has been broken down by her environment and by her experience with Helgesen.<sup>33</sup> Although I agree with the reasons suggested by Haugstveit for Albertine's 'active passivity,' I would venture to suggest a further explanation. In Winther's apartment, Albertine's passivity is fulfilling the rules of a feminine gender model, particularly salient for a woman of her class, where social disadvantage makes it impossible for her to defend herself against sexual victimisation by a man in a position of authority. The idea of female passivity is still powerful today and in Albertine's time it was unquestioned. Cathy Roberts points out its pervasive nature and how the 'assumption of female passivity' can contribute to the woman's sexual victimisation:

[it] allows a man intending to rape to maintain control of a situation and deflect any attempt by the woman to impose any other meaning or aim than his.<sup>34</sup>

The notion of female passivity is thus an integral element of the rapist's distorted thinking patterns, which he uses to justify his actions.

Through an analysis of focalization patterns in the pre-rape scene, my aim is now to examine the concepts of passivity and control in terms of the conflicting power rôles between the rapist and his intended victim. I aim to show that Albertine's status as a sexual object is expressed through the focalization of the male voyeur/perpetrator, which can also be seen to anticipate his rape of Albertine. I shall additionally attempt to identify linguistic clues that indicate both Krohg's identification with Albertine and his vision as a painter.

## 6.4 The pre-rape scene: Focalization and Fragmentation

### *Focalization*

In Chapter 4, we looked at the distinction between 'external' and 'internal' focalization; in other words, focalization which is not associated with a particular character and focalization which is mediated through a character.

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<sup>33</sup> Tove Brit Haugstveit, *Christian Krohg's 'Albertine'*, p.18.

<sup>34</sup> Cathy Roberts, *Women and Rape*, p.7

When focalization fluctuates in this way, it means that the narrator is at times able to assign the viewing position to one of the characters, which thereby internalises the focalization. When this happens, we witness events from the chosen character's perspective. As we shall see, Winther's scrutiny of Albertine occurs when she is asleep, while Albertine's observations of Winther are minimal, thus reflecting not only the imbalance of power implicit in the relation between a middle-aged, senior male police officer and a young, working-class female, but more significantly, the sexual intent of the male and the absence of desire on the part of the female.

### *'Eau de Lubin'*

The chapter 'Tollbodgaten 53' opens with Albertine's admission into Winther's apartment and her entrance into his sitting room:

En sterk duft av Eau de Lubin fylte hele værelset. Midt på gulvet sto et bord med fint, tykt bordteppe på og vin og kake og mandler og rosiner. Han skulle nok ha selskap.<sup>35</sup>

(In the middle of the floor there stood a table with a fine heavy tablecloth and wine and cake and almonds and raisins. He must be expecting guests.)

The narration here suggests that the scene is focalized through Albertine. The evaluative adjective 'fint' alludes to an impressionability that reflects her deprived background and which also conveys her admiration of luxuriance and a seamstress's appreciation of fine material. Furthermore, it betrays an underlying sensuousness in her character. Albertine's focus shifts from one object to the next, her sequence of impressions expressed through the long coordinated noun phrase 'vin og kake og mandler og rosiner.' The protagonist's conclusion that Winther is 'expecting guests' is a sadly ironic indication of her naivety and shows that the narrator is expressing only that which the character knows,<sup>36</sup> which tells us that the scene is still narrated from Albertine's point of view. The reference to 'Eau de Lubin' crucially links this scene with her final meeting with Helgesen the previous evening:

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<sup>35</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.83.

<sup>36</sup> Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980, p. 115.

Hun ble stående tilbake i en duft av Eau de Lubin – med halvåpne, forundrede leber.<sup>14</sup>

(She was left standing in a fragrance of Eau de Lubin - with half-open, astonished lips.)

The scent of Eau de Lubin functions as a connecting motif between the scenes with Albertine and Helgesen and the chapter describing Albertine's fateful visit to Winther's apartment. The extent to which the protagonist has been seduced by Helgesen is evident from the above extract, which depicts the almost trance-like state which the scent and Helgesen's final kiss has induced in her and which remains after Helgesen has abandoned her in the street. In the description of Albertine's entrance into Winther's sitting room, the scent is described as 'strong,' from which we can infer that it has been freshly applied in anticipation of Albertine's visit. Winther's choice of cologne is undoubtedly not arbitrary, but part of his plan to bait Albertine, who has so recently been 'enveloped' by Helgesen's scent, which she associates with their final kiss, and which powerfully aroused her in their very first evening together:

Gud, hvor fast og godt han holdt henne - han *kunne* danse polka, han - også han hadde noe fint luktendes på seg, som slo imot henne hver gang hun kom nær inn på ham.<sup>37</sup>

(God, how well he held her, and how tightly - he *knew* how to dance the polka - also, he was wearing a fine scent, which struck her every time she came close to him.)

Implicit in Albertine's emphasis on Helgesen's dance skill is his sexual allure and his ability to physically relate with women, conveyed also in her opening observation. The cologne, in its function as the agent of the material process 'slo,' overpowers the sensual but sexually inexperienced Albertine. It is depicted as an extension of the male, a tool in his sexual domination of the female in his grasp. The above depiction of the powerful olfactory processes associated with

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<sup>37</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.70.



sex is reminiscent of the Count Moffat's visit backstage in a theatre in Emile Zola's novel *Nana*:

He shut his eyes and inhaled a breath in which the whole sexuality of women was distilled, something which he had never before met and which struck him full in the face.<sup>38</sup>

In both extracts, the use of the verb 'slå'/'strike' is highly effective in depicting the physical force of sexual desire. In *Albertine*, the sexual imagery is perhaps even more explicit as the agent of the process 'slo imot' is identified as belonging to the male and directed at the female. Irene Iversen notes that Krohg was interested in Zola's work and she observes the narcissism that is shared by the characters of *Nana* and the altered *Albertine*, whose rape, Iversen argues, has induced in the latter a contempt for men and a heartless self-centredness.<sup>39</sup> She suggests that Krohg was possibly influenced by Zola's novel *Nana* and also by Manet's painting of the same name, created only three years before the publication of *Albertine*.

'Eau de Lubin' is a prominently connecting motif throughout the novel, recurring as we have seen throughout the scenes involving *Albertine* and *Helgesen* and also in the pre-rape scene when *Albertine* first enters *Winther's* apartment. The complicity between *Helgesen* and *Winther* is reinforced through their usage of the same seductive cologne. The scent also plays a significant rôle in the rape scene, which we shall be examining in Chapter 8. Its presence is prophetic, symbolising the superficial allure which masks the danger posed by the sexual predator.

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<sup>38</sup> Emile Zola, *Nana*. (1880) English translation: Douglas Parmé. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.139.

<sup>39</sup> Irene Iversen, 'Etterord' in Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p. 134.

### *The Portent: 'Behind' the Surface*

Even at an early stage in the pre-rape scene, Albertine's appreciation for the luxuriance of her new surroundings is countered by a sense of unease:

[...] hun så igjen på bordteppet, ja, det var tykt og loddent og fint med røde blomster og gulbrun bord. Gid hun turde ta i det? Hun hadde aldri vært i så fint værelse.- Bakom hadde hun følelsen av noe vondt som vokste langsomt og sikkert opp - som en murrende frykt.<sup>40</sup>

([...] she looked again at the tablecloth. Yes, it was thick and woolly and fine, with red flowers and a golden-brown edging. If only she dared touch it? She had never been in such a fine room. - Deep down, she had a sense of something bad rising up slowly and surely - like a throbbing fear.)

The concept of 'behindness,' manifest in the clause 'Bakom hadde hun følelsen av noe vondt' contrasts with the superficiality of the setting. The sinister and phallic connotation implicit in the phrase 'som vokste langsomt og sikkert opp' conflicts with the outward refinement of Winther's room and suggests that Albertine's feeling is prophetic. There is a powerful tension too between the indefinite pronoun 'noe' and the verb contained in the relative clause: the object of Albertine's fear is unspecified but powerfully active and imminent, the inevitability of her fate encapsulated in the adverb 'sikkert.' Given Krohg's views on the social problems of the time, most notably the plight of Christiania's prostitutes and the sexual double standard, we might interpret the notion of 'behindness' as a reference not only to Albertine's own victimisation, but to the entire sphere of a sexual culture which thrived on corruption and hypocrisy.

### *The Female Focalizer and the Male Agent*

In contrast to the detailed depiction of the scene's inanimate elements, as focalized through Albertine, the human participant in her field of vision is rendered anonymous, alluded to merely as 'Han.' There is a discernible contrast between the two characters' modes of focalization. As we shall see later in the chapter, the object of Winther's focus is divided between the sleeping Albertine, his gaze examining her figure and face in detail, and the almonds he is intently peeling. In Albertine's case, however, the object of focalization is not fixed. Her

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<sup>40</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.84.

focus shifts between various inanimate aspects of her immediate environment, occasionally resting on Winther's hands or the crown of his head, but consistently returning to the luxuriant tablecloth:

Han knekket mandler og hun satte seg å se på det fine, grønne, lodne bordteppet med de røde rosene i og den gulbrune borden omkring [...] <sup>41</sup>

(He cracked almonds and she set about looking at the fine, green, woolly tablecloth with the red roses and the yellow-brown edge [...])

Albertine's concentration on the tablecloth is double-edged. It might be interpreted in terms of her attraction to finery and to the novelty of her surroundings but a closer look at the form of the verb of perception discloses intention on the part of the female subject. It is not merely a case of her eyes being drawn to the tablecloth, (which as we have seen, she has already noticed on first entering the room) but of addressing herself to the act of looking. The verb phrase 'Hun satte seg til å se på' implies design: a deliberate ploy to divert her gaze away from the undesired male object. When her gaze does rest upon Winther, it is brief and directed almost exclusively at his hands and his hair. It is significant to note that, in contrast to the immobile body parts of Albertine as focalized by Winther, the latter's hands, when focalized by Albertine, are engaged in action:

Hun så hans kortklippede, mørke isse bøyet over mandelen, de kort hvite hendene som plukket det lyserøde skallet forsiktig av. <sup>42</sup>

(She saw the cropped, dark crown of his head bent over the almond, the blunt white hands that carefully plucked off the pale red shell.)

The detail in the above extract is almost clinical, the representation of Winther's preoccupation with his task suggesting a skilled operation. The man's delicate handling of an inanimate object in contrast to his subsequent violent rape of Albertine serves to highlight his callous and indifferent attitude towards

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<sup>41</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.87.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p.86.

women: Albertine is a commodity, dehumanized and replaceable. The specific action in which Winther is engaged anticipates and suggests his later act of rape and also, as we shall see in Chapter 8, her medical examination by the police doctors. Winther's handling of the almond also anticipates his scrutiny of Albertine's dormant body, which he has rendered immobile and thus ostensibly 'inanimate'. His obsession with her body in its inactive and oblivious state suggests a desire redolent of necrophilia. Albertine observes him 'plucking' the shell from an almond which suggests here her imminent 'deflowering': the almond, symbolically associated with virginity, is stripped of its protective casing. In the above extract, Albertine's focus shifts from Winther's head to his hands, finally resting on 'the pale red shell.' Here, the focalized object is shared by both Albertine and Winther: an intimation of the rape that is about to occur. In Winther's case, his gaze is invested with a foreknowledge of the rape he will shortly commit. From Albertine's viewpoint, the shared focus connotes a presentiment of her imminent violation. The nature of Winther's activity is depicted as one of threat, the 'cracking' of the almonds denoting a potentially violent intention on the part of the male agent:

Han la mandler og rosiner på en tallerken og begynte selv å knekke mandler, og snakket mens han smasket på mandlene [...] <sup>43</sup>

(He placed almonds and raisins on a plate and he began to crack almonds and talked while he chewed loudly on the almonds)

The female subject, on the other hand, is identified by a verb of perception, which suggests that she is still the focalizer at this point:

[...] men hun hørte ikke stort, for hun ventet på hva som skulle komme. - <sup>44</sup>

([...] but she didn't listen properly, as she was waiting for what was coming. -)

Shortly afterwards, there is a shift in focalization as Albertine falls asleep in Winther's armchair.

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<sup>43</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.84.

<sup>44</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.84.

### *The Male Focalizer and the Fragmented Female Body*

In her illuminating stylistic analysis of romantic and sexual encounters in modern fiction, Shan Wareing makes the following point regarding the effects of fragmentation on the focalization of a particular scene in a novel:

[...] a consequence of fragmentation is that in most circumstances a fragmented character cannot be the scene's focalizer, so their personal experience is written out of the scene.

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Wareing highlights a tendency in certain contemporary fiction to present ostensibly assertive central female characters as 'passive romantic heroines' in romantic or sexual scenes and to represent sexual liaisons exclusively through the focalization of the male character. In this kind of writing, the male experience of the female is that of isolated elements of her anatomy, as her body is 'separated from her consciousness.'<sup>46</sup> This fragmentation of the female body is derivative of male focalization: the woman is dismembered by the male gaze. Wareing's analysis can be applied to narratives concerning rape and sexual abuse. For the rapist, the woman's objectification is a prerequisite for his violence.<sup>47</sup> In the pre-rape scene from *Albertine*, the fragmentation of the female body as focalized through the male gaze is particularly arresting. After a brief verbal exchange between Winther and Albertine in which the former does most of the talking, the focalization in the scene switches to the police officer. Irene Iversen suggests that in this part of the narrative Winther observes the sleeping Albertine 'with an artist's eye'<sup>48</sup> and claims that there is a 'striking similarity' between the description of Albertine through Winther's gaze and the author's portrayal of her in the novel's opening pages. While this is true, I would argue that the portrayal of Albertine which is focalized through Winther has sexual overtones that are less evident in the opening description of the protagonist and which can be identified in specific linguistic features which we

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<sup>45</sup> Shan Wareing, 'And Then He Kissed Her: The Reclamation of Characters to Submissive Roles in Contemporary Fiction,' in Katie Wales (ed.), *Feminist Linguistics and Literary Criticism*, Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1984, p.132.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Adam Jukes, *Why Men Hate Women*, London: Free Association Books, 1993, p.197.

<sup>48</sup> Irene Iversen, 'Etterord,' in Christian Krohg, *Albertine*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 1994, p.135.



shall examine in the following sections, when we look at the two descriptions in detail.

### *The Painter Behind the Novel*

When Albertine falls asleep in Winther's sitting room, she provides the rapist with an opportunity to scrutinise his prey without her knowledge. During his appraisal of the sleeping Albertine, we are given access to Winther's thoughts:

Han ville ønske at han var maler, eller at han hadde en maler her.<sup>49</sup>

(He wished that he was a painter, or that he had a painter here.)

Irene Iversen invites the reader to examine the possibility in this scene of self-irony on the part of Krohg and poses the following questions not only regarding his insight as a painter, but also in relation to Krohg's sexuality:

Er det kunstneren som speiler seg i politiembetsmannen? Som dermed viser seg selv som en forbruker av kvinner, ja, som en overgriper?<sup>50</sup>

(Is it the artist who is reflected in the police officer? Who thereby reveals himself as a consumer of women, indeed as an abuser?)

It is certainly tempting to catch a glimpse of Krohg the painter behind his portrayal of the sleeping Albertine, whom he vividly and lovingly captures on the canvas of the written page. Perhaps Winther's articulated desire to be a painter or to 'have a painter' with him reflects Krohg's views on Impressionism which he embraced, greatly admiring Manet and Zola. Krohg was of the view that the Realist painters, in a reaction against the Romantics, 'concealed themselves' behind their work,<sup>51</sup> unlike the Impressionists who were not preoccupied with Nature's minutiae but who interpreted their subjects

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<sup>49</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.85.

<sup>50</sup> Irene Iversen, *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Christian Krohg, 'Den bildende Kunst som Led i kulturbevegelsen', in Sigurd AA. Aarnes(ed), *Norsk Litteratur: gjennom øyenvitner. En litteraturhistorisk kildesamling 1830-1970*, Bergen; Oslo; Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1979, p.57



according to their 'impressions.' He endorsed Zola's views on the rôle of the painter in relation to his art:

Ce, que je cherche avant tout dans un tableau –  
c'est un homme et non pas un tableau.<sup>52</sup>

(That which I look for above all in a picture –  
is a man, and not a picture.)

In Zola's statement, the 'man' is foregrounded, effectively replacing the picture. In Krohg's translation into Norwegian, however, the man is concealed, positioned 'behind' the picture:

Det som jeg vil have i et Billede er en Mand bag Billedet.<sup>53</sup>

(That which I wish to have in a picture, is a man behind the  
picture.)

In Winther's appraisal of *Albertine*, it could be argued that we are given an insight into the man 'behind' the novel. However we may choose to interpret the language that expresses Winther's desire to be a painter, we can discern the sensibilities of Krohg the artist in his portrayal of the protagonist, who has fallen asleep in a chair facing Winther. Yet the interplay of skin and shadow, body part and light, does not only betray the eye of an artist. The fragmentation of the woman's body, through a male focalizer, objectifies her and reduces her to specific 'parts' for his contemplation. In the following extract, the fragmentation of the female functions as an unequivocal overture to her rape and serves also as an allusion to her vulnerability and imminent suffering:

Panneluggen hadde delt seg litt - en trekant av pannen skinte frem - han reiste seg forsiktig og delte det enda litt mere. Under øynebrynene falt det dype skygger, og derutav rundet de lukkede øyeløkk seg frem, sluttende fast til øyet og med et trett, lidende, blålig emaljeskjær over.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, p.58.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*, p.57.

<sup>54</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.85.

(The fringe had split a little - a triangle of forehead appeared. He got up carefully and divided it even more. Under the eyebrows deep shadows fell, and from there the closed eyelids curved forward, joining steadfastly to the eyes, and with a tired, suffering, bluish enamel sheen over them.)

As Irene Iversen points out, Albertine's hair has become 'a symbol for her sex organ'<sup>55</sup> and Winther's gesture is overtly sexual. The final clause is suggestive of Albertine's virginity, the allusion to her intact hymen expressed in the noun phrase 'et trett, lidende, blålig emaljeskjær.' The evaluative adjectives 'trett' and 'lidende' imply a narrator's empathy for the focalized object, the adjective 'blålig' reflecting a painter's subtle perception. Winther's appraisal of the protagonist as a fragmented object or 'collection of objects,' is suggestive of the female body's fragmentation in pornographic literature.<sup>56</sup>

### *The dormant object*

In the scene we have been looking at, the protagonist's lack of involvement is marked, for as we have seen, her fragmentation occurs while she is asleep. During his scrutiny of Albertine, Winther's experience is intensified by the female object's immobilisation and the suspension of her consciousness. Sandra Lee Bartsky claims that women's 'more restricted motility and comportment' is the most salient evidence of the 'inferiorization' of their bodies.<sup>57</sup> In her dormant state, Albertine is observed, not as an autonomous,

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<sup>55</sup> Irene Iversen, 'Etterord,' p.133.

<sup>58</sup> Shan Wareing, 'And Then He Kissed Her', p.132.

<sup>57</sup> Sandra Lee Bartsky, 'Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power' in *Writing on the Body*, Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina & Sarah Stanbury (eds.), New York, Columbia University Press, 1997, p.141.

communicative being, but through the eyes of the voyeur/rapist, who views her as a sexual object:

- - - Hun var sovnet inn – hodet lå til siden, kinnen blek imot den mørke-grønne fløyel under det varme overlys fra hengelampen. En stor muskel som straktes, hevet seg kraftig på rundingen av halsen, og bredt og ungdommelig løftet brystet seg regelmessig under den tettsluttete, snorebroderte jerseytrøyen - Hun var sunket bakover – dypt inn i den bløte, mørkegrønne fløyel.

Han ble sittende og se.<sup>58</sup>

(- - - She had fallen asleep – her head lay to one side, her cheek pale against the dark green velvet under the warm light from the hanging lamp. A large, taut muscle swelled powerfully at the curve of her neck, and her breast rose, expansive and youthful, at regular intervals under the tight fitting, embroidered jersey jacket. She had sunk backwards – deep into the soft, dark green velvet.

He remained sitting and watching.)

In this extract, the male observer's sexually violent objective is manifest in the phallic collocation 'en stor muskel,' 'strakte seg,' and 'hevet seg kraftig.' The emphasis on the female throat denotes a male gaze that is not only sexual but vampiric, as the rapist projects his violent desire onto the chosen object of his violation. In the above extract, Winther's objectification of Albertine is expressed through the fragmentation of her body and his positioning of her underneath 'the hanging lamp.' In Chapter 2 we briefly discussed the rôle of fragmentation in Hitchcock's film *Psycho*, where the female victim's fragmentation by the knife-wielding killer is preceded by his observation of her naked body through the bathroom keyhole. In *Albertine*, the rapist visually dissects his victim prior to raping her. He has prepared perfect conditions for the meticulous visual probing of his sleeping victim. His contemplation of her is voyeuristic; she is unconscious of, and thus defenceless against, his scrutiny of her body. He examines her for flaws, assessing her physical characteristics prior to violating her. There is an additional observation that can be made with regard to the representation of the sleeping Albertine as focalized through

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<sup>58</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.85.

Winther, especially when we compare it to Krohg's portrayal of the protagonist in the opening pages of the novel where she is leaning back in her chair, resting from her sewing:

Vinterlyset gled blekt nedover ansiktet, hvor huden var like så hvit som i nakken, over den stivete strimlen som kom frem i halsen, og over det brede, høye bryst med det grå kords kjolelivet over, hvori de satt en mengde knappenåler.

Nesen var rett, øynene store og trette, lebene smale og kry.<sup>59</sup>

(The pallid winter light drifted down her face, where the skin was as white as that on the nape of her neck, over the starched collar which emerged at the neckline and over her broad, high bust with its grey cord corset, on which sat a host of safety pins.

Her nose was straight, her eyes large and tired, her lips small and full.)

I mentioned earlier Irene Iversen's observation of the striking similarities between the novel's initial descriptions of Albertine - such as the one above - and her representation through Winther's eyes in the pre-rape scene. We can certainly identify a shared vocabulary in the two depictions; in each case, the protagonist's skin, upper body and dress are described. However, an analysis of transitivity patterns reveals differences between the two representations of Albertine which are highly relevant to the present discussion. In the above extract, if we look at the processes involving the protagonist's body parts, we see that they function typically as agents of relational processes ('huden var like så hvit som i nakken'; 'nesen var rett.'). In other words, they occur in processes of 'being.' They are described for what they are. If, however, we look at the description of Albertine focalized through Winther, we can note several instances of body parts occurring as agents of material processes ('En stor muskel som straktes, hevet seg kraftig'; 'og bredt og ungdommelig løftet brystet seg').

We could argue that through Winther's focalization, Albertine's body parts are highlighted through their agency and thus further sexualised, particularly in view of the fact that Albertine is asleep and unaware of Winther's examination of her. The agency of each isolated anatomical element reflects also Winther's

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<sup>59</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.12.

suspended sexual aggression, which becomes fully and violently released in his rape of Albertine. A further point of note between these two portrayals of the protagonist concerns the rôle of light. The novel's opening depiction of Albertine at her sewing machine captures the gentle movement of light on the protagonist's motionless body, conveyed by the material process 'gled' with 'vinterlyset' as agent. In the later description, where Albertine is focalized through Winther, the protagonist's body parts are invested with agency. This might lead us to argue that, as a painting cannot capture movement, Winther's observation of Albertine deviates from the earlier, more 'painterly' representation of the protagonist. A further consideration can be noted with regard to the nature of the light depicted in each of these scenes. In the novel's opening description of Albertine it is the natural daylight that illuminates her as she sits at her sewing machine. In the pre-rape scene, however, she is lit by the artificial light of Winther's lamp.

#### *Free Indirect Discourse: The Rapist's Thought Processes*

The process of fragmentation is further reinforced and sexualised through the focalizer's comments on Albertine's fragmented body parts:

"Hun har jo et deilig hår!" [...] - - - lange øyehår! [...] Skuldrene litt for brede."<sup>60</sup>

"She certainly has lovely hair!" [...] " - - - long eyelashes! [...] The shoulders a little too broad."

The fragmented nature of Winther's speech accentuates the fragmentation of Albertine's body through his gaze. These isolated remarks that target specific elements of her anatomy interrupt a flow of narrative which constitutes a more detailed description of her physical characteristics, where, as we discussed in the previous section, the focus is primarily on Albertine's sexual attributes. The representation of Winther's thoughts provides us with an insight into his perceptions of the woman he is about to rape.

In Chapter 4, we examined the function of free indirect discourse as a means of providing the reader with an insight into the character's consciousness.

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<sup>60</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.85.



Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short highlight the importance of this technique for the novelist:

[...] many leading novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been deeply concerned with the portrayal of 'internal speech'. This is because one of the major concerns of the novelist for the last hundred years has been how to present vividly the flow of thought through a character's mind.<sup>61</sup>

From the section of text describing Winther's scrutiny of Albertine, we can identify the following extract as an example of Free Indirect Thought:

Skulle nesen være litt for spiss? - nei, Helgesen var en stor tosk.

(Was the nose a little too sharp? - no, Helgesen was a great fool.)

Michael Short posits the following observation regarding the relation of free indirect thought to reader identification with a character:

FIT [...] is perceived by readers as representing closeness with that character, the direct observation of his thoughts.<sup>62</sup>

In the pre-rape scene, free indirect thought represents the inner states of both Winther and Albertine. The constant shift in perspective thereby allows the reader an insight into the mind of both rapist and victim. In the section of text concerning Winther's appraisal of Albertine's dormant body, one of the signals that it is a direct representation of his thoughts, as opposed to the narrator's reporting of events from Winther's perspective, is the absence of a clause introducing his thoughts.<sup>63</sup> Another indication of the character's thought processes is the presence of the direct interrogative, marked by the question mark, and the immediate provision of an answer: 'nei, Helgesen var en stor tosk.' In the expression 'en stor tosk,' we can perceive a voice that is distinct from that of the narrator: namely, Winther's own scathing observation of

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<sup>61</sup> Geoffrey Leech & Michael Short, *Style in Fiction*, p. 337.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Short, 'Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature: with an Example from James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*' in *Language and Literature*, Ronald Carter (ed.), London: Routledge, 1982, p.184.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Short, 'Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature: with an Example from James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*', p.186.



Helgesen. Furthermore, the male focalizer's simultaneous objectification and fragmentation of the focalized object is magnified through her lack of consciousness, and we are made acutely aware of Albertine's status as an object in a setting that has been meticulously prepared for her violation:

Han bøyde seg frem og så riktig nøye. Skulle nesene være litt for spiss? - nei, Helgesen var en stor tosk.<sup>64</sup>

(He bent forwards and looked really closely. Was the nose a little too pointed? - no, Helgesen was a great fool.)

As Winther continues to dissect Albertine through his visual exploration of her body, it becomes evident that she is not the first of his young victims:

“Vakrere enn Oline.”

(“More beautiful than Oline.”)

At this point in the narration, there is a shift in focalization. Immediately following Winther's verbal comment on Albertine's beauty, the scene becomes externalised as Winther's actions are described, while Albertine is still asleep in the armchair and thus unaware of his movements:

Han reiste seg forsiktig og gikk inn bak portièrene i det rødlige skjær og rumsterte forsiktig med noe der inne.<sup>65</sup>

(He got up carefully and went in behind the drapes, in the reddish light, and rummaged carefully with something in there.)

The repetition of the adverb 'forsiktig' reinforces the carefully planned, deliberate nature of Winther's actions, both in the sitting-room and in the bedroom, where he will eventually consummate his objective. It provides also a powerful contrast to the brutality of his subsequent actions. The fragmentary, incomplete image of the perpetrator's movements is an example of what Mieke Bal would describe as the character 'know(ing) more than the focalizer.'<sup>66</sup> The focalization at this point lies with the narrator and not with a character, as we

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<sup>64</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.85

<sup>65</sup> *ibid*, p.86.

<sup>66</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985, p.114.

know that this event cannot be perceived by Albertine, who is still asleep. The deictic adverb 'der' indicates that Winther is no longer the deictic centre at this point. The focalizer remains in the sitting-room with the dormant protagonist and the precise nature of Winther's 'rummaging' is therefore never made explicit. However, the following observation by Albertine a little later in the scene alerts the reader to the callousness of Winther's premeditated crime:

Hun var gresselig trett. Mon hva han brukte alle de flaskene til?  
Å, det var visst ådelybeng - hun var for trett til å gå bort og  
se.<sup>67</sup>

(She was dog tired. What did he use all those bottles for? Oh, it  
was probably odelybeng - she was too tired to go over and  
see.)

It might be argued that the bottles referred to in the above extract fulfil a sinister function which could explain Winther's 'careful rummaging' and Albertine's highly drowsy state. The reference to the bottles is an enticing clue to the ease with which Winther's victim succumbs to his subsequent orders that she should undress and lie down on his bed, which we shall look at in the next section. In the above extract, Albertine has awoken and is once again the focalizer, her vision of events signalled by several of what Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan refers to as 'verbal indicators of focalization'.<sup>68</sup> She quotes 'naming' as one such signal, and we can identify this type of variation in naming in Albertine's pronunciation of the cologne 'Eau de Lubin.' The protagonist's point of view is also expressed through the occurrence of free indirect discourse, which we discussed earlier when we examined Winther's thought processes. Albertine's question 'Mon hva han brukte alle de flaskene til?' is a self-directed interrogative which Susan Ehrlich refers to as a 'direct discourse construction' and which indicates a subjective point of view.<sup>69</sup> The colloquial tone of the narration at this point, notably manifest in the expressive elements 'Å' and 'visst,' are also evidence of Albertine's thought processes. An indication that she has again become the deictic centre is conveyed by the deictic pronoun 'de'

<sup>67</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.87.

<sup>68</sup> Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, London & New York: Methuen, 1983, p.82.

<sup>69</sup> Susan Ehrlich, *Point of View: A Linguistic Analysis of Literary Style*, London: Routledge, 1990, p.15.

<sup>70</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.87.

(‘those’) and the adverb ‘bort’ (‘over’), both of which suggest a spatial location from which events are observed. The narration here is purely subjective, with minimum narratorial intervention.

### *The diverted gaze*

The fragmented form of free indirect discourse, which frames Winther’s thought processes and which as we have seen reflects the fragmented nature of his observation of the sleeping woman, is also manifest in his verbal exchange with her when she awakens from her sleep. Her tentative attempts to request Winther’s permission to leave are thwarted by the police officer’s terse commands:

“Drikk - drikk sherry - skål - drikk, sier jeg - du ser dårlig ut.  
Det er best du går inn og hviler deg litt på sengen der inne”

(“Drink - have a drink of sherry - cheers - drink, I tell you - you look unwell. It is best that you go in and rest a little on the bed in there.”)

The manner in which Winther orders Albertine to ‘rest’ on his bed is almost military in its bluntness, occurring as it does as a sequence of fragmented, curt commands. The mechanical and unfeeling tone of his speech is strangely at odds with his observation that Albertine does not look well and also with his subsequent directions, which are reminiscent of a doctor preparing a patient for an examination. When we look at Albertine’s intrusive examination at the police station in Chapter 8, we can observe parallels between the behaviour of the doctor and that of Winther in the pre-rape scene. Albertine’s reply that she will not remove her clothing provokes a response from Winther which is bluntly dismissive and absurdly incongruous to the seductive setting he has obviously prearranged specifically for his rape of Albertine:

“Jo!” svarte han uten å se opp - “det er det beste at du tar av deg klærne. - Ja det er det beste.”<sup>70</sup>

(“Yes!” he replied without looking up - “it is best that you take off your clothes. - Yes that is the best thing.”)

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<sup>70</sup> Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, p.82.

What is evident from the above extract, and which in fact characterises the entire scene, is the lack of a mutual gaze between the two characters. Winther appears to deliberately avoid looking at Albertine during their conversational exchange, in contrast to his rapacious observation of her when she is asleep and oblivious to his gaze. We noted earlier that when Albertine is the focalizer, the physical description of Winther is restricted to his hands or the crown of his head, which tells us that Winther's focus is itself diverted from Albertine. We also argued that Albertine's observation of Winther's luxuriant furnishings may not only have been motivated by a genuine admiration for the lush interior, but might be argued to have constituted a deliberate tactic to avoid eye contact with the police officer. The omission of any facial description of Winther suggests several possibilities concerning the relationship between the two characters. It is apparent that Albertine only directly observes Winther when he is preoccupied, or that Winther deliberately withholds his gaze from Albertine when she is no longer asleep. Albertine, as a female member of the lower classes, might be seen to be adhering to a behavioural code of the period, whereby the working class woman, in the presence of a male figure of authority, might avoid direct eye contact with her so-called superior. An additional possibility, however, is Albertine's implicit aversion to Winther, which becomes fully articulated in her observation of her rapist shortly after she has been raped by him, and which we shall discuss in the next chapter, when we examine the representation of the rapist in *Albertine* and *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*. Winther's avoidance of making eye contact with his intended victim may be attributed to his knowledge of the crime he is about to commit, and perhaps also to the contempt for women which, as we noted in Chapter 1, is a characteristic trait of the sexually violent male.

## 6.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have focussed on what I have termed as 'the pre-rape scene' in *Albertine*, examining patterns of focalization which highlight the gender and power imbalance between Winther and the protagonist. It was argued that the lack of sexual attraction on Albertine's part was manifest in the obvious avoidance of a mutual gaze between the two characters, which further highlighted Winther's guilty intent. We compared the passage describing

Winther's fragmentation of Albertine's body to a similar description of the protagonist at the beginning of the novel, which was not focalized through the rapist. We found that Winther's sexually violent intent was reflected in transitivity patterns with Albertine's body parts as agents of material processes. We also examined the extent to which Albertine's sexual victimisation could be seen as the result of a male conspiracy and noted that her entrapment by Winther was facilitated by Helgesen's rejection of her. In chapter 8 we shall investigate further the crucial rôle played by Helgesen in Albertine's rape by Winther when we examine the rape scene in detail. We shall also consider aspects of at what I would term as Albertine's 'second rape,' her enforced medical examination by the police doctors, when we look at the concepts of focalization and fragmentation in representations of sexual violence in both *Albertine* and *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*.

## Chapter 7

### The Child Victim: 'Tora'

Og hun ville rope på mora, kjenne henne inntil seg.  
Men hun fikk ikke frem en lyd.<sup>1</sup>

#### 7.1 Introduction

##### *Herbjørg Wassmo*

The acclaimed Norwegian writer Herbjørg Wassmo has published numerous novels, plays and volumes of short stories and is the recipient of several literary awards. She was born on the remote island of Skogsøya on Vesterålen, near the Lofoten Islands. She made her debut with a collection of poems, *Vingeslag* in 1976 but her breakthrough as a writer occurred with the publication of her first novel, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* in 1981, the first volume in her Tora-trilogy. The novel became a bestseller and Wassmo was awarded *Den norske kritikkerprisen*. The subsequent volumes, *Det stumme rommet* (1983) and *Hudløs Himmel* (1986) were also critically acclaimed and Wassmo received *Nordisk råds pris* for the final volume of the trilogy.<sup>2</sup>

##### *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*

The novel is set in a small fishing town on the North Norwegian coast in the mid 1950's. It tells the story of Tora, the twelve-year old daughter of Ingrid and a German soldier killed in World War II. Tora's mother works in a fish factory and is the family's main breadwinner. Her husband Henrik lost an arm fighting against the Germans and is unemployed. He is a heavy drinker, tyrannical and physically violent. Tora lives with her mother and Henrik in a dilapidated, former mansion which is now used as welfare accommodation for poor

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<sup>1</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981, p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Janet Garton, *Norwegian Women's Writing 1850-1890*, London & Atlantic Islands, N.J., 1983, pp. 230-231.



families such as Tora's. The novel describes the everyday lives of these people, but the narrative centres on Tora, who is sexually abused by her stepfather.

There are several dimensions to Tora's circumstances, including the stigma of being 'tyskerbarn':

Tyskerunge!  
Hun hadde hørt ordet rett som det var. Det lå noe vondt i det.  
En dom.<sup>3</sup>

(German brat!  
She had heard that word once in a while. There was something  
evil in it. A judgment.)

The novel also describes Tora's positive relationships, such as her friendship with Sol and the mute boy Fritz and the strong bond she has with her aunt Rakel and Uncle Simon. However, the most significant aspect of Tora's situation concerns her experiences of sexual abuse. Jorunn Hareide praises the novel's depiction of the sexually abusive relationship between Tora and Henrik:

Kampen mot stefaren, som misbruker henne seksuelt i et  
forvridd forsøk på å ta hevn for sin egen vanskjebne, er skildret  
med sjelden innlevelse og stigende intensitet.<sup>4</sup>

(The battle against her stepfather who sexually abuses her in a  
distorted attempt to take revenge for his own misfortune, is  
described with rare insight and increasing intensity.)

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<sup>3</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981, p.30.

<sup>4</sup> Jorunn Hareide, 'Kampen for menneskeverd. Herbjørg Wassmo: *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*,' in *Norsk litterær årbok*, (1982) Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, p.207.

### *Reader Response and Gender*

Wassmo's brave and penetrative handling of the theme of incestuous abuse was, however, overlooked by several male critics, as Hareide points out:

[...] noen menn har ikke engang skjønt at det dreier seg om seksuelt misbruk over lengre tid, men tror at det handler om en enkelt voldtekt [...]<sup>5</sup>

([...] some men have not even understood that it is a question of sexual abuse over a longer period, but think that it concerns an isolated rape.)

Hareide argues that such a blatant misreading of the text must either be attributed to these male readers' lack of interest in the problem of sexual abuse, or their inability - or unwillingness - to explore the richly metaphorical, poetic language of the text. She suggests that a misinterpretation of the novel may also arise from the fact that much of the narration is from Tora's point of view.<sup>6</sup> The mind style of the young, sexually victimised protagonist conveys her sense of powerlessness in the face of experiences that are beyond her control or comprehension. Tora's conceptualisation of reality is portrayed in a language that is frequently fragmented and highly metaphorical, which may account for the misinterpretation of Tora's systematic sexual victimisation by her stepfather. There is arguably a connection between Hareide's observations on the novel's metaphorical language and technique of point of view on the one hand, and the response of the aforementioned male critics on the other. If the narrative is frequently focalized through its female protagonist, the reader is presented with a female perspective of events. Of course, that is not to say that all male readers will inevitably misread or skim over the text for this reason, as this is not the case. However, Hareide claims that when the novel was first published, 'far more men than women' misconstrued the depiction of Tora's

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<sup>5</sup> Jorunn Hareide, 'Kampen for menneskeverd. Herbjørg Wassmo: *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*,' p.209.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p.219.

sexual victimisation and Hareide noted also a gender distinction concerning the focus of attention in the critics' readings of the text:

I anmeldelsene finner jeg [...] en tendens til at mennene er mer opptatt av tids- og miljøbildet i romanen, og av allmene, sosioøkonomiske problemer, mens kvinnene i større grad fokuserer på de fysiske overgrepene mot Tora.<sup>7</sup>

(In the reviews I find [...] a trend that the men are more occupied with the portrayal of the era and the environment, and of the general, socio-economic problems, while the women to a greater degree focus on the physical assaults on Tora.)

### *The Body in the Text*

The female readers' identification with Tora and her experiences of abuse may be viewed in the light of the text's central positioning of the female body. Tora's experiences of sexual abuse are depicted in a language rich with bodily metaphors. Rakel Christina Granaas comments on their prominence in the text:

Levende og døde kropper, kroppsbehov, kroppsfunksjoner, kroppsspråk, kroppsdelar, lemlestelse, overgrep - og begjær inntil det dyriske, ofte uttrykt gjennom frodige metaforer og sammenligner som kobler kropp og menneske med natur - denne teknikken er svært øyefallende i *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*.<sup>8</sup>

(Living and dead bodies, bodily needs, bodily functions, body language, body parts, mutilation, abuse - and lust to the degree of sexual depravity, frequently expressed through rich metaphors and similes which link body and person with nature - this technique is very striking in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*.)

In a text that is concerned with sexual abuse and rape, the body must inevitably occupy a central rôle. The victim of sexual violence is subjected to an invasion that damages and distorts her own relationship to her body. Rhonda Copelon

<sup>7</sup> Jorunn Hareide, 'Kampen for menneskeverd,' p.209.

<sup>8</sup> Rakel Christina Granaas, 'Den kroppen som ikke var hennes,' in Randi Christina Krogsveien (ed.), *Født av spindel og jern: om Herbjørg Wassmo's forfatterskap*. Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, 2000, p.21.

articulates the devastating effect of rape on the victim's 'physical and mental integrity':

Every rape has the potential to profoundly debilitate, to render the woman homeless in her own body and destroy her sense of security in the world.<sup>9</sup>

The rape victim's sense of being rendered 'homeless in her own body' can, as we saw in Chapter 5, involve a process of dissociation or 'distancing' from the body, that functions as a survival mechanism. In this chapter, my aim is to examine Tora's dissociation processes through an analysis of Wassmo's metaphorical prose, focussing on the protagonist's experiences of sexual abuse. I shall explore the themes of entrapment and escape in relation to linguistic features that convey the victim's physical and psychological responses to 'farligheten,' the abusive sexuality which is embodied in her stepfather Henrik.

## 7.2 Entrapment and Escape: The Disembodied State

The conflicting phenomena of entrapment and escape are fundamental to the situation of the sexually abused child and these diametric themes are predominant in the novel. Tora's physical confinement is exemplified in the following extract, where she is about to take a bath. Hearing Henrik enter the house, her terror is implicitly conveyed through the description of her body's immobility:

Tora satt dørgende stille i kroken sin.<sup>10</sup>

(Tora sat perfectly still in her corner)

The possessive pronoun accompanying 'kroken' identifies 'the corner' as specifically Tora's, suggesting that for the abused child it is an habitual place of refuge. By definition, this hiding-place is transient and ineffectual. To the sexually victimised protagonist, it is the last and smallest of a sequence of spaces

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<sup>9</sup> Rhonda Copelon, 'Surfacing Gender: Reconceptualising Crimes Against Women,' in Lois Ann Lorentzen & Jennifer Turpin (eds), *The Women and War Reader*, New York: New York University Press, 1998, p.76.

<sup>10</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.52.

into which she is driven within the actual boundaries of the living space. In her trapped physical state, she must find some other means of ‘escaping’ from her abuser.

### *The Imagery of Dissociation*

In the scenes depicting Henrik’s sexual abuse of his stepdaughter, the themes of entrapment and escape are linguistically manifest in features that highlight the victim’s processes of dissociation. In Chapter 5, we examined the mechanism of dissociation and its linguistic expression in Hanne Dahl’s *Vannliljen* and Mette Sundt’s *Som igar, som imorgen*. We noted that for the protagonists in these narratives, this survival strategy was a means of distancing themselves from their traumatic experiences. We saw in Sundt’s novel, for example, that the mechanism was projected through doll metaphors and spatial deixis, which served to convey the process of distancing herself from the perpetrator’s abuse of her body. In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Tora’s processes of dissociation are characterised by similes and metaphors that convey images of ‘flying,’ ‘floating’ and ‘emptiness.’ This imagery is exemplified in the following example of internal narration from the opening page of the novel:

Så måtte hun gjøre seg helt våken, enda hun ikke ville. Sette seg rett opp i senga og være som et tomt skall. Det kjentes som om hodet var svulmet opp og holdt det tomme skallet flytende i rommet.<sup>11</sup>

(Then she had to make herself completely awake, even though she didn’t want to. Sit right up in her bed and be like an empty shell. It felt as though her head had swelled up and was holding the empty shell floating in the room.)

Tora’s internalised processes are expressed through similes that connote weightlessness and emptiness, where her body, from the head downwards, loses its substance and agency. The split between Tora’s mind and her body is conveyed through the interplay between the mental process of cognition ‘kjentes’ and the body part agency of the material process ‘holdt,’ with ‘the empty shell’ (Tora’s body) functioning as object.

The material process of ‘flying’ conveys Tora’s dissociation in the following extract, where her physical entrapment and terror of her abuser releases her

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<sup>11</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.5.

into a disembodied state which is at once limitless and void; a condition of nonexistence which symbolises her feelings of denial and worthlessness:

Det var ingen i hele verden som hette Tora. Hun var fløyet inn i ingenting. Det var bare en stor stillhet.<sup>12</sup>

(There was no-one in the whole world who was called Tora. She had flown into nothing. There was only a great stillness.)

Tora's 'fight or flight' response to Henrik's invasion of the private sanctity of her space is a typical distancing mechanism used by sexually abused children which Emily Driver describes as 'to retreat or fly away from the fear induced by the experience.'<sup>13</sup> Tora's disavowal of her own identity projected in the pronouncement 'Det var ingen i hele verden som hette Tora,' is reinforced through the second clause 'Hun var fløyet inn i ingenting.' There is a forceful tension here between the verb of motion 'var fløyet,' which expresses a sense of release and spatial distance, and the prepositional phrase 'inn i ingenting,' which suggests stasis. The reader is alerted not only to Tora's desire to escape from the diabolical space which her room has become, but also to her self-effacement, encapsulated in the indefinite pronoun 'ingening.' If we look at the description of Henrik's entrance into Tora's room as she is taking her bath, the significance of Tora's metaphysical 'flight' becomes even more evident:

Hun så og så. At døra åpnet seg. Så ham velte inn som et stort loddent berg.<sup>14</sup>

(She saw and saw. Saw the door open. Saw him flounder in like a large shaggy mountain.)

The contrastive clauses 'Hun var fløyet inn i ingenting' and 'Så ham velte inn som et stort, loddent berg,' convey the antithesis between Tora and the larger-than-life manifestation of her abuser, particularly conspicuous in the disparity between the material processes 'fløyet' and 'veltet.' Implicit in the bird metaphor is a quality of weightlessness which contrasts with Henrik's clumsy brutishness, his maleness further emphasised by the adjective 'loddent.' There is

<sup>12</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.53.

<sup>13</sup> Emily Driver, 'Child Sexual Abuse' in Emily Driver & Audrey Doisen (eds) *Child Sexual Abuse: Feminist Perspectives*, Hampshire & London: MacMillan, 1989, p.184.

<sup>14</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981, p.53.



a further tension between the verticality of Tora's 'flight' away from her place of entrapment and Henrik's bulldozing advancement towards it. The simile 'som et stort loddent berg' cogently expresses Tora's perception of her abuser. Through the eyes of the young protagonist he appears foreign, immense. She sees him not as a human being, but as a monstrous, formless hulk. He is as overpowering and sinister as the mountains that dominate the surrounding landscape:

Regnet hadde overfalt dem, og nedetter fjellhamrene lå skodda tykk som gammel ondskap.<sup>15</sup>

(The rain had suddenly fallen upon them, and the fog covered the steep mountain crags like ancient evil.)

In her trapped state, Tora is unable to physically escape from Henrik's systematic violation of her body, and as we have seen, she must find some other means of distancing herself from his abuse of her. At times, this 'abandonment' of her body appears to occur at will:

Da gikk Tora utenom sin egen kropp og vilje [...] <sup>16</sup>

(Then Tora went out of her body and will [...])

On other occasions, Tora's process of disembodiment seems to occur spontaneously and completely outwith her control, as in the following excerpt which describes her reaction on hearing Henrik at her bedroom door:

Det var som om hodet hennes utvidet seg. Ble stort og uformelig og fløt bort så hun ikke hadde styring med det lenger.<sup>17</sup>

(It was as if her head expanded. Became large and formless and floated away, so that she no longer had any control over it.)

Tora's feelings of powerlessness are reflected through the interplay of distal spatial deixis and body part agency that is expressed in the verb phrase 'fløt

<sup>15</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.37.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, p.8.

<sup>17</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p. 53.

bort.’ The protagonist’s lack of control over her own body is reiterated in the final clause, the image of ‘floating,’ of a sense of weightlessness, providing a powerful contrast to her abuser’s lumbering movements:

Henrik beregnet verken dørkarm eller dør. Han hadde ikke skritt, han subbet bare inn.<sup>18</sup>

(Henrik didn’t take doorframes or doors into account. He didn’t have footsteps. He just shuffled in.)

Tora’s metaphysical flight from the fear she experiences on an earthly plane into a state of ‘stillness’ presents a powerful contrast to her abusive stepfather’s forced invasion of her space and premeditated penetration of her body. This opposition is further illustrated in the following extract, in which Henrik’s abuse of Tora is imminent:

Hun holdt såpestykket inntil kroppen. Prøvde å dekke seg med to tynne armer og et såpestykke.<sup>19</sup>

(She held the piece of soap tightly to her body. Tried to cover herself with two thin arms and a piece of soap.)

Trapped within the restricted physical boundaries of her bathtub, Tora’s acute vulnerability is intensified by the nakedness of her young body and her inability to shield herself from her abuser.

### 7.3 The Victim’s Viewpoint

Chapter 4 examined the function of mental processes, or verbs of perception and cognition, such as ‘see,’ ‘feel,’ and ‘know’ as linguistic indicators of psychological point of view. In other words, these types of processes suggest that the narration is mediated through the character’s consciousness. In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, mental process verbs are a characteristic feature of the narrative and serve to contrast Tora’s heightened sense of awareness engendered by her experiences of abuse with the failure and unwillingness of

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, p.6.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p.53.

those around her to 'see' her pain, their 'blindness' embodied in the metaphor of the novel's title. Rakel Christina Granaas articulates the metaphor's duality of meaning:

Men øynene ser ikke. Å se kan oppfattes som å vite. Huset vet ikke hva som foregår, menneskene i Toras nærhet er blinde for overgrepene.<sup>20</sup>

(But the eyes don't see. To see can be interpreted as knowing. The house doesn't know what is happening, the people in Tora's immediate environment to Tora are blind to the abuse.)

'Blindness' can thereby by the same token be equated with ignorance: an inability or an unwillingness to perceive the sexual abuse to which the victim is systematically subjected.

### *Processes of Perception*

In the novel's representations of sexual violence, mental processes serve to identify Tora as the focalizer of the narration, the emphasis on her processes of perception frequently highlighting her physical entrapment. In the following extract which we discussed earlier, where Henrik is about to attack Tora in her bath, we can note that the recurrence of the verb of perception 'så' suggests that the recounted events are from Tora's perspective. We can also observe that the preposition 'inn' identifies Tora as the deictic centre of the narration:

Kniven under listen bevegte seg sakte. Hun så og så. At døra åpnet seg. Så ham velte inn som et stort loddent berg.<sup>21</sup>

(The knife under the moulding moved slowly. She saw and saw. That the door opened. Saw him flounder in like a large shaggy mountain.)

In this extract, the focal point of the narration is the movement of the knife 'under the moulding.' There is no visible agent, the door providing a barrier between the source of the action and the viewer. The repetition of the verb 'så' in the clause 'Hun så og så,' serves to extend the process of 'seeing' on the temporal plane and, simultaneously, to define and arrest the point of focus on

<sup>20</sup> Rakel Christina Granaas, 'Den kroppen som ikke var hennes,' p.21.

<sup>21</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.53.

the spatial plane. The emphasis is on 'seeing' as a process to which Tora commits her entire will in the sense of 'watching.' The repetition of the mental process verb also emphasises Tora's acute sense of awareness in her trapped state. The entrapment of her body might thus be argued to heighten her processes of perception. The main clause 'Hun så og så' is intransitive and we assume the object of Tora's focus to be the agent of the previous sentence, ie. 'kniven,' in the clause 'kniven (under listen) bevegte seg sakte.' As we read on, however, we encounter the subordinating conjunction 'At,' introducing the subordinate clause 'At døren åpnet seg' and we thereby discover a subtle shift in the sense of the mental process verb 'så.' A new movement enters Tora's field of vision, the 'opening' of the door signifying the collapse of the protective barrier Tora has tried to build by wedging a kitchen knife into the door-frame. The breaking of the syntactic rule which does not allow a subordinate clause to stand on its own forces us to go back and to read again the sentence 'Hun så og så,' thus ensuring our increasing involvement in this key scene and reinforcing our identification with Tora. The full stop separating the main clause from the subordinate clause creates a break between the 'movement' of the knife and the 'opening' of the door, thus emphasising the sense of timelessness evoked by the repetition of Tora's mental process of perception. The punctuation here produces the added effect of slowing down the process of the 'door opening,' the prolonged action heightening the scene's progressive mood of tension.

#### 7.4 The Dynamics of 'Dangerousness'

##### *Farligheten*

The opening sentence of the novel introduces the neologism 'farligheten,' which recurs throughout the narrative:

Hun visste ikke når hun først ble klar over den: Farligheten. Det var lenge etter at hun flyttet inn i det vesle spiskammerset bak kjøkkenet, fordi mora mente hun skulle ha et lite rom for seg selv.<sup>22</sup>

(She didn't know when she first became aware of it : the Dangerousness. It was long after she had moved into the little pantry behind the kitchen, because her mother thought that she should have a little room to herself.)

We touched briefly upon the use of the term in the section on lexical features of mind style in Chapter 5, but it merits further discussion here, as it is central to the novel's depiction of Tora's sexual victimisation. In the American translation of the novel, 'farligheten' appears as 'the danger,'<sup>23</sup> a direct translation of the Norwegian noun 'fare.' I would argue that Wassmo's term is, however, crucially distinct from the abstract noun 'fare,' as it expresses the mind style of the character of Tora. 'Farligheten' captures the essence of Tora's experiences of sexual abuse. The nominalisation of the adjective transforms the abstract noun 'fare' into a state or condition, suggesting something that is permanent and unalterable, from which there is no escape. 'Farligheten' is specific to Tora's terrifying plight, but she is unable to define her subjection as sexual abuse, the term reflecting the terrible strangeness of her victimisation. The neologism embraces a duality that is at once abstract yet at the same time concrete, for 'farligheten' represents to the twelve-year old Tora not only the condition of 'dangerousness' that exists like a climatic state, its threat permeating her immediate environment, but in more concrete terms it denotes her abuser and the sexual abuse he inflicts upon her. We are told that Tora's first awareness of 'farligheten' occurs after she has moved into the pantry. Its location behind the kitchen and its diminutive size suggests entrapment, a cell-like space where Tora

<sup>22</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.5.

<sup>23</sup> *The House with the Blind Glass Windows*. Translated by Roseann Lloyd and Allen Simpson. Washington: Seal Press, 1987.

is cornered by her abusive gaoler. In a reference to Tora's lack of appetite, Raket Christina Granaas observes the symbolic relevance of the pantry as Tora's bedroom:

[...] Tora ikke orker å spise for hun er selv en som blir spist og fortært. Hun sover attpåtil i et spiskammers, ligger vel anrettet og venter på den sultne Henrik.<sup>24</sup>

([...] Tora can't manage to eat for she is herself being eaten and devoured. Furthermore, she sleeps in a pantry, lying served up, waiting for the hungry Henrik.)

Ingrid's intended function of the pantry as a bedroom, a place of privacy for her daughter, is horribly altered through Henrik's transgressions. As Granaas argues, we could say that the pantry has reverted to its original function through Henrik's rapacious appetite for his stepdaughter. 'Farligheten' converts the room from a secure place of her own to a dangerous space where she is sexually abused and raped.

### *The Flight from Farligheten*

Dagny Kristjánsdóttir makes the following observations regarding the conception of 'farligheten':

Lille Tora har hverken sosiologiske eller psykologiske begreber til å begripe det som skjer, men hun har barnets (og de gales) kreative forhold til språket; hun lager et 'portmanteau' ord for Henrik og det han står for, det er 'farligheten.'<sup>25</sup>

(Little Tora has neither sociological nor psychological concepts for grasping what is happening, but she has the child's (and the insane's) creative relationship with language; she has created a 'portmanteau' word for Henrik and what he stands for; it is 'dangerousness'.)

Kristjánsdóttir's parenthesised reference to the language of 'the insane' relates to the narration in the final volume of the trilogy, *Hudløs Himmel*, in which Tora's schizophrenia becomes articulated through language that reflects her

<sup>24</sup> Raket Christina Granaas. 'Den Kroppen som ikke var hennes,' p.24.

<sup>25</sup> Dagny Kristjánsdóttir, "With-out": Om Tora-trilogien av Herbjørg Wassmo, in *Norskkrift*, Universitet i Oslo: Institutt for nordisk språk og litteratur, 1988, p. 97.



fragmented, distorted perception of the world. Kristjánsdóttir rightly argues that Tora's psychosis does not have its origins in *Hudløs Himmel*, but that it is already established in the first two volumes.<sup>26</sup> A number of metaphorical patterns that describe Tora's perceptions (such as the imagery of weightlessness and 'floating' that we discussed earlier) in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, recur in *Hudløs Himmel*. Kristjánsdóttir regards the problem of 'incest' as only a part of the Tora - discourse,<sup>27</sup> and focusses her argument on Tora's language of schizophrenia in the final novel. Although my analysis excludes the second and third volumes of the trilogy, I wanted to briefly touch upon Tora's psychosis in *Hudløs Himmel*, because of its relevance to her experiences of 'farligheten.' I would argue that Tora's subjection to incestuous abuse over a period of years is pivotal to her later development of schizophrenia. My reading of *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* identifies 'farligheten' - Tora's special term for the abusive sexuality personified in Henrik - as the foundation of Tora's flight into an alternative realm. I therefore share Øystein Rottem's view that 'farligheten' lies at the root of Tora's dissociation processes:

'Farligheten avler angst, skam- og skyldfølelse og fører på avgjørende vis til at Tora blir en spaltet person - med et sterkt behov for å distansere seg fra seg selv og sin egen kropp.'<sup>28</sup>

(The dangerousness engenders feelings of fear, guilt and shame, and leads conclusively to Tora becoming a split person - with a powerful need to distance herself from her self and her body.)

The imagery of weightlessness and emptiness that characterises the nature of Tora's distancing processes can be found in literature written by survivors of child sexual abuse. In the first volume of Maya Angelou's biography, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*, the writer describes the physical sensations she

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, p.102.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, p.97.

<sup>28</sup> Øystein Rottem, 'Det Tomme Rommet: Herbjørg Wassmo og den melodramatiske forestillingsmåte,' in Randi Christina C. Krogsveen (ed.), *Født av spindel og jern*, p.78.

experiences as an eight-year old child, shortly after being raped by her mother's lover:

My belly and behind were as heavy as cold iron, but it seemed  
my head had gone away and pure air replaced it on my  
shoulders.<sup>29</sup>

The tension between the weightlessness of the head and the heaviness of the body is also expressed by Unni Wenche Lindberg:

Hodet kunne flykte  
Kroppen ble igjen  
Hver berøring lagret  
under et panser<sup>30</sup>

(The head could flee  
The body stayed behind  
Every touch stored  
under an armour plate.)

In the above extracts, as in the descriptions we have been looking at of Tora's responses to her abuse, the child's mind escapes from the burden of her abused body.

### *Entrapment and Rape*

Tora's physical entrapment reaches its zenith towards the end of the novel, when Henrik rapes her:

En kveld kom knirket i døra så bratt at hun ikke fikk tid til å  
forlate kroppen sin og la tankene løpe fritt ut av vinduet. Tora  
var nødt til å følge med, kjenne alt som skjedde med henne.<sup>31</sup>

(One evening the creak of the door came so suddenly that she  
didn't have time to leave her body and let her thoughts run  
freely out of the window. Tora was forced to be attentive, to  
feel everything that was happening to her.)

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<sup>29</sup> Maya Angelou, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*, London: Virago, 1984, p.78.

<sup>30</sup> Extract taken from the poem 'Splittet.' Unni Wenche Lindberg, *Vet du hva det koster? Konsekvenser av seksuelle overgrep*, Oslo: Emilia 2001, p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.152

The themes of entrapment and escape are linguistically manifest in the tension between Tora's mental processes of cognition and her material processes denoting movement away from the deictic centre. Henrik's entrance is so unexpectedly sudden that she is not given sufficient time to release her mind from her body, as she has previously been able to do, and must rely purely on her physical resources. On this occasion, Tora is forced to 'feel' the violation of her body; to experience the full impact of Henrik's ruthless and brutal abuse of her. Her reaction is conveyed through the following description of her dehumanised state, the relentless and violent nature of the attack heightened through the alliterative velar 'k' consonant:

Da tok hun til å jamre og klynke og krype rundt i sengen. Klarte ikke å ligge stille og bare la det komme til en ende denne kvelden også.<sup>32</sup>

(Then she began to wail and whimper and crawl around in her bed. Couldn't manage to lie still and just let it come to an end this evening too.)

The adverb 'også' ('also') suggests that Tora's rape is not an isolated event, but part of an ongoing pattern of sexual abuse. Her futile attempt to escape from her rapist further provokes him and exacerbates the violence he implements on this occasion. Tora's entrapment is fully and violently realised through Henrik's use of a rope with which to ensnare her, thus enabling him to fully complete his rape of her:

Da kom han igjen. Med et rep.  
Tora trodde det ikke! Verden var ikke så grim.<sup>33</sup>

(Then he came back. With a rope.  
Tora couldn't believe it! The world wasn't that cruel.)

Henrik's effective employment of the rope as a weapon, an incremental implement in the commission of his rape, provides a sadly ironic contrast to the highly ineffectual function of the potentially dangerous knife, which as we saw earlier, Tora had wedged into the doorframe as a means of hindering Henrik's entry into her room.

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.153.

### *Darkness and Light*

Tora's fear of her stepfather engenders an ambivalence towards the converse conditions of daylight and darkness, expressed in the following paradox, in which her dilemma is symbolised by a tension between summer and winter, day and night:

Hun ville at det skulle være sommer og lyst hele døgnet når hun hadde det slikt. Samtidig ville hun gjemme seg i mørke vinteren i den mest bortgjemte krå som kunne finnes.<sup>34</sup>

(She wanted it to be summer and light the whole day and night when she felt like this. At the same time she wanted to hide in the dark winter, in the most concealed corner that could be found.)

This extract exemplifies the novel's underlying themes of entrapment and escape, which are central to the experiences of the child victim of sexual abuse. In the north of Norway, where the novel is set, summer and winter bring diametric and extreme conditions of light and dark. For the child victim of incestuous abuse, however, there is nowhere to hide:

Det nyttet ikke lenger å gjemme seg i noen krå. Der fantes ikke noe skjul.<sup>35</sup>

(It was no longer any use hiding herself in some corner. There wasn't any shelter.)

## **7.5 Summary**

In this chapter, I have focussed on Tora's processes of dissociation as a mechanism for escaping from her abuse. There are other dimensions to her strategies for survival, such as the stories she creates in her imagination, when she can escape to the safe and secret space of her aunt and uncle's loft and her sense of empowerment in the open air, where she is able to run in freedom and throw a ball further than anyone else. These forms of escape, however, are not

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, p.52.

<sup>35</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.54.

conceivable when Tora is trapped in the dangerous space of the house, alone with Henrik. At these times, when her entrapment is determined and she has no means of physically escaping from her abuser, she has no option left but to project herself into another realm: a disembodied state of oblivion. We saw that Tora's means of distancing herself from her experiences of sexual abuse was typically represented by imagery denoting weightlessness and spacial distance and we argued that 'farligheten' planted the seeds of these dissociation strategies. We also observed a diametric interplay between the imagery used to depict Tora's 'flight' from her abuse and the metaphorical language denoting Henrik's sexual predation. It was also noted that the emphasis on Tora's processes of perception served to underline her physical entrapment and to convey her heightened awareness under the imminent threat of abuse.

In the next chapter, we shall examine further the portrayal of Tora's experiences of rape and sexual abuse through a comparative analysis of the representation of sexual violence in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* and Christian Krohg's novel *Albertine*.

## Chapter 8

### **‘The Fragmented Body’: Focalization and Sexual Violence in *Albertine and Huset med den blinde glassveranda***

The purpose of the concept of ‘focalization’ is to provide a means of identifying the consciousness through which a fictional event is presented in a text.<sup>1</sup>

#### 8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6, we examined patterns of focalization in the scene preceding Albertine’s rape and noted the fragmentation of the dormant female body through the male focalizer. We also touched upon the concept of focalization with relation to Tora’s entrapment as a victim of sexual abuse in Wassmo’s novel *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* in Chapter 7. My aim in this chapter is to explore the narrative representations of sexual violence in both novels through an analysis of linguistic strategies which serve to depict the victim’s experiences of rape and sexual abuse. The concepts of focalization and fragmentation will be central to this discussion and I shall also draw on Halliday’s system of Transitivity, which, as we discussed in Chapter 5, was found to function as a grammatical feature of the victim’s mind style in a number of narratives about sexual violence. In this comparative analysis of *Albertine* and *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, I aim to identify shared and distinct narrative strategies concerning the depiction of rape and sexual abuse and the representation of the perpetrator. I shall also explore the rôle of setting and its important function in the depiction of sexual violence in both texts. Before commencing a detailed linguistic analysis, I shall consider a number of apparent contrasts and similarities between the two novels.

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Mills, *Feminist Stylistics*, London: Routledge, 1995, p.181.



### *Contrastive Characteristics*

*Albertine* and *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* were published almost a century apart. As we have seen, both novels have very different settings. Wassmo's narrative takes place in an isolated, rural community in the 1950's, with the experience of the war still resonant in the memories of its inhabitants. In Krohg's novel, set in the capital of Kristiania in the 1880's, the urban landscape serves as a backdrop to the protagonist's tragic story. The novel is male-authored and has an adult female protagonist who is raped by a police officer whom she does not know personally. *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* is female-authored and is concerned with child sexual abuse, which is ongoing and incestuous. The two protagonists arguably appear discrete, from the differences in their respective ages, environments and the epoch to which they belong. The psychological effects of their experiences of sexual violence might also be said to differ considerably. In *Albertine*, the consequences of the protagonist's rape and her subsequent medical examination are manifest in her rapid descent into a life of prostitution. Unable to escape from her legacy of poverty and branded by her upbringing and social milieu, her downfall is portrayed as an inevitable consequence. In Wassmo's novel, however, the protagonist's courage and resilience are conveyed through her determination to overcome her experiences of sexual and physical abuse. The narrative concludes on a positive and hopeful note, with Henrik's dispatchment to prison for the crime of arson, and an intimation that Tora's mother may at last notice her daughter. However, as we discussed in Chapter 7, the trilogy ends tragically with the rapid progression in the final novel of Tora's schizophrenia. Tora's inner life is described in a richly metaphorical language as we noted in Chapter 7, when we looked at her processes of dissociation. In Krohg's narrative, we are also given a frequent insight into the protagonist's consciousness, which we discussed in Chapter 6, when we examined Albertine's focalization of Winther and the interior setting of his apartment. We observed that the focalization in the pre-rape scene shifted between Albertine and Winther. The former's focalization was dominant, but not consistent. In Wassmo's novel, however, the narration is at no point focalized through Henrik. Focalization is mainly through Tora and the narrator, occasionally residing with a number of the other principal characters in the novel.

### *Shared Themes*

In both narratives, the protagonists are victims of sexual violence and in each case their sexual victimisation is inextricably linked to their stigmatisation. Albertine is stigmatised because she is a woman born into poverty, her sexual victimisation ensured by her gender, beauty and impoverished social circumstances. Tora's stigmatisation, as we saw in Chapter 7, is a consequence of her paternity. Øystein Rotteim explains how the themes of incest and stigmatisation are fused in the character of Tora to underscore the novel's underlying theme of loss:

Tora har ikke bare mistet en far som ingen utenom henne vil vite noe av, hun blir også fratatt sin barndom gjennom stefaren Henriks seksuelle overgrep - overgrep som blir forklart ved at Henrik selv er et offer, ødelagt (fysisk og mentalt) som han er av den samme krigen som han daglig blir mint om gjennom tyskerungen Toras tilstedeværelse i sitt liv.<sup>2</sup>

(Tora has not only lost a father whom no-one apart from herself cares to know about; she is also deprived of her childhood through her stepfather Henrik's sexual abuse - abuse which is explained by Henrik's own rôle as a victim, destroyed (physically and mentally) as he is by the same war of which he is daily reminded through the German kid Tora's presence in his life.)

Tora's stigma is thus twofold: the illegitimate child of a German father and Norwegian mother, conceived during the Nazi occupation of Norway, Tora is sexually victimised by her stepfather who is himself a victim, physically and psychologically damaged by the war. In Krohg's novel, the theme of loss is

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<sup>2</sup> Øystein Rottem, 'Det tomme rommet:Herbjørg Wassmo og den melodramatiske forestillingsmåte,' p.78.

conveyed through Albertine's rape and the death of her younger brother Edvard, which Tove Haugstveit argues are thematically linked:

Når broren dør, synes det å henseile på at Albertines barnlige uskyldstilstand ugjenkallelig er forbi og at det sjeelige forfall må gå sin gang. Slik kan altså hans død sees som et komposisjonstrekk som underbygger det deterministiske i Albertines utvikling.<sup>3</sup>

(When her brother dies, it seems to reflect that Albertine's childlike state of innocence is irrevocably over and her spiritual decay must take its course. In this way, his death can be viewed as a thematic feature which underpins the deterministic aspect of her development.)

The themes of death and sexual abuse are also merged in Wassmo's novel, most notably in the symbol of the tortured cat:

Hun ble som den lealøse katta som guttene i Været hadde plaget i hjel fordi ingen eide den.<sup>4</sup>

(She was like the loose-jointed cat which the boys in the village had tortured to death because no-one owned it.)

The image of the dead cat recurs throughout the novel and is crucially linked to Tora's exposure to sexual and physical abuse.

The theme of betrayal is explored in both novels, most notably in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*. Sarah Paulson clarifies its thematic prominence in Wassmo's writings:

Det tematiske slektskapet mellom romanene i Wassmos forfatterskap [...] er åpenbar: På hver sin måte skildrer de et barn som lider under konsekvensene av (foreldre)svik.<sup>5</sup>

(The thematic relationship between the novels in Wassmo's authorship [...] is evident: In each their own way they portray a child who suffers the consequences of (parental) betrayal.)

<sup>3</sup> Tove Brit Haugstveit, 'Christian Krohg's 'Albertine''. 3-måneders hovedoppgave, (unpublished dissertation) Oslo: Nordic Institute, University of Oslo, 1971, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.54.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah J. Paulson, 'Gjentakelse i Lykkens sønn' in Randi Christina C. Krogsveen (ed.), *Født av spindel og jern*, p.103.

In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, the central metaphor of blindness, alluded to in the title of the novel, reflects the betrayal of its child protagonist by those responsible for her care and well-being. The metaphor of the blinded eye can be interpreted in several ways, the decay and deterioration of the building representing neglect and poverty of both body and spirit and symbolising also the moral degeneration of the child sex abuser who exercises his reign of terror within its walls. It may be read specifically as a metaphorical representation of the perpetrator, the protagonist or of her mother Ingrid who appears 'blind' to her daughter's abuse. More generally, it may be understood to extend to all of the building's inhabitants, to the entire community of the island, and even further, to society as a whole. Like the flayed cat, it embodies the consequences of neglect, ignorance and powerlessness.

The theme of betrayal in Krohg's novel was examined in Chapter 6 and was associated with a male conspiracy to entrap Albertine, Helgesen's abandonment of the protagonist effectively heralding Winther's abuse of her vulnerability. The scent 'Eau de Lubin' was identified as a crucial factor in the pre-rape scene and may be interpreted as a symbol not only of Albertine's sexual awakening but also of her betrayal by Helgesen. As we shall see later, its recurrence crucially links the rape scene with the final scene between Helgesen and Albertine.

## 8.2 The Rapist

In both novels, the male body is fragmented into specific body parts when the narration is filtered through the consciousness of the female protagonist. In Chapter 6, we noted that in the pre-rape scene the fragmentation of Albertine's body occurred with the focalization of the male character and that when Albertine was the focalizer, Winther was identified by isolated bodily parts, most notably his hair and his hands. As the focalization in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* never resides with Henrik, the reader is not provided with an

insight into the mind of Tora's abuser. When Tora is the focalizer, her sexually abusive stepfather is, like Winther, frequently represented by his hands:

Hender. Hender som kom i mørket. [...] Store, harde hender som krafset og klemte.<sup>6</sup>

(Hands. Hands that came in the dark. [...] Large, hard hands that groped and squeezed.)

The proximal deictic verb 'kom' identifies Tora as the focalizer, the body part agency and value-laden lexis ('store, harde') conveying the mind style of the child victim. Tora's tactile perception of her abuser is implicitly conveyed through the reference to 'mørket' and explicitly represented by the value-laden adjective 'harde' and the material processes 'krafset' and 'klemte,' the alliterative velar 'k' reinforcing the hardness and unremitting brutality of the abusing 'hands.' The full import of this image becomes apparent a page later, when we discover that Henrik has the use of only one arm, the result of a war injury. Seen through the eyes of the child protagonist, this 'able' limb is infinitely more grotesque than Henrik's 'damaged' arm:

Det underlige og skremmende med Henriks overkropp var likevel ikke den ødelagte skulderen. Det var den friske!<sup>7</sup>

(The strange and frightening thing about Henrik's upper body wasn't, however, the damaged shoulder. It was the healthy one!)

The diametric interplay between aggression and passivity is exemplified in

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<sup>6</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p.12.

the contrast between his 'healthy' arm and the limb that has been destroyed by the Germans:

Den veltet seg enormt under klærne. Neven og armen var en eneste bunt av trassige muskler i rastløs bevegelse. Men på venstre side hang hånden og armen underutviklet og passiv og var en hån mot hele Henriks vesen.<sup>8</sup>

(It was huge, tossing around under his clothes. The fist and arm were a single knot of defiant muscles in restless motion. But on his left side the hand and the arm hung, underdeveloped and passive, an insult to Henrik's entire being.)

Connotations of repressed sexual violence are implicit in the description of Henrik's active arm, effectively conveyed through body part agency and lexis that emphasises his deep-rooted anger and his inherently violent nature. The definition between hand and arm are erased, the entire limb powerfully active underneath the perpetrator's clothing. The opposition between impotence and force, which is so powerfully expressed in this extract, operates both textually and thematically. It not only depicts the conflicting physical characteristics of Henrik's limbs, but alludes also to the extreme imbalance of power between the child victim and her adult abuser.

### *The Faceless Perpetrator*

A notable aspect of the rapist's portrayal in both novels concerns the omission of any facial description, which might be argued to convey the inhumanity of these male characters, particularly with relation to the protagonist's focalization. In Chapter 6, we noted the avoidance of a mutual gaze between Winther and Albertine. With the protagonist as the focalizer, we observed that Winther was represented by the crown of his head or his hands. As well as indicating Albertine's aversion to the police officer, it implies also that when the protagonist is awake, her rapist's focus is diverted from the female protagonist and directed instead at the almonds which he is so assiduously and

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<sup>8</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.12.



tirelessly peeling. In the following extract, the seated Winther is focalized from above, as Albertine hesitantly attempts to leave:

“Kan jeg få lov til å gå?” Hun hadde reist seg - det var jo en ren svart pelslue han hadde på hodet - med noen grå hår innimellom.<sup>9</sup>

(“May I have permission to go?” She had got up - that was a regular black fur cap he had on his head - with a few grey hairs in amongst it.)

Albertine’s observation of Winther’s hair is mildly derisive, her sarcasm turning into contempt after he has raped her:

Om en stund trengte et flakkende skinn inn under øyelokkene. En fyrstikk ble tent, og hun så Winther stå foran den store vaskevannsbollen med stearinlys ved siden av seg. - Hodet med den svarte, kortklippede nakken var bøyet forover, og nedenfor den gulgrå jegerskjorten stakk de to stygge, lodne, hjulbente benene. Gud, hvor hun hatet ham!<sup>10</sup>

(In a while, a flickering light pressed in underneath her eyelids. A match was lit, and she saw Winther standing in front of the large washbasin with a paraffin candle at his side. - The head with its black, closely-cropped nape was bent forward, and below the greyish-yellow undershirt, protruded two ugly, hairy, bandy legs. God, how she hated him!)

The above extract powerfully illustrates the clinical nature of the scene, already exemplified in Winther’s detached behaviour towards his intended victim before she retires to his bedroom, which we discussed in Chapter 6. Having just raped Albertine, Winther is now observed by her to be in the process of what can be assumed to be a post-coital wash. As in the previous descriptions of him in the pre-rape scene, the focus is on his head and hair, but on this occasion his back is turned towards her in a final gesture of contempt towards his victim. He is framed by the light of the match, his image static and grotesque. Winther’s hands, previously focalized by Albertine in the pre-rape scene, are now hidden from her view. Spatially situated behind her rapist, her focalization of Winther

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<sup>9</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.87.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p.88.

is a reverse of her earlier observation of him in his sitting room, where she was seated directly opposite him. In contrast to Winther's detailed scrutiny of the protagonist in the pre-rape scene, which reveals nuances of light and shadow, Albertine's observation of Winther is cursory and crude, his discoloured undershirt contrasting with the white sheets on which she has been raped. The protagonist's abhorrence and contempt is manifest in the sequence of derogatory adjectives and in her final, heartfelt exclamation, expressed in the form of free indirect discourse.

The perpetrator's lack of facial features is explicitly stated in the following extract from *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, which describes an incident where Henrik abuses Tora as she is taking a bath:

Mannen hadde ikke noen ansikt. Fatet veltet. Den friske armen var villig til å greie opp for to.<sup>11</sup>

(The man had no face. The tub overturned. The healthy arm was willing to do the work of two.)

The scene's overtones of automatism are conveyed by the perpetrator's 'facelessness,' which also implicitly expresses his metaphorical 'blindness.' The mindless motivation of his actions is further conveyed by the replacement of a body part in place of a person in the final clause, the reference to the abuser's 'healthy arm' serving as a counterpoint to the damaging actions it implements in its abuse of the victim.

### *The Fragmented Perpetrator*

As in Krohg's novel, there is no description of the perpetrator's facial features in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* but where in the former it is implicitly conveyed through patterns of focalization in which the protagonist's focus is deliberately diverted from her rapist's face, in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* I would argue that the omission of a facial description of Henrik appears to derive from an emphasis on the fragmentation of his body into isolated anatomical elements and other manifestations of his being, notably

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<sup>11</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.53.

through unusual collocations which serve to highlight his sexually violent and deviant behaviour:

Han hadde ikke skritt, han subbet bare inn. Men Henrik hadde andre skritt inni hus om han ville. Skritt som nesten ikke hørtes. Lydløse, men full av grov pust.<sup>12</sup>

(He didn't have footsteps, he just shuffled in. But Henrik had other footsteps inside the house if he chose. Footsteps that could hardly be heard. Silent, but full of coarse breathing.)

Tora is able to distinguish between Henrik's habitual mode of movement and the premeditated 'footsteps' that signify his depraved motivation. The child protagonist's mind style is expressed through a highly unusual representation of the perpetrator, in the form of what Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short refer to as 'deviant collocations,' ie. groupings of words which deviate from a 'commonsense version of reality.'<sup>13</sup> The collocation 'Skritt [...] full av grov pust' serves to foreground the perpetrator's depravity and sexual intent. Changes in the abuser's breathing is one of the features in a 'pattern' which Ellen Klosterman has discovered in her research on representations of sexual abuse in both fictional and non-fictional works. The pattern includes elements such as the perpetrator's manipulation of the victim's physical environment or her body; justification by the perpetrator for inflicting the abuse, and a reference to the abuser's sexual arousal. The latter is outlined by Klosterman:

The perpetrator's sexual satisfaction is indicated by details such as changes in his breathing, intensity of his touch, or facial expression, or through details about his erection or ejaculation.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech & Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>14</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.192.

When Henrik forces his way into Tora's room when she is bathing, his breathing becomes the sole element of the scene of abuse:

Så ble det bare pust i rommet. Pusten var nattelyden i huset.<sup>15</sup>

(Then there was only breathing in the room. Breathing was the night sound of the house.)

In this extract, the noun 'pust' initially occurs without an article or possessive pronoun; it is expressed as an isolated entity, possessing no evident source. The adverb 'bare' identifies it as the sole occupier of the space and the essence of the moment immediately prior to Henrik's abuse of his stepdaughter. Like 'farligheten,' it is represented as a quasi-climatic state: a condition of the house in which the abuse occurs. When it is repeated in the definite form, it is identifiable as something that is associated with the darkness, but which is now threatening Tora in the daylight hours. Her dawning realisation that 'the breathing' is no longer only a phenomenon of the night is interrupted by Henrik's approach and is therefore not fully formulated, as indicated by aposiopesis:

Nå var det dag men...<sup>16</sup>

(Now it was daytime but...)

Tora's thought processes are at this point interrupted by Henrik's abuse of her. The representation of the perpetrator by his body parts and other isolated aspects of his being such as his laughter and his breathing contributes to the mind style of the child protagonist who, as a victim of incestuous abuse, experiences her stepfather as an overpowering, grotesque entity typified by his inhumanity.

In Wassmo's novel, the mind style of the child protagonist is created through language which conveys her deeply traumatic and terrifying experiences of sexual abuse and rape. Through her focalization, Henrik is fragmented into isolated anatomical elements that seemingly act of their own volition which

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<sup>15</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.53.

<sup>16</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.53.

conveys the terror experienced by the sexually abused child. In *Albertine*, the descriptions of the perpetrator are less defamiliarised than in Wassmo's novel, which reflects a more 'normal' mind style than that projected by the child protagonist in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*. In Wassmo's text, as we have seen, the perpetrator's body parts frequently occur as agents, without reference to the source of their agency (eg. 'Hender som kom i mørket.'). Although, like Henrik, Albertine's rapist is fragmented into isolated body parts, these are generally identifiable as belonging to their owner, with the exception of the rape scene. Here, as we shall see in the next section, the rapist's fragmentation can be understood to reflect the heightened mind style of the protagonist as she is being attacked.

### 8.3 The Rape

When we look at the representation of rape in both novels, we can note that an emphasis is placed on the physical and psychological effects of rape on the victim. In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, focalization in the rape scene appears to subtly shift between the narrator and the protagonist. The following

extract, depicting Henrik's rape of Tora, focusses on the experience of the protagonist:

Myk, myk var motstanden. Bare til å sette tommelen i øyet på. Den ba for seg, og ga nok etter. Så revnet det. Tora kjente det et sted utenfor seg selv. Visste ikke hvor det begynte eller endte, det hang ikke fast med resten av henne. Likevel smertet det så.

Pusten og blodet!

Blodet kom helt uten at det skulle. Det var i mønster utover hele lakenet fordi hun ikke greide å holde seg på plass under ham. Hun skjønnte at dette var den grimme virkeligheten som ikke sto i noen bøker hun hadd lest.<sup>17</sup>

(The resistance was soft, soft. Just enough to press the thumb into its eye. It begged for its life, and gave in. Then it tore. Tora felt it somewhere outside herself. Didn't know where it began or where it ended. It wasn't attached to the rest of her. Yet it hurt so.

The breathing and the the blood!

The blood came without it being meant to. It was in patterns all over the entire sheet because she wasn't able to keep herself in place underneath him. She understood that this was the grim reality which wasn't written in any of the books she had read.)

Alliteration and the fronting of the repeated adjective *myk* ('soft') lends a poetic quality to the language that is akin to a lullaby, highlighting the extreme vulnerability of Tora's immature body. After this metaphorical description of Henrik's initial attack on Tora, with its allusions to the novel's prominent metaphor of blindness, there is a sense of the focalization shifting from the narrator to the protagonist, this transition signalled by the mental process verb 'kjente.' Focalized through the protagonist, the profound physical pain of her rape is expressed as something which is beyond the limits of her experience. It is simultaneously without and within her experiencing self, the boundaries of her body ruptured through Henrik's savage invasion. The scene

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<sup>17</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.152.



is reminiscent of Maya Angelou's rape in the first volume of her autobiography *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* :

Then there was the pain. A breaking and entering when even the senses are torn apart. The act of rape on an eight-year old body is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can't. The child gives, because the body can, and the mind of the violator cannot.<sup>18</sup>

Tora's shocked realisation that her blood is a part of 'farligheten' is expressed through the co-occurrence of 'pusten' and 'blodet' in the form of free indirect discourse. When Henrik rapes her, Tora's bewilderment changes to cynicism, her position as focalizer signalled by the mental process 'skjønte.' Having raped Tora once, Henrik immediately rapes her again. On this occasion, as we saw in Chapter 7, his total physical control over Tora culminates in his use of a rope with which to tie her to her own bed:

Da kom han igjen. Med et rep.

Tora trodde det ikke da hun ble bundet til sengen. Trodde det ikke! Verden var ikke så grim. Slikt skjedde ikke!

Da åt han seg inn i henne. Blindt. Som om han hadde noe å hevne. Bare åt og åt. Holdt puta over ansiktet hennes og lot sin grenseløse vilje skje. Det hadde tatt lang tid å komme til målet. Nå var han der.<sup>19</sup>

(Then he came back. With a rope.

Tora couldn't believe it when she was tied to the bed. Couldn't believe it! The world wasn't so cruel. This kind of thing didn't happen!

Then he ate his way into her. Blindly. As if taking vengeance for something. Just ate and ate. Held the pillow over her face and let his limitless will come to be. It had taken a long time for him to reach his goal. Now he was there.)

The proximal deictic verb 'kom' identifies Tora as the deictic centre, the mental process of cognition 'trodde' further reinforcing her position as the focalizer. Her thoughts are conveyed through the use of free indirect discourse, signified by the exclamation marks.<sup>20</sup> A notable shift from internal to external narration subsequently occurs with the description of the rape itself, particularly

<sup>18</sup> Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, p.76.

<sup>19</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.153.

<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech & Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction*, p.331.

conspicuous in the narrator's observation of Henrik's motivation. He is the agent of several material processes of intention, the majority of which involve Tora as the object. The material process 'ått,' which is normally associated with animals, effectively conveys the rapist's insatiable hunger, which he channels sexually through his rape of Tora. The allusion to blindness manifest in the earlier extract 'Bare til å sette tommelen i øyet på,' is explicitly referred to in the above description of Tora's rape. There is a tension here between the metaphorical 'blindness' attributed to Henrik's action of raping and the literal (but temporary) 'blindness' of his victim, through her rapist's action of smothering her face with the use of a pillow.

### *Behind the Drapes*

As in Wassmo's novel, a predominant aspect of the representation of the protagonist's rape in *Albertine* is the omission of any physical description of the rapist. It might be useful here to refer briefly to an extract from Krohg's defence speech, which provides an insight into the author's depiction of Albertine's rape:

[...] jeg vilde ikke ha, at de saa skulde bli siddende der og fantasere over, hvor lidelig mon det blev, den scenen derinde - bag de nedslupne Portièrene - i det rødlige Skjæret aaf Maaneskinnslampen. Jeg vilde ikke det. De skulde værsgo følge med videre, og derfor saa slog jeg portièrene heilt tilside og bare lod dem se: [...] <sup>21</sup>

([...] I did not want you to sit there, fantasising over how depraved it was going to be, the scene in there - behind the lowered drapes - in the red-tinged gleam of the small bedside lamp. You were to be so good as to continue to watch carefully, and I therefore drew the drapes completely aside and simply allowed you to see: [...])

We might interpret Krohg's 'drawing aside' of the drapes as a metaphor for his exposure of the hypocrisy concerning official morality, enabling those in a position to abuse their authority to face their own corrupt desires. But what exactly does Krohg show us when he allows us to see behind the drapes? He

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<sup>21</sup> Christian Krohg, 'Christian Krohgs Forsvarstale for Høyesterett,' in Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.116.

achieves his objective precisely because he does *not* show the reader what occurs in Winther's bedroom:

Med en gang ble den lysegule stripen mellom portièrene borte og det kom noen inn. En kom hen og klappet henne på hodet og kysset henne på pannen. Eau De Lubin! Det var noen som kledde av seg - først dunket en støvel bløtt mot gulvteppet, osså om litt en til. Hun hørte et ur bli trukket opp, og så ble det hengt opp på veggen over sengen.

Hun fikk et kyss på pannen og hun bøyd hodet bakover for bedre å kjenne den fine lukten - og så fikk hun et langt på munnen - et langt og så flere bakefter og så enda flere.

Hva var det, hva var det, hvor var hun? Hun følte en knugende vekt på brystet så hun var nær ved å kveles. Det var noe som gjorde forferdelig vondt. Et skrik - - - det var hennes, og lysvåken og edru og angst til døden forsto hun med en gang alt, og klorte og slo og krafset og skrek.

"Hysch, hold kjeft," sa en forpustet stemme like i hennes øre - det ble en kamp for livet, men to armer av jern holdt henne fast, og hun lukket øynene.<sup>22</sup>

(Suddenly the pale yellow stripe between the drapes disappeared and someone came in. Someone came over and patted her on the head and kissed her on the forehead. Eau de Lubin! Someone was getting undressed - first a boot thumped softly against the rug, then after a little while, another one. She could hear a watch being wound up, and then it was hung up on the wall above the bed.

She felt a kiss on her forehead and she tilted her head back so that she could get a better smell of the fine scent - and then she felt a long kiss on her mouth - a long kiss followed by several more and then even more.

What was it, what was it, where was she? She felt a crushing weight on her breast so that she was on the verge of suffocating. There was something that was hurting her terribly. A scream - - - it was hers, and sober and afraid for her life, she suddenly understood everything and scratched and hit out and tore and screamed.

"Shh! Shut your mouth", said a breathless voice right in her ear - there was a long fight as though for her life, but two arms of iron clutched her tightly, and she closed her eyes.)

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<sup>22</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.88.

The rape is portrayed from Albertine's point of view; the narration here is clearly focalized through the protagonist. Through the interplay of focalization and fragmentation, the protagonist's experience of rape is conveyed without any reference to the act itself. Sara Mills argues that focalization can 'manipulate the reader's sympathies'<sup>23</sup> and Krohg has achieved this by representing the rape through the protagonist/victim's consciousness, which is expressed as a sequence of painful and terrifying sensations. We might make the observation that in his depiction of Albertine's rape, Krohg was realising his objective of presenting only 'the impression of the moment.'<sup>24</sup> The recurrence of the indefinite pronoun in the rape scene conveys the protagonist's spontaneous impressions of the intruder entering the space. The reader can of course deduce that it is Winther, but the protagonist's immediate perceptions must be conveyed in order for the reader to gain an insight into her consciousness. The usage of indefinite formulations serves to identify the uncertainty and confusion of the protagonist, compounded by the lack of light and the alcohol-induced sleep from which she is now being woken. The rapist's anonymity creates an atmosphere of intrigue which is then unexpectedly attenuated by the ordinary, everyday actions of a person getting ready for bed. Through Albertine's focalization, these actions are immediately identifiable but their agent is not. As the scene rapidly progresses, there is a dramatic shift in the relationship between agency and identity; the intruder's mundane actions, which hitherto have involved inanimate entities as objects (the boots and watch, for example), are suddenly and violently transformed into the act of rape inflicted on the female body as the male agent is finally identified by his victim. As in the rape scene in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, when Tora learns of the 'grim reality' through Henrik's rape of her, so too does Albertine gain a sudden insight into the reality of her sexual victimisation: 'og lysvåken og edru og angst til døden forsto hun med en gang alt.'

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<sup>23</sup> Sara Mills, *Feminist Stylistics*, p.181.

<sup>24</sup> Oscar Thue, *Christian Krohg: En bibliografi*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968, p.10. 'Både som maler og forfatter ville han gi øyeblikkets inntrykk, unngå all utpensling og bare gjengi det som momentant hadde grepet ham.' ('Both as a painter and as a writer, he wanted to give an impression of the moment, to avoid any elaboration and to only reproduce that which had instantly affected him.')

*Helgesen and Winther: A Case of Mistaken Identity?*

Implicit in Albertine's insight into the terrible reality of her situation is the extent to which her sexual violation has been planned by Winther, possibly with the help of Helgesen. A close reading of the rape scene reveals parallels between Albertine's final meeting with Helgesen and the depiction of her rape in Winther's bedroom, which, I would argue, serve to link the two men in Winther's plot to rape Albertine and which explain also her initial reactions to Winther's advances in the rape scene. Tove Brit Haugstveit rightly points out that the scent of Eau de Lubin, the twilight, and the room's atmosphere of tension all appeal subconsciously to Albertine's awakening sexual instinct:

Når så Winther kommer inn i soveværelset til henne, virker hun nesten imøtekommende overfor hans tilnærmelser fordi selve stemningen virker inn på hennes ubevisste kvinnelighet.<sup>25</sup>

(When Winther then enters the bedroom where she is lying, she appears almost accommodating towards his advances because the atmosphere itself has an effect on her subconscious femininity.)

Although I agree with Haugstveit's observation regarding Albertine's reactions at the beginning of the rape scene, I would argue that there are additional discernible factors which might be seen to influence her initial reactions towards Winther. The elements embodied in 'the atmosphere' of the room need to be examined more closely in order to interpret the protagonist's 'almost accommodating' behaviour. Firstly, we can look again at the usage of indefinite formulations which we discussed earlier. It was argued that the occurrence of indefinite pronouns as agents of material processes lends an air of mystery and uncertainty regarding the identity of the intruder, and serves also to express the protagonist's drowsiness and state of confusion. Furthermore, it can be argued that the variation between the indefinite

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<sup>25</sup> Tove Brit Haugstveit, *Christian Krohgs 'Albertine,'* p.18.



pronouns 'en' and 'noen' creates an ambiguity in terms of number, particularly salient in the following formulations:

En kom hen og klappet henne på hodet. [...] Eau de Lubin!  
 Det var noen som kledde av seg [...] <sup>26</sup>

(Someone came up and patted her on the head. [...] Eau de Lubin!  
 There was someone who undressed [...])

The scent is a common denominator for both Helgesen and Winther and its occurrence here in the form of an exclamatory utterance suggests that it has powerful associations for Albertine of the man whom she loves but who has abandoned her. Her attraction to the cologne, through its association with Helgesen, and her belief that it is he who is undressing and bestowing upon her the first kiss, is expressed through her immediate response in the form of a material process affecting her own body: 'hun bøyde hodet bakover.' Her physical autonomy is of course short-lived, as it is immediately followed by her rape. Focalized through Albertine, the agent represented by the pronouns 'En' and 'noen' in the clauses 'En kom hen og klappet henne på hodet' and 'Det var noen som kledde av seg' is not inevitably one and the same. The introduction of the phrase 'Det var noen [...]' creates an impression that a new agent is being introduced to the scene. The separation of the clauses by the exclamation 'Eau de Lubin!' introduces the implication that, by means of association through her olfactory processes, the protagonist believes Helgesen to have returned to her. The punctuation mark can signify either surprise, excitement or fear and this ambiguity contributes to the scene's pervasive uncertainty and tension. The suggestion, however tenuous, that there are two intruders in the room, reflects the implicit involvement of Helgesen in Winther's plan to ensnare Albertine. This observation is reinforced if we look at the final scene between the protagonist and Helgesen. A close reading of this section of the text yields several similarities with the rape scene. Through a comparison of the two scenes, it becomes evident that Winther's entrance into the bedroom is in a sense a sequel to the final meeting between Helgesen and Albertine. The

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<sup>26</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.88.



following extract from their last rendezvous depicts Helgesen's reaction to Albertine's distress on being informed that he no longer wishes to see her:

“Neimen, gråter du da, Albertine?” Han lo og klappet henne på kinnet. “Vær nå fornuftig.”<sup>27</sup>

(“You're not crying are you, Albertine?” He laughed and patted her on the cheek. “Be sensible now.”)

As in the opening paragraph of the rape scene (‘En kom hen og klappet henne på hodet’), Helgesen's action is ostensibly non-sexual. His manner is flippant and apparently devoid of sexual intent. However, his dismissive behaviour is subsequently contradicted by his request for a farewell kiss:

“Ja, ja - adjø da, Albertine - så treffes vi ikke mer - vil du gi meg en kyss?”  
“Ja.”

Hun følte lukten av Eau de Lubin omkring seg igjen. - Sånn hadde han aldri kysset henne - og hun klynget seg til ham og kysset ham igjen mange ganger og lenge for hver gang.<sup>28</sup>

(Yes, yes - goodbye then, Albertine - so we shan't meet again - will you give me a kiss?)

“Yes.”

She felt the scent of Eau de Lubin around her again. - He had never kissed her like that - and she clung to him and kissed him again many times, a long kiss every time.)

Helgesen's boredom with the situation is evident in the opening line, both in the repetition of the affirmative and his throwaway remark concerning his renouncement of Albertine. His arrogance and self-certainty is manifest in his request for a kiss, which he delivers in the same breath as his rejection of Albertine. The key formulation ‘Sånn hadde han aldri kysset henne’ has at least two implications. It may be evidence of his sexual attraction to Albertine, and it may also signify a more sinister motivation. We might assume that it is part of a plan to ‘groom’ Albertine for Winther's entrance onto the scene and to thereby render her more vulnerable to his advances. The narration in the above extract is focalized through Albertine, signalled by the mental process ‘følte.’ The scent of ‘Eau de Lubin’ evidently has strong sexual associations for

<sup>27</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.79.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*, p.80.

Albertine and can be recognised as a crucial link between this scene and the rape scene. The corresponding actions of Helgesen and Winther - the abrupt transition from the pseudo-paternal 'patting' to overtly sexual behaviour in the form of passionate kissing - provides an additional textual parallel between the two scenes which links them also thematically.

### *The Perpetrator's Processes*

In the rape scene in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* we have noted Henrik's representation as the agent of several material processes of intention, which signify his sexually violent actions. In *Albertine* on the other hand, we have seen that the male agent in the rape scene is not explicitly identified, his actions implicitly conveyed through indefinite formulations and, as we shall see in the next section, the representation of Albertine as the recipient of the perpetrator's actions. At no point during Albertine's rape is Winther represented as the agent of a material process. We can, however, find one striking example of body part agency, which signifies the end of Albertine's brave struggle to fend off her rapist:

[...] det ble en kamp for livet, men to armer av jern holdt henne fast, og hun lukket øynene.

(There was a long fight as though for her life, but two arms of iron clutched her tightly, and she closed her eyes.)

Here, the rapist's isolated body parts appear without reference to their source, the allusion to Albertine's physical struggle with her rapist reinforced through the metaphorical reference to Winther's 'two arms of iron.' Her attempts at

self-protection are manifest again later in the text, during her gynaecological examination by the police physician's assistant in the police station:

Hun bet tennene sammen og stred imot alt det hun orket, men de to hender ble for sterke - da plutselig doktoren for opp og stampet i gulvet og skrek med brutal stemme: "Nei, ikke noe sludder! Hun skal værsgo selv ta knærne fra hverandre!"<sup>29</sup>

(She clenched her teeth and fought with everything she could manage, but the two hands were too strong - then suddenly the doctor approached and shouted in a brutal voice: "No, no nonsense! She will be so good as to open her knees herself!")

The parallels between the two extracts are conspicuous. The above description of Albertine's attempt to hinder the invasion of her body is reminiscent of the rape scene, where as we have seen, Winther's body part agency finally restrains the protagonist. In both extracts, Albertine is overpowered only after a violent struggle, expressed through the noun 'kamp' in the rape scene and 'stred' in the examination scene. The formulation 'to armer av jern' and the older doctor's militant behaviour, as manifest in the material process 'stampet i gulvet' contribute further to the expression of physical coercion and male brutality in each scene. As with the excessive physical force exhibited by Winther in his rape of Albertine, the doctor's verbal commands are inordinately brutal and abusive. These strikingly similar representations of Albertine's experiences highlight her status as a victim and suggest that her intrusive medical examination (at Winther's behest) can be viewed as a second rape. Later, when we examine the rôle of setting, we will identify further links between Albertine's examination and the scene in Winther's apartment.

### *The Victim's Processes*

In the rape scene in both novels, mental processes identify the protagonist as the character-focalizer of the narration. In the first paragraph of the extract from *Albertine*, the proximal deictic verb 'kom' identifies the protagonist as the deictic centre. In this opening paragraph, only one process can be attributed to Albertine: the mental process 'hørte.' The remaining processes - all of which are material processes of intention - are assigned to the indefinite pronouns 'noen' and 'en' and to the inanimate entities in the scene: 'støvel' and 'ur.' In the second

<sup>29</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.108.

paragraph, a perceptible shift in transitivity patterns begins to appear. The intruder has still not been identified and his agency in the scene is further obfuscated through Albertine's representation as the recipient of his actions: 'hun fikk et kyss på pannen [...] og så fikk hun et langt på munnen[...]' In these formulations, the protagonist is passive, her body fragmented through the rapist's concretised actions. Albertine's participation in the early part of the scene is characterised by physical passivity, excepting one material process which affects a part of her own body ('hun bøyd hodet bakover'), her action here motivated by her attraction to Winther's scent (which, as we discussed in Chapter 6, he shares with Helgesen.) Albertine's physical involvement in the scene finally occurs in the third paragraph, when she realises that she is being raped. At this point, her agency is represented through a sequence of material processes of intention: 'klorte og slo og krafset [...]' Albertine's actions immediately follow the mental process 'forsto,' which as we have seen, signifies her insight into the extent of her sexual victimisation and the events that have led to the moment of her rape.

In Wassmo's text, the protagonist's mental processes occur in both the negative and positive form: 'Tora kjente det et sted utenfor seg selv'; 'Visste ikke hvor det begynte eller endte [...]' The only occurrence of a material process with Tora as agent is in its negative form, and can thus be defined as a failed material process. In Chapter 5 we noted that in Hanne Dahl's *Vannliljen* and Mette Sundt's *Som igår, som imorgen*, the victim's inability to physically escape from her abuser was found to be characterised by material processes which occurred in the negative form. In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, the child victim's innocence and physical powerlessness are reflected in the occurrence of negative mental processes and the failed material process 'greide ikke å holde seg på plass.' In the rape scene in *Albertine*, however, the protagonist's mental processes occur only in the positive form. Furthermore, we have identified Albertine as the agent of three material processes of intention. This disparity in processes between Albertine and Tora may partly be attributed to the discrepancy in age between the two characters. As an adult, Albertine is better equipped to fight her rapist, her physical strength expressed, as we have seen, as a sequence of material processes. We have noted also that Tora's immobilisation by Henrik is even more brutally effected than Winther's



entrapment of Albertine, which inevitably affects Tora's agency in the rape scene.

### *The Fragmented Victim*

Like Tora, Albertine seems to experience her rape both within and beyond her body. Her 'scream' occurs before it is identified by its source: 'Et skrig ---det var hendes [...].' It is not represented as a material process with the protagonist as agent, but occurs instead in its nominal form. It is thereby concretised, an embodiment of Albertine's pain and terror. The material process of screaming is replaced by nominalisation, which in this case effectively conveys the sudden, intense nature of the scream, thereby reflecting also the violent cause of Albertine's reaction. The scream, appearing as it does in isolation, and apparently disconnected from its source, can be viewed as an aspect of Albertine's fragmentation in the rape scene, but in this instance, fragmentation is represented through Albertine's experiencing self. In Chapter 6 we noted that in the pre-rape scene, Winther fragments the sleeping Albertine into isolated anatomical elements as he observes her asleep in the chair positioned opposite him. The fragmentation of the female thus occurs through the male focalizer, as Sara Mills observes:

Fragmentation of the female is [...] associated with male focalization - the female represented as an object, a collection of objects, for the male gaze.<sup>30</sup>

I would argue that in the rape scene in *Albertine* the visual fragmentation of the protagonist, which occurred in the pre-rape scene through Winther's focalization, is reflected experientially through the focalization of the protagonist. In both of these sections of the text, the female body can thus be said to be fragmented but where in the pre-rape scene the fragmentation of the female protagonist occurs with the focalization of the male perpetrator, in the rape scene - which is focalized through Albertine - the protagonist physically experiences the fragmentation of her body as each anatomical element is targeted by her rapist. The nature of the protagonist's fragmentation can thus be said to be affected by the identity of the focalizer. This becomes clear when we compare contrastive depictions of the same anatomical element in the pre-

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<sup>30</sup> Sara Mills, *Feminist Stylistics*, p.172.

rape scene and the rape scene, respectively. In the following extract, Winther observes the movement of Albertine's 'breasts':

[...] og bredt og ungdommelig løftet brystet seg regelmessig under den tettsluttete, snorebroderte jerseytrøyen.<sup>31</sup>

([...] and expansive and youthful, her breasts rose rhythmically underneath the tight-fitting, cord-trimmed bodice.)

Focalized through the male gaze, the fragmentation of Albertine's body emphasises her status as a sexual object, but specifically one who is as yet untouched. The above extract exemplifies the protagonist's portrayal as an embodiment of vitality and sexual desirability, the focalizer's anticipation of his imminent actions suggested by a tension between the confinement of the breasts and their potential liberation. Winther's anticipatory desire for the female sexual object, depicted in the extract above, is subsequently fulfilled through his rape of Albertine, the needless brute force of the rapist expressed through the focalization of the protagonist:

Hun følte en knugende vekt på brystet så hun var nær ved å kveles. Det var noe som gjorde forferdelig vondt<sup>32</sup>

(She felt a crushing weight on her breast, so that she was on the verge of suffocating. There was something that was hurting her terribly.)

Focalized through the protagonist, the rapist's use of force is excessive and contradicts the ostensibly painterly depiction of Albertine's body in the pre-rape scene. The contrastive depictions of 'brystet' in each of the above extracts exemplifies the opposition between Winther's visual fragmentation of the protagonist and the physical fragmentation experienced by Albertine through Winther's rape of her. His abuse of Albertine is manifold: sexual, physical and verbal. As with the references to Henrik's breathing which we discussed earlier in relation to the perpetrator's representation through the victim's focalization,

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<sup>31</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.85.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*



this physical manifestation of the rapist's sexual excitement is expressed through Winther's brutal command:

“Hysch, hold kjeft,” sa en forpustet stemme like i hennes øre -  
33

(“Shh! Shut your mouth,” said a breathless voice right in her ear -)

The same element of Albertine's anatomy, ‘øret,’ is earlier idealised in the pre-rape scene, depicted in painterly terms with the focus on light and shadow:

Eftersom kinnets bleke, ovale linje gled forsvinnende nedover mot halsen, tapte det varme gule lys seg uten noen grense i skyggen nedenfor øret og kom så for siste gang igjen på halsens strakte muskel.<sup>34</sup>

(As the pale, oval line of the cheek disappeared, drifting down towards the neck, the warm yellow light faded into the shadow below the ear and then appeared again, for the last time, on the taut muscle of the neck.)

In the above extract the protagonist's fragmentation is conveyed by material processes which emphasise the movement of the artificial light on her sleeping features, the phallic depiction of the final object of focalization suggesting the focalizer's objective.

The victim's fragmentation in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* functions on a different level. We noted earlier that focalization never resides with Henrik, and Tora's fragmentation is therefore not associated with male focalization. As in

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<sup>33</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.85..

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

the rape scene in *Albertine*, Tora's fragmentation in the text occurs through her own focalization; in other words, it is represented through her experiencing self:

Ørene var som naustdørene hans Almar i Hestvika: Ødelagte i hengslene så uværet suste og slet i dem.<sup>35</sup>

(Her ears were like Almar's boathouse doors in Hestvika: their hinges were so damaged that the storms rustled and tore them.)

We saw in Chapter 7 that Tora's dissociation processes were manifest in material processes of flying and floating, which were argued to represent her metaphorical flight from 'farligheten.' In the above extract, Tora's dissociation is conveyed through her feelings of corporeal fragmentation. In their fragmented, 'damaged' state, her ears do not function as they should. They shut out the sounds from the real world, yet let in sounds that belong to Tora's other world, a dimension associated with her experiences of sexual abuse. Rakel Christina Granaas comments on the feelings of fragmentation experienced by Tora in the above segment of text:

Bevisstheten har forlatet kroppen. Det som er igjen av den, skildres som indirekte og gir inntrykk av fragmentert kroppsfølelse.<sup>36</sup>

(Consciousness has left her body. What is left of it is described as indirect and gives an impression of fragmented bodily experiences.)

Tora's experiences of fragmentation are crucially linked to her sexual abuse and

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<sup>35</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.5.

<sup>36</sup> Rakel Christina Granaas, 'Kroppen som ikke var hennes,' p.21.

frequently occur during the protagonist's processes of dissociation. Granaas observes the representation of Tora's abuse as 'a force of nature':

Overgrepet framstår som en ødeleggende naturkraft som ikke er til å komme utenom, Henriks drifter beskrives som storm og uvær.<sup>37</sup>

(The abuse stands out as a destructive force of nature which is not to be evaded; Henrik's urges are described as storms and squalls.)

Just as Henrik's sexual urges are depicted in terms of the destructive elements of nature, so are Tora's experiences of sexual abuse suffused with references to her external environment:

Det var den samme hånden som hadde berget henne fra kaikanten, det var den samme som holdt henne utpå Hesthammeren, som skjøv henne i dissa mellom de store bjørketrærne bak huset [...]<sup>38</sup>

(It was the same hand that had saved her from the edge of the quay, it was the same hand that had held her over Hesthammer Cliff, that pushed her in the swing between the two large birch trees behind the house [...])

In the above extract Henrik's 'hand' has diverse functions, namely those of rescuing, tormenting and playing, which reflect his multiple rôles as caretaker, abuser and stepfather. In each of these cases the action of the hand is associated with an element of Tora's environment. We have seen that in the novels under discussion the settings are highly contrastive. In *Albertine*, Krohg's vision as a painter is especially manifest in the detailed descriptions of the novel's interior scenes and Wassmo's poetic, richly metaphorical language in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* is rooted in the landscape in which the novel is set. In the following section we shall consider the important rôle of setting in the representation of sexual violence in both novels.

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.54.

## 8.4 The Setting

### *The Human Landscape*

In his biography of Krohg, Pola Gauguin clarifies the crucial rôle of ‘people’ in Krohg’s art:

Krohgs kunst er helt knyttet til menneskeskildringen. Landskapet og interiøret er bare uttrykt som miljø for det levende liv, eller som han selv uttrykker det den *levende* natur: Menneskene.<sup>39</sup>

(Krohg’s art is entirely connected to the portrayal of people. The landscape and the interior are merely depicted as a milieu for life itself, or which he himself expresses as *living* nature: People.)

Krohg’s human landscape is conspicuous in the depiction of Albertine’s unnecessary gynaecological examination in the police station which, as a degrading and coercive experience for the protagonist, should be interpreted (as I suggested earlier) as a second rape. The description of the scene which

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<sup>39</sup> Pola Gauguin, *Christian Krohg*, p. 109.

greet Albertine on her entrance into the examination room is characterised by a sense of immobility, which contradicts the protagonist's inner turmoil:

Der, like imot henne, på den annen side av det store, fengsels-gule bordet midt i værelset - der sto den jo - stolen - den forferdelige stol [...] Der sto den, høy og fæl, minst en meter høyere enn bordet, med en halvrund innskjæring i det brunslitte, lærbetrukne sete og en lav, skrå rygg, der sto den, visende sin uhyggelige profil, og foran den lille trappen som førte opp til setet, sto en ung herre som hun ofte hadde set ved musikken på Karl Johan - med svart liten knebel og mørke øyne og rettet på sin lorgnett mens han ventet på henne.<sup>40</sup>

(There, just facing her, on the other side of the large, prison-yellow table in the middle of the room - there it stood – the chair [...] There it stood, tall and ugly, at least a metre higher than the table, with a semicircular opening in the worn, brown, leather-covered seat and a low, slanting back; there it stood, showing its ominous profile, and in front of the little step which led up to the seat, stood a young man whom she had often seen by the bandstand on Karl Johan - with a small black moustache and dark eyes, straightening his pince-nez while he waited for her.)

Through the material process 'sto' the doctor's assistant is linked to the scene's inanimate participant: the examination chair, which is an embodiment of Albertine's worst fears and which she must now face at last in its concrete form. The chair occupies a dominant position in the scene, fulfilling a far more prominent rôle than the male participant. Focalized through Albertine, the chair appears quasi-human, the protagonist's mind style manifest in the value-laden lexis 'forferdelig,' 'fæl,' and 'uhyggelig.' The lexical items used to describe the examination chair have negative connotations that could also be applied to her rapist Winther, the implicit association between the two men further highlighted through the description of the doctor's 'black' moustache and his small stature. The doctor's assistant is not introduced until the chair has been described in all its terrifying detail. He is presented almost as an appendage, inseparable from the chair itself. This impression finds its grammatical roots in the introduction of the male participant in a co-ordinated clause ('og foran den lille trappen [...] sto en ung herre') The doctor is thereby presented as a

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<sup>40</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.106.

continuation of the previous, elongated clause. In this scene, the inanimate chair and the human participant thus merge into a 'living' interior landscape.

### *Setting and Space*

In both novels, setting is a crucial aspect of the novel's representation of sexual victimisation and in each of the texts we can observe an ostensible tension between interior and exterior spaces. For *Albertine*, the world outside is an alluring but potentially dangerous place. At the time the novel was written, the young working-class women who strolled the busy avenue of Karl Johan would inevitably fall under the eye of the over-zealous police and their spies. If a well-dressed woman from the lower echelons of society aroused the interest of a 'vigilant' policeman, she would be indelibly printed on his memory.<sup>41</sup> Many poor, young women were forced to attend gynaecological examinations and were thence in many cases driven into a life of prostitution. Pola Gauguin describes the effects of this system on those who frequented Karl Johan:

Det var som å være i et glasshus under opsikt av et våkent politi.<sup>42</sup>

(It was like being in a glasshouse under the supervision of vigilant police.)

In *Albertine*, the streets can be identified as the hunting-ground where the protagonist is targeted by Helgesen and Winther, the latter's sexually violent objective finally fulfilled in the space of his home territory: the setting of his

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<sup>41</sup> Pola Gauguin, *Christian Krohg*, p.101.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p.79.



bedroom. The notion of transparentness conveyed in the above extract stands in stark contrast to the dark, enclosed space where Albertine is raped:

Veggene var mørke, og det lå et rødlig halvllys utover fra en måneskinnslampe. Værelset var skjøvt - veggen til høyre var meget mindre enn den til venstre - det syntes hun var rart. Sengen sto på den skrå veggen like mot døren.<sup>43</sup>

(The walls were dark, and a red-tinged half-light glowed from a small lamp. The room was crooked - the wall on the right was much smaller than the one on the left - she thought that was strange. The bed stood by the oblique wall just opposite the door.)

Winther's bedroom is reminiscent of a brothel, signified by the 'red-tinged' light. The mental process 'syntes' identifies Albertine as the focalizer of the narration, and the first thing that is seen to catch her attention is the room's distorted shape, which can be observed to signify the function of the room as a setting for Winther's depraved actions. Albertine's entry into the bedroom is marked by a significant change of environment. In contrast to Winther's sitting room, with its lush furnishings (which we discussed in Chapter 6), the description of the bedroom's interior appears scant, the bed the only apparent piece of furniture. Its impending function as the site of Albertine's rape is signified by its occurrence as the final object of her focalization.

In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, the tension between the space outside and the interior space of her home is expressed through the protagonist's contrastive modes of behaviour in each setting. The house represents the site of Tora's abuse, the outdoors identifiable as the surrounding landscape which she equates with a sense of freedom:

Ute var det oftest godt å være til. Der var et annet slags liv. En kunne løpe! Løpe fra hva det skulle være.<sup>44</sup>

(Outside was usually a good place to be. It was a different kind of life there. You could run! Run from whatever happened.)

Outwith the confines of the house, Tora's movements reflect not only the vast space of the outdoors, but also her euphoria on escaping from her abusive

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<sup>43</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.87.

<sup>44</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p.48.

stepfather. Outside, Tora is able to perform physical actions associated with happy, healthy children, like running, jumping and throwing a ball. In stark contrast, the descriptions of Tora inside the house, in the presence of her abuser, are characterised by a physical immobility:

Dersom han plutselig kom inn i et rom der hun var alene før, kunne det kjennes som om noen hadde kastet over henne et skittent, klamt tøyestykke. Da ble hun stående stivt rett opp og ned, til noe hendte som utløste drømmen.<sup>45</sup>

(If he suddenly came into a room where she had previously been alone, it could feel as though someone had thrown a dirty, damp cloth over her. Then she remained standing, completely stiff, until something happened to break the spell.)

However, as a victim of incestuous abuse, Tora can never feel completely safe anywhere, not even out of doors:

Etter at onkel-bruket brant, måtte Tora gå til skogs for å være helt alene. Og selv der var det av og til et gufs av farlighet nå etter at det begynte å være lyst hele døgnet og hun ikke kunne gjemme seg i ly av mørket.<sup>46</sup>

(After her uncle's fishing station was burnt down, Tora had to go to the woods to be completely alone. And even there, there was sometimes a gust of dangerousness, now that it was beginning to be light the whole day and she wasn't able to hide in the shelter of the darkness.)

The temporal deictic adverb 'nå' identifies Tora as the deictic centre and indicates that the reader is given an insight into the character's thoughts and feelings *while* she is experiencing them. Focalized through the protagonist, the narration is thus invested with a sense of immediacy which helps the reader to identify with Tora as a character. We are given an insight into her vulnerability as a victim of abuse, which in the above extract is expressed through her observation of the growing daylight and the dangers to which it exposes her.

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p.135.

### *The Rôle of Light*

The function of light and its counterpart are central to both narratives, particularly with relation to the depiction of sexual violence. The feature of light - and its absence - is intrinsic to the protagonists' experiences of rape and sexual abuse. Tora, as we have observed, harbours ambivalent feelings towards the daylight as it exposes her to the dangerous possibility of being seen by Henrik. Darkness, on the other hand, functions to erase where light discloses and defines, as the following extract exemplifies:

Mørket var godt. Laget ikke spor etter seg. Mørket hadde alltid et skjul for en jentekropp. Men da måtte det ikke være vegger rundt. Måtte være som her: grenseløst.<sup>47</sup>

(The darkness was good. Didn't leave any tracks. The darkness always had a hiding place for a young girl's body. But then there mustn't be any walls around it. Had to be like here: without boundaries.)

The proximal deictic adverb 'her' identifies Tora as the deictic centre, in her situation out of doors, far from the house. Through Tora's focalization, the significance of the exterior darkness lies in its lack of boundaries, 'skjul' losing its literal meaning in this context. 'Mørket' is synonymous with concealment, but only when it is not enclosed. The accepted notion of the home as a safe place is not applicable to Tora, who as a victim of incestuous abuse draws a distinction between the darkness of the house and that of the open air. If the home of the victim or that of the offender is the most frequent site of abuse,<sup>48</sup> then Tora's home can be viewed as doubly dangerous as it houses both the victim and the perpetrator. Tora thus feels safer in the darkness but only if it belongs to the space outside. Indoors, in the house which she shares with her mother and her abuser, the darkness possesses a very different quality:

Det var umulig og fremmedt alt sammen, og mørket var utrygt.<sup>49</sup>

(Everything was impossible and strange, and the darkness was unsafe.)

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<sup>47</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p. 175.

<sup>48</sup> David Finkelhor, *Sexually Victimized Children*, New York: The Free Press, 1979, p.74.

<sup>49</sup> Herbjørg Wassmo, *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, p. 5.

Inside the house, the feature of light is portrayed as having both positive and negative connotations for Tora. In the following extract, the sunlight functions as a painful reminder of her experiences of sexual abuse:

Sola viste henne at sengen var en skam i seg selv. Fordi den fikk henne til å huske.<sup>50</sup>

(The sun showed her that the bed was a shame in itself. Because it made her remember.)

In the following extract, however, its metaphoric representation is depicted in positive terms:

Det knirket litt i døra. Så ble det stille det øyeblikket det tok mens skjoldet sto vakt og sola gjorde sitt. Døra ble lukket.<sup>51</sup>

(The door creaked a little. Then it became still for the moment that it took for the shield to stand guard while the sun did what it needed to. The door was closed.)

Through the midnight sun's metaphorical intervention, the 'shield' of Tora's menstrual blood protects her on this occasion from her abuser. The contrastive functions of light and darkness can also be regarded as prominent aspects of setting in Krohg's text. We noted earlier the semi- darkness of Winther's bedroom, which was observed to conceal the perpetrator from his victim and to heighten the protagonist's auditory, olfactory and tactile perceptions of her rapist. In contrast to the perpetrator's concealment in the darkness of the rape scene, we noted that the subsequent disclosure of his repugnant appearance, focalized through Albertine, was effected by the artificial light of the paraffin

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid*, p.149.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*, p.140.

lamp. At the end of the novel, the rôle of light is exemplified when we are given a final glimpse of Albertine:

[...] og midt i lampelyset som strømmet ut på gaten og kløvet skyggen langs husveggen for så å forsvinne i det sterke måneskinn utenfor, der sto en stor pike og ropte dem an. Sterke hofter under et kort, rødt ullskjort med hvite strømper under, en svær barm under den blekrøde nattøye og et stort hår uordentlig hengende nedover skuldrer og hals. "Kom inn til meg da, gutter!" ropte hun med høy stemme.<sup>52</sup>

([...] And in the centre of the lamplight that streamed out into the street, cleaving the shadow that ran along the wall, to then disappear into the powerful moonlight outside, there stood a large girl, who was calling out to them. Strong hips under a short, red woollen skirt with white stockings underneath, a large bosom under the pale red nightshirt and a great head of hair hanging, dishevelled, down over her shoulders and neck. "Come on in, boys!" she shouted in a loud voice.)

The protagonist is situated in the centre of the streetlight, the scene's sexual overtones manifest in the light's 'cleaving' of the shadow, which is reminiscent of Winther's 'parting' of Albertine's fringe in the pre-rape scene. As in the previous descriptions of the protagonist she is fragmented, her sexual characteristics emphasised through lexis denoting size and power. The scene describes a view of the protagonist by Helgesen and Smith as they are returning home late one night from a ball. The lamplight emphasises the dramatic changes in Albertine's body, the repetition of the preposition 'under' further highlighting the overtly sexual character of Albertine's representation in this concluding scene. Irene Iversen makes the following observation regarding Krohg's final portrayal of the protagonist:

Han har ikke kunnet unngå å vise denne kvinnekroppen som *fatal* og *grotesk*. Det blir hennes seksuelle drift som til slutt framstår som grunnen til at hun går under.<sup>53</sup>

(He has not been able to avoid presenting this female body as fatal and grotesque. It is her sexual urge that finally emerges as the cause of her downfall.)

<sup>52</sup> Christian Krohg, *Albertine*, p.110.

<sup>53</sup> Irene Iversen, 'Etterord,' p.136.

While I agree that Albertine's appearance and behaviour can be viewed as an external manifestation of her sexual urges, I would suggest that the cause of her 'final downfall' needs to be examined in the light of her experiences of sexual violence. I propose that Albertine's behaviour in the final scene betrays a self-destructive urge, generated by her abusive experiences, which manifests itself as an expression of indiscriminate sexual desire.

## 8.5 Summary

*Albertine* and *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* have one crucial factor in common: the representation of male sexual violence is focalized through the female protagonist. These novels are what Sabine Smith would identify as 'alternative' rape narratives: texts which disrupt traditional depictions of rape that are based on myths which justify male sexual violence against women<sup>54</sup> (as we discussed in Chapter 1 when we looked at explanations of rape based on perceptions of 'inappropriate' female behaviour, for example). Smith argues that alternative rape narratives can assist survivors of sexual abuse by acknowledging the pain of their experience. They fulfil a crucial function by rendering sexual violence *visible*:

[innovative rape narratives] can help transform the ways in which we look at sexual violence and the latent power dynamics by which it is sustained and facilitated.<sup>55</sup>

The concept of focalization is thus fundamental to rape narratives as it affects the ways in which we *see* the representations of sexual violence that are situated within the text.

In this chapter, we focussed mainly on the interplay of focalization and fragmentation in *Albertine* and *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*. We noted that the nature of the protagonist's fragmentation was dependent on the identity of the focalizer. This was particularly relevant to Krohg's text, where focalization was observed to reside with the male perpetrator during a short

<sup>54</sup> Sabine Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture*, pp. 301-302.

<sup>55</sup> Sabine Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture*, p.305.



passage in the pre-rape scene. I would argue that the objectification of the female body in this section of the narrative is not to any extent gratuitous, and that Winther's focalization of Albertine at this junction in the narrative should be viewed as a strategy on the part of the author to allow the reader a brief but crucial insight into the mind of the perpetrator, prior to his rape of Albertine. The linguistic clues that determined my conclusion were discovered through a comparison of two similar descriptions of the protagonist. We noted that when focalized through the rapist, the depiction of Albertine had sexual overtones that were much less conspicuous in an earlier portrayal which was *not* focalized through Winther. Critically, the novel's representations of Albertine's rape and medical examination were found to be focalized through the protagonist.

In both texts, the fragmentation of the perpetrator was discovered to correspond with the victim's focalization. The representation of the rapist by his isolated body parts was found to be a notably salient feature of Wassmo's novel, in which body part agency could be observed to convey the perpetrator's inhumanity, as seen through the eyes of the child victim.

In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, as in Hanne Dahl's *Vannliljen* and Mette Sundt's *Som igår, som imorgen*, the focalization of the child protagonist's experiences of sexual abuse are reflected in a language that conveys the traumatic and terrifying world of the child victim.

## Conclusion

If we don't all understand what is going on in families like the ones I came from, we can't hope to make things better.<sup>1</sup>

In the Introduction we noted that the concept of 'breaking silence' is not only fundamental to the abuse victim's recovery processes but is also crucial in educating the public on the social problem of sexual violence. Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray observe that the metaphor of 'breaking the silence' is consistent for abuse survivors and they argue that survivor discourse fulfils a function of 'unsilencing what has been made secret.'<sup>2</sup> They clarify the dual rôle of writing about sexual abuse as both a recovery process and a consciousness - raising strategy:

Writing about sexual trauma is not only a transformative process for the survivor, but a means of transferring the problem of sexual violence from the psyche of the victim to society at large.<sup>3</sup>

The critical function of rape narratives in raising public awareness of sexual violence is also highlighted by Sabine Smith:

I contend that all extant rape narratives serve to illustrate and explain the social problem of sexual violence. They assign cultural and political meaning to women's sexual victimisation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Elliott, *The Little Prisoner*, London: HarperElement, 2005, p.ix.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Alcoff & Laura Gray, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?' in *Signs* 18: 21 (1993), p.261.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Sabine Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture*, p.300.

Texts that emphasise the damages from sexual abuse have a particularly crucial rôle in educating the public, as Ellen Klosterman observes:

Survivor writers commonly say their goal is to stop abuse through breaking silence, educating readers by creating additional representations demonstrating that abuse is abusive.<sup>5</sup>

If 'breaking silence' is crucial to the sexual abuse victim's recovery and to society's understanding of sexual crimes then so too is the concept of 'rendering visible' the victim of sexual abuse, as Tormod Kleiven writes:

Ønsket mitt er at vi skal se og forstå - både med hodet og hjertet - hva seksuelle overgrep er når vi står nær den som er blitt utsatt for overgrep. Å stå nær betyr to ting. Det er å ha fokus på den utsatte når vi skal beskrive hva seksuelle overgrep er. Men det er også å stille seg ved siden av den utsatte og se hva seksuelle overgrep betyr når vi ser det med den utsattes øyne.<sup>6</sup>

(My wish is that we shall see and understand - both with our heads and our hearts - what sexual abuse is when we stand close to the person who is exposed to abuse. To stand close to that person means two things. It is to have our focus on the victim when we write what sexual abuse is. But it is also to place ourselves next to the victim and to see what sexual abuse means when we see it through the eyes of the victim.)

Thus as a society we have a responsibility to recognise the sexual abuse victim and to attempt to understand what she is experiencing. In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* the metaphor embodied in the novel's title can be seen to convey both an inability to see into the house of abuse or to see out of it, thereby reflecting the victim's betrayal by those responsible for her care and, in wider terms, by society as a whole.

### *Point of View*

If we 'see through the eyes of the victim' when we read a text about sexual violence we learn something about what it means to be sexually victimised. Klosterman points out that a description of abuse from the victim's point of view makes it 'more difficult for a reader to dismiss the abuse as anything but

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<sup>5</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.244.

<sup>6</sup> Tormod Kleiven, *Når den utsatte blir usynlig - Om seksuelle overgrep i kristne miljøer*. Oslo: Luther Forlag, 2004, p.10.

violation.<sup>7</sup> As readers we identify with the victim and experience her conceptualisation of the abuse to which she is exposed. Point of view is therefore crucial in determining whether or not the victim is objectified in a text, as Klosterman asserts:

Pro-survivor works, or works that do not objectify the victim, encourage the audience to identify with the victim through controlling the distance or closeness to the victim[...]<sup>8</sup>

Thus, as Klosterman argues, point of view which resides with the victim and which thereby discloses her 'inner life' functions as a consciousness-raising strategy through the reader's identification with the victim.<sup>9</sup> An analysis of point of view in a text about sexual violence therefore has critical implications for our understanding of the social problem of sexual violence. In literary texts, point of view that resides with the victim helps the reader to identify with her as a character. We noted for example in Chapter 4 the function of internal focalization in creating an illusion of closeness between the reader and the character/focalizer. As a writer, Klosterman acknowledges the awareness she has gained through her study of texts about child sexual abuse by other women writers:

Writing by women about child sexual abuse has offered insight into technical innovation in structuring choices in fiction.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst Klosterman's arguments regarding the importance of structural choices are highly valid, her thesis is not concerned with the actual linguistic 'tools' that help to distinguish non-objectifying narratives from those which objectify the victim. The aim of this project has been to explore rape and sexual abuse narratives through the application of a stylistic framework which helps us to examine in detail the language used in literary representations of sexual violence. A close textual reading which focusses on the identification of specific

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<sup>7</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.188.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p. 140.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, p.229

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p.9.

linguistic strategies can, as Katie Wales asserts, shed light on general issues raised by feminist literary theory:

One of the major problems in feminist criticism is that a great deal is said about style and language and gender, but often in broad generalizations. A linguistic-stylistic approach aims to clarify the issues, and test generalizations with concrete evidence from analyses.<sup>11</sup>

A linguistic analysis can thus serve to confirm assumptions or insights we may have formed during our reading of a narrative. Our intuitions about a certain character, for example, may be validated when we examine specific linguistic features in the text.

### *Linguistic Choices and Mind Style*

In a narrative depicting rape and sexual abuse the identification of linguistic choices can deepen our understanding of the trauma experienced by those victimised by sexual violence, providing us with an insight into the physical, psychological and emotional effects of rape and sexual abuse on the victim. In chapter 3 we noted that dissociation processes are typically developed by child victims to distance themselves from the abuse as it is happening. In Part II and also in chapter 7 in Part III, we explored the linguistic strategies used in the representation of dissociation in our text corpus. We concluded for example in Chapter 5 that the doll metaphor in *Som igår, som imorgen* could be identified as a linguistic manifestation of the protagonist's mind style at the time of her abuse. The use of this metaphor was also seen to represent the victim's distancing from her abuse, her displacement from human to inanimate correlating with her mental detachment from her physical body. The distancing mechanism of dissociation was also identified in *Vannliljen* and *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*. We saw that in Wassmo's novel Tora's means of distancing herself from the abuse was expressed through metaphors conveying images of emptiness and weightlessness. In *Vannliljen*, the child victim's dissociation processes were manifested as a splitting into several other 'selves,' her lack of autonomy compensated by the material processes of her alternative ego states. Spatial deixis was also identified in the representation of dissociation, the victim's distal relationship to her abuser manifest in the detachment of her mind from her abused body. In all of these cases specific linguistic strategies can

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<sup>11</sup> Katie Wales, 'Introduction,' in Katie Wales (ed.) *Feminist Linguistics in Literary Criticism*, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994, p.ix

be seen to reflect the survival processes of the abused child. We could say that in each of these texts the child's enforced silence is compensated by a specific coping strategy which serves as a temporary means of escape from her abuse, her mind style reflecting the powerlessness that precipitates her dissociation processes. Ellen Klosterman observes that in a text about sexual abuse an effective means of establishing the victim as a character is by 'focussing on her lack of options.' We have seen that in the texts mentioned above the protagonist's lack of choices is reflected in a language that highlights her powerlessness.

### *Transitivity and Objectification*

In Chapter 5 it was argued that in a text about sexual violence an exploration of the linguistic manifestations of mind style is crucial to our understanding of the victim's experiences. Michael Halliday's system of transitivity was shown to provide an invaluable framework for the analysis of rape narratives because of its rôle in the representation of experience within the text. Because transitivity is concerned with the characters and their processes - both physical and psychological - this grammatical system was argued to be a particularly relevant framework for the analysis of texts about sexual violence. It was found that body part agency, for example, was a key linguistic feature of the sexual abuse victim's mind style. It was established that when focalized through the victim the body part agency of the perpetrator served to emphasise his abusive actions. Conversely, body part agency assigned to the victim was observed to convey her lack of control over her own body.

In the above-mentioned texts the perpetrator's sexually violent actions were found to be focalized through the protagonist and these texts are thus identifiable as non-objectifying, pro-survivor works. It was concluded that the rape scenes in these narratives share a transitivity pattern whereby the act of rape is expressed either through indirect references to the rapist's actions or through the victim's cognitive processes. Klosterman points out the importance



of internal narration in establishing the abusive nature of the perpetrator's actions:

Paradoxically, it is not the detail itself which defines the action as abusive within the text - it is the emotional tone of the point of view used for narration, and the already established context for understanding the abuse.<sup>12</sup>

A sexually violent action that is conveyed by means of the victim's perceptual and cognitive processes thus ensures that the victim is not objectified in the text. Conversely one could say that if sexual violence is overtly expressed through the perpetrator's actions, the abuse is sensationalised and the text thus objectifies the victim concerned. In this type of narrative the victim's powerlessness is not subjectively expressed as a manifestation of her mind style but is instead represented as a direct consequence of the rapist's power over her. We noted this latter type of narrative representation in Sverre Inge Apenes's *Fange hele livet*, where transitivity patterns in the rape scene were found to be vastly different from the other texts. We saw that the perpetrator's rape of his niece was conveyed by several material processes with the rapist as agent and a direct reference to the rapist's sexual organ which, it was argued, was reminiscent of pornographic representations which objectify the victim. Taken with the victim's relative lack of mental processes, these transitivity patterns were deemed to contribute to a style of narration which was seen to objectify the rape victim. We noted that in pornographic literature agency is shown to be exclusively attributed to the male characters and invariably removed from the female characters, the latter represented as passive objects. We can therefore argue that the transitivity patterns identified in the representations of rape in Apenes's text are reminiscent of the power dynamic of male dominance and female submission that is exemplified in pornographic literature and which was discussed in Chapter 2.

### *The Documentary Novel*

It was debated whether the representational differences of rape between Apenes's narrative and the other texts could be attributed to its male authorship or whether these were indicative of the book's documentary status. It was suggested that Randi's insensitive response to Kate's narration appeared to reflect a male-constructed, sexist ideology, conveying a belief system which

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<sup>12</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.189.

supports rape myths such as those discussed in Part I. As a counter-argument however, it was proposed that Randi's reaction did not necessarily betray a male-gendered view but that it might be interpreted as the spontaneous response of a journalist. It was suggested that her misdirected question may have been intended to show the character's preoccupation with her own past and was thus uttered as an automatic, almost involuntary inquiry. Although Randi's reactions to Kate's accounts of abuse appear to contradict a female-affiliated reading, one could argue that the author's strategy is in fact to raise public awareness of sexual violence through the conflict of ideologies that is presented in the text. Nevertheless, *Fange hele livet's* detailed descriptions of rape and sexual abuse risk sensationalising the victim's experiences of sexual violence, thereby minimising the gravity of her abuser's crimes. Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray argue that although survivor discourse can serve to empower those who disclose their experiences of abuse, it can have the 'paradoxical effect' of undermining victims of sexual assault through the mass media's eroticisation of sexual violence and its survivors.<sup>13</sup> Although their theories concern the phenomenon of survivor speech - in the form of television and radio interviews - their arguments are nevertheless relevant to the discourse of writing, particularly with relation to arguments concerning the boundary between pornographic and non-pornographic literature. In Chapter 2 it was observed that the pervasive message of pornography is that women enjoy being raped. Although the emphasis on the rapist's actions in *Fange hele livet* were argued to be reminiscent of pornographic representations of sex, the text's references to the protagonist's thoughts and emotions, although sporadic, preclude it from being considered pornographic.

### *The Adult Victim*

Emily Driver posits the following argument concerning the contextualisation of child sexual abuse in wider terms:

Sexual abuse of children, whether conducted inside the family or outside it, must be contextualised within two broader perspectives - that of child abuse in general and that of sexual violence against women.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Linda Alcoff & Laura Gray, *Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?* p.262.

<sup>14</sup> Emily Driver, *Child Sexual Abuse: Feminist Perspectives*, p. 196.

Driver argues that the power of individual child abusers is supported by the imbalance of power that exists between the sexes.<sup>15</sup> Feminists claim that sexual violence against women - like child sexual abuse - functions to 'maintain oppression.'<sup>16</sup> In Part I we saw that sexual violence can be recognised as a process of victimisation, a means of control by the dominant over the more vulnerable. The feminist understanding of incestuous abuse is 'that it is largely an expression of male dominance over women and children, ensuring silence and submission.'<sup>17</sup> Child sexual abuse and sexual violence against women can thus both be understood to constitute a social problem which is caused by the misuse of male power over a person or persons in a weaker position. In this project, Krohg's text *Albertine*, with its depiction of the adult protagonist's sexual victimisation, serves to place the analysis of child sexual abuse narratives in a wider context that embraces also the issue of sexual violence against women. Krohg's novel reveals (as we saw in Chapter 8) parallels with Wassmo's text which portrays child sexual abuse. In both novels the imbalance of power relations between male perpetrator and female victim could be identified in patterns of focalization whereby the rapist was represented by isolated parts of his body. The fragmentation of the perpetrator, it was argued, could be recognised as a linguistic feature of the sexual abuse victim's mind style which, as we saw in Part II, was also identified in the other works in our text corpus.

### *Understanding the problem*

Ellen Klosterman clarifies the crucial function of literature as a consciousness-raising medium:

one appropriate use of literature is to raise people's consciousness about the impact of social and political issues on women's lives, including childhood sexual abuse.<sup>18</sup>

Sabine Smith argues that rape narratives can directly influence social beliefs, depending on their content and structure. Texts that adhere to a sexist framework based on rape myths such as those observed in Chapter 1 can obviously not be considered as consciousness-raising works. Smith suggests that one method of transforming our perceptions of sexual violence would be

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p.170.

<sup>16</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.113.

<sup>17</sup> Emily Driver, *ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen Klosterman, *The Music She Hears*, p.109.

the elimination of a male or omniscient narrator which, she argues, would enable us as readers to ‘give full and undivided attention to women’s experiences and accounts.’<sup>19</sup> In this project we have seen that narration focalized through the victim ensures that we are not mere external observers of her world but that we are placed in the viewing position of the victim herself and thus experience the world as if through her senses. This thesis has aimed to demonstrate ways in which a linguistic analysis can identify features that serve to express those senses, thus hopefully bringing us closer to an understanding of what it means to be sexually victimised. Sabine Smith emphasises the need for us all to recognise the problem of sexual violence:

[...] all members of society need to understand sexual violence as a social problem that concerns *everybody*, regardless of sex, age, class, or cultural background.<sup>20</sup>

One positive contribution we can make towards addressing sexually abusive practices is to read the narratives of those who have survived sexual violence:

Vi ville få fram en stemme fra oss som selv har bli utsatt for seksuelle overgrep som barn. Med ord og bilder ønsker vi å delta i kampen for å bekjempe dette ondet.<sup>21</sup>

(We wanted to call forth a voice from those of us who have ourselves been sexually victimised as children. With words and pictures we want to participate in the fight against this evil.)

Through the process of writing, sexual abuse survivors can thus ‘unsilence’ their experiences of abuse and in so doing enlighten readers on the problem of sexual violence, urging us to make positive changes to the rape culture in which we live.

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<sup>19</sup> Sabine Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture*, p.127.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p.106.

<sup>21</sup> Unni Wenche Lindberg & Bodil Von Schantz, *Vet du hva det koster? Konsekvenser av seksuelle overgrep*, p.9.

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# Appendix

*Steinvör Pálsson*

Entrapment and Escape:  
Narrative Techniques in Representations of  
Sexual Abuse in Herbjørg Wassmo's  
*Huset med den blinde glassveranda*

Several months ago, I attended an evening talk at my daughter's primary school, which was given by a Glaswegian authority on paedophilia. The purpose of her lecture was to introduce parents to a new sex education programme aimed at primary school children. A major part of her talk focussed on methods used to empower children facing the threat of sexual abuse by strangers. She covered typical strategies used by paedophiles in their approaches to children and areas popularly targeted by child sex offenders. The speaker also touched upon the reality of sexual abuse within the family, although she did not discuss this problem at any length. In spite of the fact that most child sexual abuse is perpetrated in the home of the child,<sup>1</sup> the subject of incestuous abuse is still a taboo topic which the public prefers to ignore. The talk was very poorly attended: apart from the teachers, there were only about ten parents in the audience. At the end of the evening, as we were filing out of the hall, one of the parents turned to me, and said: 'Was all that really necessary? Surely it was all a bit far fetched?' This person's reaction to the talk was perhaps symptomatic of the 'blindness to abuse' referred to by Roland C. Summit, who in his article 'Hidden Victims, Hidden Pain' outlines society's continuing avoidance to face up to the reality of child sexual abuse:

It is my thesis that child sexual abuse exists in society as a phenomenon that is most conspicuous for its presumed absence. One of the clues to how important it is may be the effort we devote to keeping it out of sight.<sup>2</sup>



No-one knows the true extent of child sexual abuse, but what *does* emerge from the research is that 'the vast majority' of child sexual abusers are male.<sup>3</sup> Emily Driver, a barrister who helped found the Incest Survivors' Campaign, quotes the numbers of sexually abused girls in Britain as one in eight and sexually abused boys as one in twelve. Her figures are taken from a 1984 MORI poll.<sup>4</sup> An American study undertaken by a self-help support group, 'Parents United', reveals a far more extensive problem, estimating the figures of sexually abused children as one in four girls and one in seven boys.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the true figures are, and the very nature of child sexual abuse ensures that many survivors will never tell their story, the sexual victimisation of children appears to be extensive. Novels such as *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* by the Norwegian writer Herbjørg Wassmo contribute towards a greater public awareness of this terrible phenomenon.

In *The Music She Hears: Point of View and Technique in Women's Writing on Childhood Sexual Abuse*, Ellen Klosterman writes:

...one appropriate use of literature is to raise people's consciousness about the impact of social and political issues on women's lives, including childhood sexual abuse.<sup>6</sup>

When I first read *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* ('The House with the Blind Glass Veranda' or 'The House with the Blind Glass Windows' as it appears in the American translation by Roseann Lloyd and Allen Simpson<sup>7</sup>), I was struck by the uncompromising and thought-provoking portrayal of the young protagonist's experiences of sexual abuse by her stepfather. For me personally, the novel raised my own awareness of the problem of sexual violation against children, and I found myself wanting to find out more about the prevalence and implications of sexual violence and society's attitudes towards this taboo topic. Titles such as *The Best Kept Secret*, *Secret Survivors* and *The Conspiracy of Silence* reflect the public attitude to incest and the stigma suffered by its victims. In an interview with Catherine Sandnes, Herbjørg Wassmo states that when *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*

first came out in 1981 she was inundated with calls from people critically in need of emergency psychiatric treatment. This reaction to her book was something that she was totally unprepared for. In her own words:

Og jeg kunne ingenting gjøre. Det lå på meg som et mareritt.<sup>8</sup>  
 [And there was nothing I could do. It weighed upon me like a nightmare.]

Given Herbjørg Wassmo's brave and sensitive handling of the theme of incest, such a reaction from people one would assume to be victims of sexual abuse is perhaps not surprising. The narration, although in the third person, is often filtered through the consciousness of the young protagonist, allowing the reader an insight into her thoughts and feelings. The sexual abuse of the main character Tora is thus very much related from the point of view of the victim. Ellen Klosterman argues that this type of narration, which she refers to as '3rd person semi-omniscient', is commonly used in literature about child sexual abuse. Her definition of this mode of narration applies also to the use of point of view in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*:

...third person omniscient allows room for the narrator to shape the perception of the reader through the selection of details and word choices reflecting the experience of one character over another.<sup>9</sup>

In a narrative concerning the theme of sexual abuse, point of view is crucial in determining the reader's interpretation of events, and in influencing our attitude towards the characters involved. How is the perpetrator of the abuse represented in the novel? What are the stylistic indices that signal a particular character's viewpoint? How does the writer depict sexual abuse from the victim's point of view? These are some of the questions I will attempt to address in this article.

In her 1982 article on *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Jorunn Hareide refers to the fact that several male critics of the book failed to realise that the abuse was ongoing,

believing it to be an isolated assault.<sup>10</sup> She argues that such a misunderstanding of the text must mean either that these readers found the subject matter uninteresting, or that they simply failed to penetrate the figurative, poetic language of the novel. I suspect that the former explanation is probably the most accurate, for Wassmo's writing is by no means obscure. I would argue that a reader who can overlook the perpetual reality of abuse as experienced by the young protagonist, has merely skimmed over the book. The fact that these particular readers were male is an interesting phenomenon which undoubtedly warrants further investigation, but which I shall not be exploring in this article. However, their failure to recognise the persistent nature of sexual abuse as it is depicted in the novel is, I feel, a relevant point of departure for examining in some detail the portrayal of incestuous abuse in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* and its impact on the central character, the adolescent Tora.

### *Disavowal and Disembodiment*

The conflicting phenomena of entrapment and escape are fundamental to the sexually victimised child, and these diametric themes are predominant in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*. Tora's trapped state is illustrated in the following extract, where about to take a bath, she hears Henrik enter the house and is too terrified to move:

Tora satt dørgende stille i kroken sin. [p.52]  
[Tora sat perfectly still in her corner.]

The adjective 'stille' is intensified by the accompanying adverb 'dørgende': Tora's stillness is complete. She crouches like a hunted animal, paralysed by fear. The possessive pronoun accompanying 'kroken' identifies the 'corner' as specifically Tora's, suggesting that for the abused child, it is an habitual place of hiding. By definition, this hiding-place is temporary and elusive. To the sexually victimised Tora, it is the last and smallest of a sequence of spaces into which she

is driven within the actual boundaries of the living space. In her trapped physical state, she must find some means of minimising the impact of her abuse.

Ellen Klosterman describes one of the 'coping mechanisms' used by sexual abuse survivors:

Victims experience alienation from their own bodies which originates as a form of denial used to distance themselves from the abuse as it happens. This process of distancing is called "dissociation" and may be described by a victim as "leaving my body" or "going up into my head".<sup>11</sup>

In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Tora's fear of her abuser and her actual experience of the abuse itself induces a state of disembodiment. Physically trapped, she escapes into a place that is at once limitless and void: a state of nonexistence which symbolises her feelings of denial and worthlessness:

Det var ingen i hele verden som hette Tora. Hun var fløyet inn i ingenting. Det var bare en stor stillhet. [p.53]  
 [There was no-one in the whole world who was called Tora. She had flown into nothing. There was only a great stillness.]

This process of 'disembodiment' is engendered by Tora's terror of her abuser, and is a recurring motif in the novel. In *Child Sexual Abuse: Feminist Perspectives*, Emily Driver refers to 'the mental distancing techniques' used by sexually abused children 'to retreat or fly away from the fear induced by the experience.'<sup>12</sup> Tora's disavowal of her own identity in the pronouncement 'Det var ingen i hele verden som hette Tora' (There was no-one in the whole world who was called Tora) is reinforced through the sentence 'Hun var fløyet inn i ingenting' (She had flown into nothing'). There is an interesting tension here between the verb of motion 'var fløyet' (had flown) which expresses spatial distance and suggests an end-point, a final destination, and the prepositional phrase 'inn i ingenting' (into nothing). The reader is alerted not only to

Tora's desire to escape from the diabolical space which her room has become, but also to her self-effacement, encapsulated in the abstract noun 'ingenting' (nothing). If we look at the description of Henrik's entrance into Tora's room as she is taking her bath, the significance of 'ingenting' becomes even more evident:

Hun så og så. At døra åpnet seg. Så ham velte inn som et stort loddent berg. [p. 53]

[She saw and saw. Saw the door open. Saw him flounder in like a large shaggy mountain.]

The contrastive clauses 'Hun var fløyet inn i ingenting' and 'Så ham velte inn som et stort, loddent berg' convey the antithesis between Tora and the larger-than-life manifestation of her abuser, particularly conspicuous in the disparity between the verbs 'fløyet' (flew) and 'veltet' (floundered). Implicit in the bird metaphor is a quality of weightlessness which contrasts with Henrik's clumsy brutishness, his maleness further emphasised by the adjective 'loddent' (shaggy). There is a further contrast between the verticality of Tora's 'flight' away from her place of entrapment and Henrik's bulldozing advancement towards it. The simile 'som et stort loddent berg' (like a large shaggy mountain) cogently expresses Tora's perception of her abuser. To the young girl, he appears foreign, immense. She sees him not as a human being, but as a hairy, formless hulk. He is as overpowering and sinister as the mountains that form part of the surrounding landscape:

Regnet hadde overfalt dem, og nedetter fjellhamrene lå skodda tykk som gammel ondskap. [p.37]

[The rain had suddenly fallen upon them, and the fog covered the steep mountain crags like ancient evil.]

In her trapped physical state, Tora is unable to escape from Henrik's systematic violation of her body, and she must therefore resort to some other means of distancing herself from his abuse of her. At times, this 'abandonment' of her body appears to occur at will:



Da gikk Tora utenom sin egen kropp og vilje... [p. 8]  
[Then Tora went out of her body and will...]

On other occasions, Tora's process of disembodiment seems to occur spontaneously and completely outwith her control, as in the following excerpt which describes Tora's reaction on hearing Henrik at her bedroom door:

Det var som om hodet hennes utvidet seg. Ble stort og uformelig og fløt bort så hun ikke hadde styring med det lenger. [p. 53]

[It was as though her head expanded. Became large and formless and floated away so that she no longer had any control over it.]

Tora's feeling of powerlessness is reflected through meronymic or 'body part' agency, the lack of control over her own body reiterated in the final clause. The image of 'floating', of a sense of weightlessness, provides a powerful contrast to her abuser's lumbering movements:

Henrik beregnet verken dørkarm eller dør. Han hadde ikke skritt, han subbet bare inn. [p. 6]

[Henrik didn't take doorframes or doors into account. He didn't have footsteps. He just shambled in.]

Tora's 'flight' of the mind from the fear she experiences on an earthly plane into a 'nothingness', where there is 'only a great stillness' presents a powerful contrast to her abusive stepfather's lumbering and forced invasion of her space and premeditated penetration of her body. This contrast is further illustrated in the following extract, in which Henrik's abuse of Tora is imminent. Trapped within the restricted physical boundaries of her bathtub, Tora's acute vulnerability is intensified by the nakedness of her young body:

Hun holdt såpestykket inntil kroppen. Prøvde å dekke seg med to tynne armer og et såpestykke. [p. 53]



[She held the piece of soap tightly to her body. Tried to cover herself with two thin arms and a piece of soap.]

Tora's attempt at defending her dignity is cogently expressed through the verb phrase 'prøvde å dekke seg' (tried to cover herself). Her endeavour to shield her nakedness is futile, for all she has at her disposal are 'two thin arms and a piece of soap'. The occurrence of 'to tynne armer' without the possessive pronoun, and in a coordinated noun phrase with the inanimate noun 'et såpestykke', conveys an impression of Tora's arms being somehow extraneous to herself, the adjective 'tynne' poignantly expressing their inadequacy to protect her slender, immature body.

### *The Victim's Viewpoint*

Paul Simpson and Martin Montgomery, in their article 'Language, Literature and Film: The Stylistics of Bernard Maclaverty's *Cal*', argue that 'mental process verbs' such as 'saw' and 'heard' are 'clear stylistic indices' that narrative events are being described from a particular character's viewpoint:

The fact that these processes...exclusively express human perceptions serves notice that events are being mediated through the perceptual domain of a single character.<sup>13</sup>

In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, 'mental process verbs' are a characteristic feature of the narrative, and serve to contrast Tora's experiences of abuse with the failure and unwillingness of those around her to 'see' her pain, this 'blindness' embodied in the metaphor of the novel's title. Rakel Christina Granaas points out that "seeing" can be interpreted as "knowing".<sup>14</sup> 'Blindness' can therefore by the same token be equated with ignorance: a failure to 'see' or to 'know'. In Tora's case, even her own mother is 'blind' to her daughter's suffering. Tora is alone with her terrible knowledge: she is the sole witness of her own violation.

In the scene we have been looking at, where Tora is caught unawares in her bath, the recurrence of the verb of perception 'så' suggests that the recounted events are from Tora's perspective:

Kniven under listen bevegte seg sakte. Hun så og så. At døra åpnet seg. Så ham velte inn som et stort loddent berg. [p. 53]  
 [The knife under the moulding moved slowly. She saw and saw. That the door opened. Saw him flounder in like a large shaggy mountain.]

In this extract, which we looked at earlier, the focal point of the narration is the movement of the knife 'under the moulding'. There is no visible agent, the door providing a barrier between the source of the action and the viewer. The repetition of the verb 'så' in the clause 'Hun så og så' serves to extend the process of 'seeing' on the temporal plane and, simultaneously, to define and arrest the point of focus on the spatial plane. The emphasis is on 'seeing' as a process to which Tora commits her entire will in the sense of 'watching'. The repetition of the verb of perception also emphasises Tora's heightened sense of awareness in her trapped state. The main clause 'Hun så og så' (She saw and saw) is intransitive and we assume the object of Tora's focus to be the subject of the previous sentence, i.e. 'kniven' (the knife) in 'kniven bevegte seg sakte' (the knife moved slowly). As we read on, however, we encounter the subordinating conjunction 'At' (that) introducing the subordinate clause 'At døren åpnet seg' ('That the door opened') and we thereby discover a subtle shift in the sense of the verb 'så'. A new movement enters Tora's field of vision, the 'opening' of the door signifying the collapse of the protective barrier Tora has tried to build by wedging a kitchen knife into the door-frame. The breaking of the syntactic rule which does not allow a subordinate clause to stand on its own forces us to go back and to read again the sentence 'Hun så og så', thus ensuring our increasing involvement in this key scene and reinforcing the reader's identification with Tora. The full stop separating the main clause from the subordinate clause creates a break between the

'movement' of the knife and the 'opening' of the door, thus emphasising the sense of timelessness evoked by the repetition of the verb 'så'. The punctuation here produces the added effect of slowing down the process of the 'door opening', the prolonged action heightening the scene's progressive mood of tension.

### *The Dynamics of 'Dangerousness'*

The opening sentence of the novel introduces the neologism 'Farligheten', which recurs throughout the narrative:

Hun visste ikke når hun først ble klar over den: Farligheten.

Det var lenge etter at hun flyttet inn i det vesle spiskammerset bak kjøkkenet, fordi mora mente hun skulle ha et lite rom for seg selv. [p. 5]

[She didn't know when she first became aware of it: the Dangerousness.

It was long after she had moved into the little pantry behind the kitchen, because her mother thought that she should have a little room to herself.]

Wassmo has coined a word that embodies the essence of Tora's sexual victimisation. 'Farligheten' is a state, a condition. It suggests something that is permanent and inalterable. It is the state of being dangerous: 'Dangerousness'. Its occurrence as a proper noun in the opening sentence further conveys its magnitude and its separateness. We are told that Tora's knowledge of 'farligheten' occurs after she has moved into the pantry. Its location behind the kitchen, and its diminutive size indicated by the adjective 'vesle' (little), suggests entrapment, a cell-like space where Tora is cornered by her abusive gaoler. Rakel Christina Granaas illustrates the symbolic relevance of the pantry as Tora's bedroom:

...Tora ikke orker å spise for hun er selv en som blir spist og fortært. Hun sover attpåtil i et spiskammers, ligger vel anrettet og venter på den sultne Henrik.<sup>15</sup>

[...Tora can't manage to eat for she is herself being eaten and devoured. Furthermore, she sleeps in a pantry, lying served up, and waits for the hungry Henrik.]

The intended function of the pantry as a bedroom, a place of privacy for the adolescent girl, is horribly altered through her stepfather Henrik's appalling transgressions. 'Farligheten' converts the room from a secure space of her own to a place where she is sexually violated: abused and raped. In the American translation of the novel, 'farligheten' appears as 'the danger,'<sup>16</sup> a direct translation of the Norwegian noun 'fare'. Herbjørg Wassmo's choice of the word 'farligheten' to express Tora's experiences needs to be addressed, I believe, when looking at the depiction of sexual abuse from the young protagonist's point of view. 'Farligheten' is specific to Tora's terrifying plight, but she is unable to define her subjection as sexual abuse, the term 'farligheten' reflecting the terrible strangeness of her victimisation. The neologism embraces a duality that is at once abstract, yet concrete, for 'farligheten' represents to the twelve-year old Tora not only the condition of 'dangerousness' that exists like a climatic state, its threat permeating her immediate environment, but in more concrete terms, it denotes her abuser and the sexual abuse he inflicts upon her:

Hender. Hender som kom i mørket. Det var farligheten. Store, harde hender som krafset og klemte. [p. 6]

[Hands. Hands that came in the dark. That was the dangerousness. Large, hard hands that groped and squeezed.]

In this extract, Tora's abusive stepfather is represented by his hands, which occur as agents with verbs of action. In his discussion on the system of transitivity in language, Paul Simpson refers to Michael Halliday's analysis of William Golding's *The Inheritors*, indicating the significance of

'meronymic'<sup>17</sup> (or 'body part') agency in the representation of a world seen through the eyes of a Neanderthal man. In Golding's novel, corporal fragmentation contributes to the unfamiliarity of events that are related from this particular character's perspective. In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, meronymic agency is a powerful linguistic device in the depiction of sexual abuse as experienced by the young Tora. The representation of Henrik by his body parts: fingers, hands, mouth, and other isolated aspects of his being: his voice, breath, laughter, presents Henrik as a grotesque, monstrous entity, a gothic-like villain typified by his inhumanity, his 'thing-ness', as referred to by David Punter in his analysis on *Jekyll and Hyde* in his volume *The Modern Gothic*.<sup>18</sup>

The deictic verb 'kom' (came) in the clause 'Hender som kom i mørket' indicates that the disembodied 'hands' are depicted from Tora's perspective; they are moving towards her, seemingly from nowhere. Implicit in the word 'mørket' (the dark) is Tora's tactile perception of her abuser, explicitly conveyed through the verbs 'krafset and klemte' (groped and squeezed), the alliterative velar *k* further emphasising the hardness and unremitting brutality of the abusing 'hands'. The full import of this image becomes apparent a page later when we discover that Henrik has the use of only one arm, having been injured by the Germans during the war. To the abused Tora, this 'able' limb is infinitely more grotesque than Henrik's damaged arm:

Det underlige og skremmende med Henriks overkropp var likevel ikke den ødelagte skulderen. Det var den friske! [p. 12]

[The strange and frightening thing about Henrik's upper body wasn't, however, the destroyed shoulder. It was the good one!]

As Rakel Christina Granaas observes, the depiction of Henrik's crippled arm provides a rare insight into 'an otherwise one-dimensionally evil literary persona.'<sup>19</sup> Øystein Rottem suggests that Henrik's abuse of Tora can be interpreted



as 'a perverted form of revenge.'<sup>20</sup> In his article on the melodramatic element in Wassmo's writing, Rottem illustrates the thematic complexity of the novel. Tora's stigma is twofold: the illegitimate child of a German father and Norwegian mother, conceived during the Nazi occupation of Norway, Tora is sexually victimised by her stepfather who is himself a victim, damaged by the war. The diametric interplay between aggression and passivity is exemplified in the contrast between Henrik's 'good' arm and his 'bad' arm:

Den veltet seg enormt under klærne. Neven og armen var en eneste bunt av trassige muskler i rastløs bevegelse. Men på venstre side hang hånden og armen underutviklet og passiv og var en hån mot hele Henriks vesen. [p. 12]

[It was huge, tossing around under his clothes. The fist and arm were a single knot of defiant muscles in restless motion. But on his left side the hand and the arm hung, underdeveloped and passive, an insult to Henrik's entire being.]

The definition between hand and arm is erased: the limb is shapeless, yet powerfully active, the suggestion of repressed violence implicit in the noun 'bunt' (knot) and the adjective 'trassig' (defiant). The opposition between impotence and force, passivity and aggression that is so powerfully expressed in the above extract, alludes not only to the conflicting characteristics of Henrik's limbs, but also to the extreme difference in the balance of power between the abuser and the abused.

Nowhere is this disparity in power relations more graphically illustrated than in the scene where Henrik rapes Tora. Significantly, it is on this occasion that Tora does not have time to 'abandon' her body:

En kveld kom knirket i døra så bratt at hun ikke fikk tid til å forlate kroppen sin og la tankene løpe fritt ut av vinduet. Tora var nødt til å følge med, kjenne alt som skjedde med henne. [p. 152]



[One evening the creak of the door came so suddenly that she didn't have time to leave her body and let her thoughts run freely out of the window. Tora was forced to follow what was happening, to feel everything that was happening to her.]

The process of disembodiment which normally creates some distance between the abuse inflicted on Tora and her involvement in that abuse, is thwarted by the suddenness of Henrik's entrance into her room. On this occasion, Tora is forced to 'feel' the violation of her body, to experience the full impact of Henrik's abuse of her. Her reaction is conveyed through the following description of her dehumanised state, the relentless and violent nature of the attack heightened through the alliterative velar *k* consonant:

Da tok hun til å jamre og klynke og krype rundt i sengen. Klarte ikke å ligge stille og bare la det komme til en ende denne kvelden også. [p. 152]

[Then she began to wail and whimper and crawl around in her bed. Couldn't manage to lie still and just let it come to an end this evening like the others.]

We can find in this extract a conspicuous signal that this incident is part of an ongoing pattern of sexual abuse. Implicit in the adverb 'også' (also) is the repetitive nature of Tora's sexual victimisation. Her pitiful and futile attempt at escaping from Henrik's violation of her, provokes his bewilderment and contempt:

Det forvirret ham, det pirret hatet hans. Det kunne brukes til å vekke attrå, til å bruke makt og kraft. [p. 152]

[It confused him, stimulated his hatred. It could be used to arouse desire, to use power and strength.]

Tora's resistance is an instrument which Henrik uses in order to justify his sexual abuse of her. Her weak struggle is concretised and intensified through the repetition of the neutral pronoun 'det' (it). The repetition of the verb 'bruke' (use), first in its

passive form, and then in its active usage, serves to contrast the vulnerability and powerlessness of the victim with the brutal domination of the abuser. But we are not confronted with an explicit description of the perpetrator. In the following depiction of Henrik's savage invasion of Tora's young body, the narration is focussed on the experience of the victim:

Myk, myk var motstanden. Bare til å sette tommelen i øyet på. Den ba for seg, og ga nok etter. Så revnet det. Tora kjente det et sted utenfor seg selv. Visste ikke hvor det begynte eller endte, det hang ikke fast med resten av henne. Likevel smertet det så. [p. 152]

[The resistance was soft, soft. Just enough to press the thumb into its eye. It begged for its life, and gave in. Then it tore. Tora felt it somewhere outside herself. Didn't know where it began or where it ended. It wasn't attached to the rest of her. Yet it hurt so.]

Alliteration and the fronting of the repeated adjective 'myk' (soft) lends a poetic quality to the language that is akin to a lullaby, highlighting the extreme youth and innocence of the rape victim. The fronting of the adjective 'myk' (soft) also serves to emphasise the physical vulnerability of Tora's immature body. The pain of her rape is beyond the limits of her experience and in her consciousness it is felt as something external to her physical self. The scene is reminiscent of Maya Angelou's rape in the first volume of her autobiography *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*:

Then there was the pain. A breaking and entering when even the senses are torn apart. The act of rape on an eight-year old body is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can't. The child gives, because the body can, and the mind of the violator cannot.<sup>21</sup>

Henrik's brutal and steadfast persistence in wielding his power over Tora culminates in his use of a rope with which to

ensnare her in her own bed to enable him to fully complete his violation of her:

Da kom han igjen. Med et rep. Tora trodde det ikke! Verden var ikke så grim. ]p. 153]

[Then he came back. With a rope. Tora couldn't believe it! The world wasn't that cruel.]

Tora's entrapment is so unexpectedly violent and sudden that she is not given sufficient time to 'escape' from her body. It is perhaps her reaction to Henrik's abuse of her that exacerbates the violence he implements on this occasion, culminating in his rape of her. His effective employment of the rope as a weapon, an incremental implement in his violent entry of Tora, provides a sadly ironic contrast to the highly ineffectual function which Tora has hitherto assigned to the potentially dangerous knife as a means of preventing Henrik's entry into her room.

One night prior to the rape, Tora, in her desperation, takes her mother's meat knife into her bed to defend herself against Henrik. However it is not the knife, but the 'shield' of her first menstrual blood that protects her on this occasion:

Det skjoldet var trygt om det var spinkelt. Det hadde berget jentunger og kvinner før, uten at Tora visste det.

Ei størknet blod-rose. En mørkerød blomst i den blå gymnastikkbuksa som hun selv hadde sydd på håndarbeidet. [p. 140]

[That shield was secure, even though it was fragile. It had saved young girls and women before, without Tora knowing it.

A solidified blood-rose. A dark red flower in the blue gym shorts she'd made herself in sewing class.]

The compact 'blood-rose' which symbolises Tora's initiation into womanhood, presents a stark contrast to the blood which permeates her sheet as she is raped:

Blodet kom helt uten at det skulle. Det var i mønster utover hele lakenet fordi hun ikke greide å holde seg på plass under ham. [p. 153]

[The blood came, although it wasn't supposed to. It was in patterns all over the entire sheet because she wasn't able to stay in place underneath him.]

The blood, which had recently served to protect her from her stepfather's violation of her, now flows freely as a result of his violation. Tora's bewilderment is signalled in the following exclamatory utterance:

Pusten og blodet! [p. 153]

[The breathing and the blood!]

The co-occurrence of 'pusten' and 'blodet' indicates Tora's realisation that this blood is intrinsic to 'farligheten': 'the dangerousness'.

Changes in the abuser's breathing is one of the features in a 'pattern' discovered by Ellen Klosterman in her research on representations of sexual abuse in writings by women, in both fictional and non-fictional works. This pattern includes, among many others, elements such as the perpetrator's manipulation of the victim's physical environment; a fixed reference point in time; justification by the perpetrator for inflicting the abuse, and a reference to the abuser's sexual arousal, which Klosterman describes as follows:

The perpetrator's sexual satisfaction is indicated by details such as changes in his breathing, intensity of his touch, or facial expression, or through details about his erection or ejaculation.<sup>22</sup>

In *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, Henrik's breathing is an element of farligheten. In the following extract, Tora distinguishes between Henrik's habitual mode of movement and the premeditated 'footsteps' that signal his depraved motivation:

Henrik beregnet verken dørkarm eller dør. Han hadde ikke skritt, han subbet bare inn. Men Henrik hadde andre skritt inni hus om han ville. Skritt som nesten ikke hørtes. Lydløse, men full av grov pust. [p. 6]

[Henrik didn't take into account either doors or doorframes. He didn't have footsteps, he just shambled in. But Henrik had other footsteps inside the house if he chose. Footsteps that could hardly be heard. Silent, but full of coarse breathing.]

When he forces his way into Tora's room when she is bathing herself, his breathing becomes the sole element of the scene of abuse:

Så ble det bare pust i rommet. Pusten var nattelyden i huset. [p. 53]

[Then there was only breathing in the room. Breathing was the night sound of the house.]

In this extract, the first occurrence of the noun 'pust' (breath) is without an article or possessive pronoun; it is an isolated entity, possessing no evident source. It is merely 'breath'. Through the adverb 'bare' (only), it becomes the sole occupier of the space and the essence of the moment immediately prior to violation. Like 'farligheten', it is represented as a quasi-climatic state: a condition of the house in which the abuse occurs. When it is repeated in the definite form, it is identifiable as something that is associated with the night, but which is now threatening Tora in the daylight hours. Her dawning realisation that 'the breathing' is no longer only a phenomenon of the night is not fully formulated, as indicated by aposiopesis:

Nå var det dag men... [p. 53]

[Now it was daytime but...]

Tora's ambivalence towards the converse conditions of daylight and darkness are expressed in the following



paradox, where her dilemma is symbolised by a tension between summer and winter, day and night:

Hun ville at det skulle være sommer og lyst hele døgnet når hun hadde det slikt. Samtidig ville hun gjemme seg i mørke vinteren i den mest bortgjemte krå som kunne finnes. [p. 52]  
[She wanted it to be summer and light the whole day and night when she felt like this. At the same time she wanted to hide in the dark winter in the most concealed corner that could be found.]

This extract exemplifies the novel's underlying themes of entrapment and escape. In the north of Norway, where the novel is set, summer and winter bring diametric and extreme conditions of light and dark. To the sexually victimised Tora, neither provides shelter from her abuser, for it is in the very house they both inhabit that the abuse occurs: *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*.

In an interview with Catherine Sandnes, Herbjørg Wassmo talks about 'the betrayed child' in her books:

Men når det er sagt, så er det åpenbart at det sviktede barnet går igjen som et ledemotiv i bøkene mine. Og det vil ikke forbause meg om det vil henge med meg gjennom enda noen tiår.<sup>23</sup>

[But when it comes to it, then it is obvious that the betrayed child recurs as a leitmotif throughout my books. And it wouldn't surprise me if it sticks with me through another ten years.]

The theme of the betrayed child is powerfully examined in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, the novel's central metaphor of blindness reflecting the betrayal of the central character, the sexually abused Tora. At the beginning of this article, I quoted an extract from Roland Summit's article on the 'blindness' to child sexual abuse that is still prevalent in our society: our persistent neglect to recognise the true nature



and extent of the sexual exploitation of children. Theirs must surely be the ultimate betrayal.

### Notes

1. Blair & Rita Justice, *The Broken Taboo* (London: Peter Owen, 1980), p.14.
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3. Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 60.
4. Emily Driver, 'Introduction', in E. Driver & A. Droisen (eds.), *Child Sexual Abuse: Feminist Perspectives* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 2.
5. Ellen Bass & Louise Thornton (eds.), *I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (New York: Harper, 1983), p. 24.
6. Ellen F. Klosterman, *The Music She Hears: Point of View and Technique in Women's Writing about Childhood Sexual Abuse* (dissertation in partial fulfilment of PhD, Microfiche edition) (Ohio: Bowling Green State University, 1997), p. 9.
7. *The House with the Blind Glass Windows*, translated by Roseann Lloyd & Allen Simpson (Washington: Seal Press, 1987).
8. Catherine Sandnes, 'Fornuft og følelser: Et intervju med Herbjørg Wassmo', in *Født av spindel og jern*, ed. Randi Christina C. Krogsveien (Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, 2000), p.145.
9. Ellen Klosterman, op.cit., p. 136.
10. Jorunn Hareide, 'Kampen for menneskeverd', *Norsk Årbok*, 1982.
11. Ellen Klosterman, op. cit., p. 30.
12. Emily Driver & Audrey Droisen, op. cit., p.184.
13. In Peter Verdonk & Jean-Jacques Weber (eds.), *Twentieth Century Fiction: From Text to Context*. (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 149. Simpson and Montgomery go on to suggest that the proliferation of verbs of seeing and hearing in the novel *Cal* indicates that 'the narrative focalization...is unequivocally locked within Cal's consciousness.'
14. Rakel Christina Granaas, 'Den kroppen som ikke var hennes', in *Født av spindel og jern*, ed. Randi Christina C. Krogsveien (Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, 2000), p. 21.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
16. *The House with the Blind Glass Windows*, p. 3.
17. Paul Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 110.
18. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, vol. 2: *The Modern Gothic* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 2.
19. Rakel Christina Granaas, op. cit., p. 17.

20. Øystein Rottem, 'Det tomme rommet', in *Født av spindel og jern*, ed. Randi Christina C. Krogsveien (Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, 2000), p. 78.
21. Maya Angelou, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* (London: Virago, 1984), p. 76.
22. Ellen Klosterman, op. cit., p. 192.
23. Catherine Sandnes, op. cit., p. 140.

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# Centring on the Peripheries

Studies in Scandinavian, Scottish,  
Gaelic and Greenlandic Literature

Edited by Bjarne Thorup Thomsen

Assistant Editor: Allan Macniven

Steinvör Pálsson

The Fragmented Body:  
Transgressing the Periphery:  
Two Novels by Herbjørg Wassmo and  
Christian Krohg

Herbjørg Wassmo's critically acclaimed debut novel *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* was written in 1981. The first volume of a trilogy about the adolescent girl Tora, it won the Norwegian Critics Prize and has been translated into numerous languages. Wassmo was born in 1942 in the north of Norway, near the Lofoten islands, on the island of Skogsøya. *Huset med den blinde glassveranda* takes place in a parallel setting: an isolated fishing community on an island off the north-west coast of Norway in the 1950's.

Christian Krohg was born in 1852 in Aker, near Norway's capital of Kristiania, as it was known then. When he wrote his novel *Albertine* he was already a highly respected and well established painter. When the book came out, it was considered obscene and was immediately seized by the authorities and confiscated. Krohg was brought to trial, although he had many supporters, especially in the women's movement and the newly-formed workers' movement. In contrast to the rural setting of Wassmo's book, Christian Krohg's novel, written almost 100 years previously in 1886, takes place in the town of Kristiania.

We could say, then, that Wassmo's novel is situated on the periphery, in geographical terms. Through the eyes of its protagonist, we see the northern landscape, we witness the effects of its climate and we glimpse the lives of its people. Krohg's novel, on the other hand, is located in the country's centre: in its capital city. Very much an urban novel, it depicts the plight of the city worker, in this case the female worker: the seamstress Albertine. The urban landscape serves as a backdrop to the tragic human story that unfolds, depicting the protagonist's passage into prostitution. It was the human landscape that preoccupied Krohg, both in his painting and his writing. He referred to people as 'den levende natur' (Gauguin 1932:109).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gauguin's biography gives a full and fascinating account of Christian Krohg's life.

In this discussion, it is the landscape of the human body that I shall be attempting to explore; more specifically, the transgression of the boundary – or if you like, the periphery – of the female body and how it is represented in these texts. I shall be concentrating mainly on the patterns of focalization and fragmentation that occur in the depiction of sexual abuse and rape in each of these two novels.

In her thesis on point of view in writings on childhood sexual abuse, Ellen Klosterman writes:

Paradoxically, it is not the detail itself which defines the action as abusive within the text – it is the emotional tone of the point of view used for narration... (Klosterman1997:189)

In a narrative concerning sexual violation, point-of-view is crucial in determining the reader's interpretation of events and in influencing his or her attitude towards the characters involved. How, for example, does the writer portray the rapist? What are the stylistic indices that signal a particular character's perspective? How does the writer depict a rape from the victim's viewpoint?

### *The rapist*

I would like to begin by exploring the portrayal of the rapist: Tora's stepfather Henrik in *Huset med deri blinde glassveranda* and the police officer Winther in *Albertine*. In both novels, the narration, when filtered through the consciousness of the female protagonist, fragments the male into specific body parts, as in the following excerpt from Wassmo's novel, where Henrik's hands function as tools of abuse:

Hender. Hender som kom i mørket. Det var farligheten. Store, harde hender som krafset og klemt. (Wassmo1981:6)

(Hands. Hands that came in the dark. That was the dangerousness.<sup>2</sup> Large, hard hands that groped and squeezed.)

Here, the narration is in the third person but it is *focalised* through the eyes of the child Tora. In his discussion on point of view in fiction, Roger Fowler gives a very clear and succinct definition of the term 'focalization':

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<sup>2</sup> I have translated *farligheten* as 'dangerousness'. The author does not use the word for danger: *fare*, but has instead coined a new term to depict the specific type of danger facing Tora. I have tried to reflect this in my translation.

A novel may be narrated from the pervasive viewpoint of a single narrator, or it may be told in the third person as if by a narrator, but focalized through the eyes of a character within the narrative. (Fowler 1996 :161)

In the earlier extract from Wassmo's novel, the deictic verb *kom* indicates that the disembodied hands are depicted from the protagonist's perspective: they are looming towards her, seemingly from nowhere. Implicit in this description is Tora's tactile perception of her abuser. She cannot see the hands, for they come 'in the darkness'. The full import of this image becomes apparent when the reader later discovers that Henrik has the use of only one arm, the result of a war injury. The diametric interplay between aggression and passivity is exemplified in the contrast between his two limbs:

Den veltet seg enormt under klærne. Neven og armen var en eneste bunt av trassige muskler i rastløs bevegelse. Men på venstre side hang hånden og armen underutviklet og passiv og var en hån mot hele Henriks vesen. (Wassmo 1981:12).

(It was huge, tossing around under his clothes. The fist and arm were a single knot of defiant muscles in restless motion. But on his left side the hand and the arm hung, underdeveloped and passive, an insult to Henrik's entire being.)<sup>3</sup>

The contrast between impotence and force, passivity and aggression, that is so powerfully expressed in this extract, alludes not only to the conflicting characteristics of Henrik's arms, but also to the extreme difference in the balance of power between the abuser and the abused. As Rakel Christina Granaas observes, the depiction of Henrik's crippled arm provides a rare insight into 'an otherwise one-dimensionally evil literary persona.' (Granaas 2000:17). It is true to say that the narration is never related from Henrik's perspective. The scenes depicting Tora's abuse are either related from the narrator's viewpoint or focalized through Tora herself. Throughout the novel, the corporal fragmentation of the male perpetrator is a powerful linguistic device in the depiction of sexual abuse as experienced by the young female protagonist. These fragmented body elements are a part of *farligheten* – 'the dangerousness' – Tora's term for her stepfather's sexual abuse of her. The representation of Henrik by his body parts: fingers, hands, mouth, and other isolated aspects of his being: his voice, breath, laughter, presents Henrik as a grotesque, monstrous entity, a gothic villain typified by his inhumanity, which is forcibly illustrated in the following excerpt from the novel:

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the author.



Henrik beregnet verken dørkarm eller dør. Han hadde ikke skritt, han subbet bare inn. Men Henrik hadde andre skritt inni hus om han ville. Skritt som nesten ikke hørtes. Lydløse, men full av grov pust. (Wassmo 1981:6)

(Henrik didn't take into account either doors or doorframes. He didn't have footsteps, he just shambled in. But Henrik had other footsteps in the house when he wanted. Footsteps that were silent, but full of coarse breathing.)

Like Henrik, the police officer Winther in Christian Krohg's novel *Albertine* is what E.M. Forster would have termed a 'flat character' (Forster 1990:73), i.e. a character lacking development and unaltered by circumstances. In the key chapter of *Albertine*, which takes place in Winther's apartment and culminates in his rape of the young seamstress, we see Winther through Albertine's eyes. Her observations of him are minimal, reflecting not only the implicit imbalance of power between a middle-aged, senior male police officer and a young working-class woman in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but more significantly perhaps, the sexual intent on the part of the male and the absence of desire on the part of the woman. In the entire chapter, a physical description of Winther occurs in only two instances, both of which are relatively brief. The first of these is focalized through Albertine, as she sits in a chair facing Winther:

Hun så hans kortklipte, mørke isse bøyet over mandelen, de korte hvite endene som plukket det lyserøde skallet forsiktig av. (Krohg 1994:86)<sup>4</sup>

She saw the cropped, dark crown of his head bent over the almond, the blunt white hands that carefully plucked off the pale red shell.

Winther, the focalised object, is fragmented through Albertine's gaze. As the theorist Mieke Bal points out in her work on narratology: 'the image we receive of the object is determined by the focalizer.' (Bal 2001:100). In *Albertine*, the description of Winther's 'blunt' hands suggests an aversion to the focalized object and creates a striking contrast to the activity in which the hands are engaged. Implicit also in this image we are given of Winther, is a fascination on Albertine's part with the peeling of the almond. Winther's movements are almost clinical in their precision, his fastidiousness suggesting a skilled operation. The man's delicate handling of an inanimate object in contrast to the subsequent brutality and violence of his rape of Albertine, serves to highlight his callous and indifferent attitude towards women:

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<sup>4</sup> Included in the 1994 Gyldendal edition is Krohg's defence speech to the Supreme Court on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1887, which was printed in its entirety in the newspaper 'Verdens Gang' the day after the trial.

Albertine is a replaceable commodity. The specific action in which Winther is engaged at this point anticipates also his impending act of rape and Albertine's enforced gynaecological examination later in the novel, which could be interpreted as a second 'rape'. Winther's action of 'plucking' the shell from the almond suggests here Albertine's imminent 'deflowering'. The almond, symbolically associated with virginity, is stripped of its protective casing. As Albertine's focus shifts from the crown of Winther's head, to his hands and finally to the 'pale red shell', the latter becomes the focalized object shared by both characters.

The second description of Winther, again focalised through Albertine, occurs immediately after she has been raped by him. This time, her viewing position is from the bed where she has been sexually violated:

Om en stund trengte et flakkende skinn inn under øyelokkene. En fyrstikk ble tent, og hun så Winther stå foran den store vaskevannsbollen med stearinlys ved siden av seg. – Hodet med den svarte, kortklippede nakken var bøyet forover, og nedenfor den gulgrå jegerskjorten stakk de to stygge, lodne, hjulbente benene. Gud, hvor hun hatet ham! (Krohg 1984:88)

(In a while, a flickering light pressed in underneath her eyelids. A match was lit, and she saw Winther standing in front of the large washbasin with a paraffin candle at his side. – The head with its black, closely – cropped nape was bent forward, and below the greyish-yellow undershirt, protruded two ugly, hairy, bandy legs. God, how she hated him!)

Having just raped Albertine, Winther is now observed by her to be in the process of what can only be assumed to be a post-coital wash. As in the previous description, Albertine's focus is directed at his head, but on this occasion his back is turned towards her in a final gesture of contempt towards the object of his abuse. He is framed by the light of the match, his image static and grotesque. Albertine is no longer able to see his hands as in her earlier observation of him. They are now hidden from her, although again engaged in activity. As in the previous description, the representation of Winther is fragmented, but this time it is a reverse image of her earlier observation of him. Now, his back turned towards her, she sees the nape of his neck, where previously, seated opposite her, he had presented to her the crown of his head. Albertine's observation of Winther is cursory and crude, her feelings of repugnance and contempt manifest in the sequence of derogatory adjectives depicting Winther's unattractive legs and in her final, heartfelt exclamation.

A notable aspect of Winther's depiction as focalised through Albertine in the only two instances that occur in the text, is the fact that no description of his face is given. As we have seen, he presents only the 'crown,' or the 'back' of his head. In the following excerpt from *Huset*

*med den blinde glassveranda*, taken from a scene where Henrik sexually abuses his stepdaughter Tora in her bath, the abuser's 'facelessness' emphasises the inhumanity of his actions:

Mannen hadde ikke noe ansikt. Fatet veltet. Den friske armen var villig til å greie opp for to. (Wassmo 1981:53).

(The man had no face. The tub overturned. The healthy arm was willing to do the work of two.)

'The man' referred to in this extract is depicted as a mindless, faceless 'machine' that blindly knocks down anything in its way. The image of the abuser is again fragmented, represented here as a disembodied arm. Wassmo's use of deviant collocation highlights the depravity of the situation being described and conveys also the wanton greed that motivates the arm into action.

### *The rape*

I shall now look at the rape scene in each novel, beginning with Herbjørg Wassmo's *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*. In the following depiction of Henrik's savage invasion of Tora's young body, the narration is focussed on the physical experience of the victim:

Myk, myk var motstanden. Bare til å sette tommelen i øyet på. Den ba for seg, og ga nok etter. Så revnet det. Tora kjente det et sted utenfor seg selv. Visste ikke hvor det begynte eller endte, det hang ikke fast med resten av henne. Likevel smertet det så. (Wassmo 1981:152)

(The resistance was soft, soft. Just enough to press the thumb into its eye. It begged for its life, and gave in. Then it tore. Tora felt it somewhere outside herself. Didn't know where it began or where it ended. It wasn't attached to the rest of her. Yet it hurt so.)

There is a sense here of the point of view shifting from the narrator to Tora, this transition signalled by the mental process verb 'felt'. From this point, the narration is focalised through the female protagonist. The profound pain and trauma of her rape is beyond the limits of her experience. It is simultaneously without and within her experiencing self, the boundaries of her body ruptured through Henrik's brutal violation.

As in *Huset med den blinde glassveranda*, the rape in Krohg's novel *Albertine* is focalized through the female protagonist:

... Med engang blev den lysegule Striben mellem Portièrerne borte, og der kom noen ind. En kom hen og klappede hende paa hodet og kyssede hende paa Panden. Eau de Lubin! Der var noen, som klædte af sig – først dunkede en Støvle blødt mod Gulvtæppet ossaa om lidt en til. Hun hørte et uhr bli' trukket op, og saa blev det hængt op paa Væggen over Sengen. Hun fikk et Kys paa Panden, og hun bøjede Hodet bagover for bedre at kjende den fine Lugten – og saa fik hun et langt paa Munden – et langt og saa flere bagefter og saa endda flere.

Hvad var det, hvad var det, hvor var hun? Hun følte en knugende Vægt paa Brystet, saa hun var nær ved at kvæles. Der var noget, som gjorde forferdelig ondt. Et skrig – det var hendes, og ædru og angst til Døden forstod hun med engang alt og klorte og slog og krasede og skreg. – 'Hysch, hold Kjæft', sa en forpustet Stemme lige i hendes Øre – det blev en lang Kamp som for Livet, men to armer af Jern holdt hende fast, og hun lukkede Øjnene.<sup>5</sup>

(Suddenly the pale yellow stripe between the drapes disappeared and someone came in. Someone came over and patted her on the head and kissed her on the forehead. Eau de Lubin! Someone was getting undressed – first a boot thumped softly against the rug, then after a little while, another one. She could hear a watch being wound up, and then it was hung up on the wall above the bed. She felt a kiss on her forehead and she tilted her head back so that she could get a better smell of the fine scent – and then she felt a long kiss on her mouth – a long kiss followed by several more and then even more.

What was it, what was it, where was she? She felt a crushing weight on her breast so that she was on the verge of suffocating. There was something that was hurting her terribly. A scream – it was hers, and alert and afraid for her life, she suddenly understood everything and scratched and hit out and tore and screamed. – "Shh! Shut your mouth", said a breathless voice right in her ear – there was a long struggle as though for her life, but two arms of iron clutched her tightly, and she closed her eyes.)

Like Tora, Albertine seems to experience her rape both within and beyond her own body. The scream happens before it is identified by its source: 'A scream – it was hers...' The sound is foreign to Albertine herself and she perceives it as occurring outside her body. In its nominal form, the scream is concretised, an embodiment of Albertine's suffering. Nominalisation eliminates the *process* of screaming, which in this case effectively conveys the sudden, intense nature of her scream. As in the earlier excerpt from Wassmo's novel, the verb 'felt' conveys the physical pain of Albertine's rape as she is experiencing it. Sara Mills suggests that: 'focalization can manipulate the reader's sympathies' (Mills 1995:181) and Krohg achieves this by representing to the reader the consciousness that experiences the rape.

A predominant aspect of the narration concerning the rape itself, which is also manifest in Wassmo's novel, is the omission of any physical description of the rapist: When Winther enters the bedroom where Albertine is sleeping, he is represented by the indefinite pronoun,

<sup>5</sup> I have taken this extract from Christian Krohg's defence speech (Krohg 1994:116-117).

indicating that Albertine is unable to identify the intruder in the darkness of the room, or that she is still drowsy. We could perhaps make the observation that in his depiction of the rape scene, Krohg was being faithful to his painter's gaze. His objective was to present only 'the impression of the moment' (Thue 1968:10).<sup>6</sup> Unable to portray that which was concealed by the darkness, he had to find other means of conveying the protagonist's impressions.

The recurrence of the indefinite pronoun in the passage quoted above establishes an atmosphere of mystery regarding the identity of the person entering the space. The reader can of course deduce that it is Winther, but it is Albertine's perceptions that must be conveyed in order for the reader to gain an insight into her thought processes: *i.e.*, to share her *impressions*. The anonymity of the rapist creates an atmosphere of intrigue which is then unexpectedly attenuated by the ordinary, everyday actions of a person getting ready for bed. To Albertine, the actions are immediately identifiable but their agent is not. As the scene rapidly progresses, there is a dramatic shift in this relationship between agency and identity; the intruder's mundane actions, which hitherto have involved inanimate entities as objects (the boots and watch, for example), are suddenly transformed into the act of rape inflicted upon the female body, as the male agent is eventually identified by his victim.

The concepts of centre and periphery in the context of sexual abuse and rape are highly complex, and by no means easy to articulate. They are eloquently conveyed in the following quotation from an article written by Rhonda Capelon, entitled 'Surfacing Gender: Reconceptualising Crimes against Women in Time of War':

Every rape is a grave violation of physical and mental integrity.

Every rape has the potential to profoundly debilitate, to render the woman homeless in her own body and destroy her sense of security in the world. (Capelon 1998:76)

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<sup>6</sup> 'Både som maler og forfatter ville han gi øyeblikkets inntrykk, unngå all utpensling og bare gjengi det som momentant hadde grepet ham.'

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