

## BODY, CORPORALITY AND MATERNITY IN MARGARET DRABBLE'S *THE MILLSTONE*

### CUERPO, CORPOREIDAD Y MATERNIDAD EN *THE MILLSTONE*, DE MARGARET DRABBLE

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#### ABSTRACT

The definition of the human body has been studied in multiple fields, as well as the concept of corporality. Both are closely related, as the human body is not only what we see, the biological body, but also the elements that surround this physical reality – that is, corporality. Maternity is one of these elements, and this is clearly reflected in *The Millstone*. Through the analysis of the protagonist's (Rosamund) physical, social and cultural body, we are able to explore her evolution, her relationship with her own body and with herself, with her friends and the women that surround her during her pregnancy, and her adjustment to her new situation and to her daughter.

KEY WORDS: Margaret Drabble; *The Millstone*; maternity; corporality; physical body; social body; cultural body

#### RESUMEN

La definición del cuerpo humano ha sido objeto de estudio de múltiples campos disciplinarios, al igual que el concepto de corporalidad. Ambos están intrínsecamente relacionados, ya que el cuerpo no es solo lo que vemos, nuestro cuerpo biológico, sino también los elementos que rodean a esta realidad física, es decir, la corporalidad. La maternidad es uno de estos elementos y esto queda claramente reflejado en *The*

*Millstone*. A través de un análisis del cuerpo físico, social y cultural de su protagonista, Rosamund, exploramos su evolución, su relación con su propio cuerpo y con ella misma, sus amigos, las mujeres que la rodean durante el embarazo y su adecuación a su nueva situación y a su hija.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Margaret Drabble; *The Millstone*; maternidad; corporalidad; cuerpo físico; cuerpo social; cuerpo cultural.

The definition of the human body has been the focus of attention of many scholars for centuries. The phenomenon of body and the concept of corporality have also been studied in different and varied fields, from science to literature or history (see ZIMKE, ZLATEV and FRANK 2007). Indeed, both concepts are closely related, as the body is not only what we see, the physical or biological body, but also the consequences of the elements surrounding this physical reality, that is, corporality. This has been defined as «the dialectical unity of body and soul, as the integral quality of existential experience of a person, a complex of natural and individual and cultural features of the human body, as the field of interaction of inner and outer life spaces of a human body, as a body that acquired various «languages» as a result of socialization» (GALUTSKIKH, 2013: 238). This basically means that the human body suffers different transformations due to the social and cultural factors that surround it, and maternity is one of them. A woman's body does not only change because of the physical consequences of childbirth, but also because of what becoming a mother may mean for women. Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone* reflects this. Rosamund Stacey, the protagonist, does not only change her attitude towards her own body and sexuality after having her baby, but also her perception of women, from whom she had always felt detached, and the effects that giving birth and all the things this entails has on all of them.

Taking this into account, the main purpose of this article is to analyze how body and corporality are represented in *The Millstone* and how maternity is involved in this representation. It is also to analyze Rosamund's relationship with her own body and with feminism as well, as she decides on her maternity, her career and her daughter, but also suffers. The novel is not only about her pregnancy, but also an account and examination of herself, her friends, the women that surround her in the hospital, the way their bodies reflect their sufferings and happiness, and her adjustment to her new situation and to her daughter. Rosamund's evolution is, in general, the main subject of this article. To do so, the concept of body will be defined in three different ways.

According to Iryna Galutskikh, there are several definitions for body, namely: the biological body, or the entire structure of a human organism; the social body, or the results of its interaction with the social environment; and the cultural body or the «product of culture congruous formation and employment of the bodily principle of a human being [...] the quintessence, the accomplishment of the process of transition of impersonal, purely corporeal preconditions to properly human existence of the body» (237-38). Rosamund's first person accounting of her life before and after having her daughter reflects these definitions of body and their relation to corporality. This is also strongly connected to

feminism and Drabble's own idea of what an Ideal Woman should be in the time in which Rosamund lived.<sup>1</sup>

Before getting pregnant, Rosamund showed a complete ignorance of her own body and of what maternity implied in a physical sense but also showed a physical reluctance to what sex meant, as she explains: «It must have been the physical thing itself that frightened me, for I did not at all object to the social implications ... nor the emotional upheavals which I imagined to be its companions: but the act itself could neither make nor contemplate» (DRABBLE, 1965: 18). In the eyes of her friends Rosamund is a strong independent woman, although she is actually insecure and feels miserable for being unable to have physical contact with a man and for pretending to be with two men at the same time. Her explanation of her first and only sexual contact with George proves this as well. She just seems to know what she is doing, although she actually does not. She pretends to have done it before and even hides physical pain («I managed to smile bravely, in order not to give offence, despite considerable pain, and I hoped that the true state of affairs would not become obvious» (DRABBLE, 1965: 30). What is more, her description of the whole event looks too simple when compared to other descriptions, and she uses words such as deception, or blame. She really wants George to stay longer afterwards but does not say a word and he leaves. Her incapacity to explain her emotions when coming to terms with physical contact makes her miss the opportunity to have a relationship with George, to know him better. She is so insecure that she even believes he does not feel attracted to her and her body and says «Perhaps we appeal to each other because we're rivals in hypocrisy» (DRABBLE, 1965: 31).

It is not until she realizes she is pregnant that she starts to pay attention to her biological body and the changes she and other women suffer, also showing her little self-knowledge. She feels bad once she has her first hospital appointment and observes pregnant women, who are merely proof of human misery, in her opinion. It is at this point that she understands the biological and physical changes a woman's body experiences during pregnancy and how they turn them into ugly beings that are euphemistically considered beautiful. For the first time in the novel Rosamund indirectly refers to corporality or the

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<sup>1</sup> During the Victorian Age, a woman's role was confined to the home as motherhood and domesticity were considered to be sufficient for their emotional and personal fulfillment. The Ideal Woman was the one that kept away from the public sphere in most fields and concentrated on raising children and staying at home. Apart from the Queen, the term seems to come from Mrs. Frances Goodby, the wife of the Reverend J Goodby of Ashby-de-la-Zouch in Leicestershire. At her death it was considered that she carried out her duties as wife and mother with patience and piety and that she was the best example of a virtuous woman whose life revolved around her home, her family and God; a woman who also accepted her place in the sexual hierarchy, as it is stated in *The General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer*, 1840. However, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Victorian feminism started to emerge as a potent political force and although Margaret Drabble is not considered a feminist, she may draw on that tradition. According to Lynn Veach Sadler, «Drabble has steadfastly disavowed any connection with the feminist movement other than a kindred concern for the problems women face» (1986: 131), but she does show interest on presenting characters who are at the forefront of the changes that empowered women, as Rosamund in *The Millstone*.

effects that external factors have on one's body, in this case maternity and its negative effects on women's bodies:

*Anemia and exhaustion were written on most countenances: the clothes were dreadful, the legs swollen, the bodies heavy and unbalanced [...] a huge middle-aged woman, who could walk only with a stick, a pale thin creature with varicose veins [...] they were complaining at great length about how their backs ached and how they'd never get their figures back. (DRABBLE, 1965: 58)*

However, it is also the first time in the novel that she realizes her physical changes are not unique - all women suffer them, although she had tried not to look like all of them, pregnant or not. She understands that she is like all of them and that she is more attached to other women than she had ever been before, saying «I was like that too. I was trapped in a human limit for the first time in my life, and I was going to have to learn how to live inside it» (DRABBLE, 1965: 58). Until that moment, she had tried to distance herself from the rest of women and pregnant women, because she was an intellectual, independent person who did not show any concern about sharing her life with a man, but the very process of becoming a mother is making her like them, the physicality of maternity is turning her into a common woman who is not different nor isolated anymore. She understands and discovers that from now on her pregnancy will limit her independence, also physically. At that point she also realizes there are many pregnant women everywhere and that pregnancy turns women invisible for men in situations in which men usually pay attention to women and to her, such as in bars or the underground. This feeling of being like any other pregnant woman and not an individual as she used to be before expecting a baby is even more emphasized when she goes to hospital for the first time. There, she first gets lost, showing her ignorance towards anything related to maternity, and then she feels her body is treated as a piece of meat by doctors who do not know her at all but who also teach her things about her own body that she had never known before.

*I lay there, my eyes shut, and quietly smiling to conceal my outrage, because I knew that these things must happen, and that doctors must be trained, and the medical students must pass examinations; and he asked them questions about the height of the fundus, and what about the pelvis. They all said I had a narrow pelvis, and I lay there and listened to them and felt them, with no more protest than if I had been a corpse examined by budding pathologists for the cause of death. But I was not dead, I was alive twice over. (DRABBLE, 1965: 59-60)*

Even in this description of what doctors are doing, Rosamund feels concerned while she is being examined and again she tries to hide it. The examination does not reveal anything exceptional, nothing that will distinguish her from any other pregnant woman and therefore the passage describes her body as a series of generic parts within the pregnancy context. However, the fact that Rosamund feels like a dead body, «demonstrates another flattening of her identity. Even in her rejection, though, she does not speak of herself as an individual but rather from within the context of her pregnancy» (MCDANIEL, 2010: 168). Rosamund stops being a woman to simply become a pregnant woman or at least, that is

the way she feels. This may be one of the effects that pregnancy has over women, what is known as corporality.

She is more and more aware of the changes in her physical body as time passes and her belly grows and again she feels closer to other women:

*Towards the end of January, I began to flag. Although I would not admit it, I felt at times too tired to read. I ate more and more iron pills but they did not seem to have much effect. [...] I did not enjoy walking any more, public transport was a continual trial, I could not sit comfortably through a full length of picture, and I could not eat anything interesting without suffering for it afterwards. I felt thoroughly annoyed; I could understand, in this condition, why women are, as they certainly are, such perpetual complaining bores. (DRABBLE, 1965: 90-91).*

Again she feels that what is happening to her is not exceptional and that she is not different from others. However, this becomes a bit different when she is giving birth. While she is suffering, she listens to the nurses talking about their love affairs, about other births, or more specifically about sex and the length of their skirts. She does not participate in such conversations because she is completely different from these women. She rejects sex, and therefore what a feminine body somehow represents in the society in which she lives and for the women that surround her. Indeed, from that moment on, her physical body also distances her from these women. Unlike other women, and unlike what the nurses expect, she has a quick birth. At first, she pays attention to what the nurses tell her despite feeling her body was asking for something else. She does not stop being a common pregnant woman to be herself because she knows nothing of her physical body and because of her inexperience in terms of maternity. This is the same attitude nurses have towards her, according to McDaniel:

*The nurses ... do not offer the possibility for individual differences among different mothers but suggest that all birth narratives belong to the same kind of terrible experiences that they have described. From then nurses' perspectives, she cannot possibly be ready to deliver because of the way they read her bodily signals, a reading that turns out to be a misreading. (2010: 177).*

Nevertheless, this changes during and after the baby's birth, when she starts to feel different from others, or at least different from what she had previously felt. When she cannot continue listening to the nurses and their comments, Rosamund shouts at them and for the first but not last time, she has her own voice in all the pregnancy process: «At this I could take it no longer, and I heard my voice yell, from a long way away, Oh, for God's sake, pack it in, can't you?» (DRABBLE 1965: 101). This is the first chance she has to say aloud what she feels about her physical body, but it is not enough, as she explains that her voice was disembodied, not coming out of her. But it is a beginning and when she is told that she should not feel so proud of feeling happiness because it «is one of the most boring commonplaces of the female experience» (DRABBLE 1965: 103), for the first time she reacts and says.

*I denied hotly that all women felt it, as I knew hardly a one who had been as enraptured as I, and then I contradicted my own argument by saying that anyway, if all other women did feel*

*it, then that was precisely what made it so remarkable in my case, as I could not recall a single other instance in my life when I had felt what all other women feel. (DRABBLE 1965: 103).*

After this, her experience at the hospital looks different too. She tries to detach herself from other women in the hospital ward, as Tess Cosslett states:

*Rosamund's preference of class identity over female identity is made quite clear in the subsequent scenes in the maternity ward – there is no longer any pretence of participation with other women, all the effort is directed towards marking herself off from them. In the ward, the mothers are represented in a competition with each other, a competition that focuses on comparisons between babies, cards, gifts and visitors. Rosamund wins on all counts. (1994: 97).*

She refers to other women who have just given birth as well and their conversations about common things, conversations in which she does not take part and that she listens to as white noise. What is more, she does not even name these women but calls them Woman A, B, or C. She is not like these common women any more, and this is also reflected in her physical body. As she explains, after birth, the muscles of her belly snapped back into place without a mark, «but some of the women looked as big as they had looked before. I am haunted even now by a memory of the way they walked, large and tied into shapeless dressing gowns, padding softly and stiffly, careful not to disturb the pain that still lay between the legs» (DRABBLE, 1965: 109). Indeed, it is also the first time during her stay in hospital that doctors treat her differently, stop looking at her as another woman, and consider the physical recovery of her muscles as something extraordinary, taking into account that the baby was quite big (DRABBLE, 1965: 110). Tess Cosslett goes a bit further and points out that Rosamund is a very privileged unmarried mother: «*The Millstone* enacts a repudiation of the other women encountered through the NHS in terms of class and maternity. Their disgusting bodies and their lack of social status go together as what the intellectual Rosamund rejects... she easily escapes the physical and social problems that weigh down the other women» (COSSLETT, 1994: 94).

The change in her attitude at a physical level and her feelings towards this is even clearer when the baby becomes ill. It is at this point of the narrative when Rosamund's description of her physical body and her realization of how it works becomes more explicit and closer to the concept of corporality, that is, to how external factors affect human body at a physical level. From the very moment she realizes the baby is sick, her description of her physical condition changes. She had recovered control of her body after birth as the baby grew up. She had decided to stop feeding Octavia herself and although her life had changed considerably, she seemed to have recovered her self-esteem and overcome her insecurities. However, this completely changes from the moment the doctor who comes to see Octavia suggests taking her to hospital for a more complete check up. Fear enters her life for the first time and she describes the time until she goes to hospital as a nightmare that is reflected in her physical body: «I thought I would drop dead from the strain on my spirits. ... I knew myself to be vulnerable, tender, naked, and easy target for the malice of chance.» (DRABBLE, 1965: 120) After receiving the diagnosis and learning that the little baby has to be operated because of a serious congenital heart defect, she says: «I did not know what to do with myself for the next fortnight: I was really off work, and consistently

off, too, not just fancying I was off until I made myself open the books» (DRABBLE, 1965: 124). Her turmoil of emotions gets to its highest point after Octavia's operation. When the nurses do not allow her to see the baby, she becomes a different woman. As McDaniel explains:

*Rosamund comes to the realization that motherhood and independence are not mutually exclusive and willingly and purposely accepts her position as Octavia's mother; she exhibits self-worth rather than a value or category that is assigned to her by others. While one might argue that Octavia is an exterior source of self-possession, Octavia is, in a sense the ultimate representation of Lockean self-possession because she is a product of Rosamund's body. (2010: 178)*

When the nurse tries to physically remove Rosamund from hospital, she screams, and unlike the first time she shouted at nurses, this time she is completely conscious of what she is doing, she in full control of the situation and of her physical condition: «Inside my head it was red and black and very hot, I remember, and I remember also the clearness of my consciousness and the ferocity of my emotion, and myself enduring them, and not breaking into two» (DRABBLE, 1965: 134). It is at this point in Rosamund's narration that the reader understands she has been able to control her physical body and that she has turned from an illiterate woman in terms of physicality to a complete expert on it. Maternity has changed her attitude towards her body and her reactions and insecurities.

This physical body that connected Rosamund to other women in her situation and that made her aware of the effects of maternity in bodily terms differs from the social body and the effects that maternity had on her in social terms.

Before getting pregnant, Rosamund presents herself as an independent middle-class woman who is worried about people misinterpreting her socioeconomic position because she lives in an expensive flat that belongs to her parents. She is the well brought-up and educated daughter of socialist parents, the woman who works on her PhD about Elizabethan sonnet sequences, who teaches the poor and relates to people in the literary world, the woman who sometimes feels bad for living in this apartment and who is completely aware of the social classes and gender differences that surround her. Indeed, when she realizes that she is pregnant, her first reaction is to think that pregnancy is a punishment for being a woman. She is so abstracted from the role women are supposed to have at her age that she has nearly forgotten what women are expected to be at that time, and says: «it would serve me right, I thought, for having been born a woman in the first place. I couldn't pretend that I wasn't a woman, could I, however much I might try from day to day to avoid the issue? I might as well pay, mightn't I, if other people had to pay?» (DRABBLE, 1965: 16). Many of the women that surrounded Rosamund, her sister, her sister-in-law, her mother, still believed motherhood was the ideal of self-realization that all women should try at least once, but always within the context of a marriage. Becoming an unmarried mother was still stigmatized and having extra-marital sexual relations was not accepted among them. But that was a time of changes and concepts such as promiscuity were turning into a reality. Women were just beginning to adopt the concept of sex for pleasure, not only to produce children.



While historians, such as Stephen Marcus and Peter Cominos, writing about that era considered that Victorian women experienced little interest in sex and that this was mostly related to the marriage context, Carl Degler stated something different, basing his opinions on Dr. Mosher's work.<sup>2</sup> According to Nancy S. Landale and Avery M. Guest, «What seems more striking and unusual about Degler's initial interpretations of the Mosher data is that the women allegedly expressed enthusiasm about the sexual act itself rather than confining their interest to the emotional-spiritual bond with their husband» (1986: 149-150). Degler also considered that women were «relatively modern in their enjoyment of sexual behavior» (LANDALE AND GUEST, 1986: 150), unlike what was expected from them at that time, showing that sexuality was changing. Margaret Drabble wants to represent this in the novel too, using Lydia Reynolds (unmarried and sexually active) as example, or making Rosamund state sentences like: «I'm one of those Bernard Shaw women who wants children but no husband? It suits me fine, like this» (DRABBLE, 1965: 106).

Rosamund's personal context is different. She is indifferent to all these ideals and lives in her own world. Her friends believe she has the sexual activity of a woman appropriate to her social context and she lets them think so. Nevertheless, when she finds out she is pregnant she cannot avoid thinking it is her punishment for being so independent (unlike her female relatives) and for being reluctant to have sexual relations with men (unlike her female friends):

*I walked around with a scarlet letter embroidered upon my bosom, visible enough in the end, but the A stood for Abstinence, not for Adultery. In the end I even came to believe that I got it thus, my punishment, because I had dallied and hesitated and trembled for so long. Had I rushed in regardless, at eighteen, full of generous passion, as other girls do, I would have got away with it too. But being at heart a Victorian, I paid my Victorian penalty. (DRABBLE, 1965: 18)*

However, although her physical body resists overcoming these doubts, her social consciousness and personality do it soon. Rosamund is a clear example of a woman who forefronts her time and reflects Margaret Drabble's interest in creating characters who do not follow the established rules. She quickly understands that she does not identify with the domesticity linked to her sex and clearly explains that for her, having a baby is not an ideal of self-realization but just another kind of job she has to do. When she tells Joe that she wants to have the baby, he says: «Oh well, [...] if you want to make a fool of yourself. Don't tell me, you've probably been longing to have a baby all your life. You won't be able to keep it, though. They won't let you keep it.» (DRABBLE, 1965: 41), suggesting she is like any other woman whose main dream is to have a child and that society will make her suffer for being an unmarried mother. Rosamund's reaction is much more vehement than when she has to deal with pregnancy in physical terms, and says: «I could not work out

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<sup>2</sup> Readers can get an idea of what women of the time thought about sexuality having a look at Dr. Mosher's work, a survey that started in the 1890s and continued up to two decades in which she talked with forty-five women about their sexual habits and preferences. The study was never published during the author's lifetime but it was recovered in 1973 by Carl Degler.



my response to this immediately, as I was highly offended by both its implications: first, that I was the kind of person who had always had a secret yearning for material fulfillment, and second, that some unknown authorities would start interfering with my decision by removing this hypothetical child.» (DRABBLE, 1965: 4)

She wants to make clear that she has decided to have the baby but that this does not imply leaving the rest of her life behind and that this was not the ideal life she expected to have but that she can achieve it. So far, she has somehow constructed her personality through the opinions others have of her, but once she decides to have the baby, this changes and she starts to make her own decisions, and she wants everybody to understand it as soon as possible. She is not going to allow people to decide for her, not even the authorities. That is why she becomes furious when Joe suggests her pregnancy gives her a sense of purpose, or why she rejects Roger's marriage proposal, or why she gets really angry when her sister proposes adoption:

*It seemed to me that nobody had the faintest right to offer me any advice about my own child: I had not asked for advices. I was quite capable of advising myself. Her letter did in fact serve one purpose: it revealed to me the depth of my determination to keep the baby. The determination at this stage cannot have been based, as it later was, on love, for I felt no love and little hope of feeling it: it was based rather on an extraordinary confidence in myself, in a condition, quite irrational, that no adoptive parents could ever be as excellent as myself would be. (DRABBLE, 1965: 79)*

Indeed, Rosamund confirms her identity as an independent working woman when she compares herself to other women. When she meets her sister in law at the market, she describes her as the typical unemployed woman with no cultural interests and pretensions who spends the day at the hairdresser because she has no better way to spend her time and money, a woman that Rosamund considers «an idle parasite» (DRABBLE, 1965: 83) completely opposite to herself and to what she thinks she represents in a new society. She cannot understand why other women renounce their education or their lives to marry and have children. Education is for Rosamund her only source of self-security. Her career and her work are not threatened by her pregnancy and on the contrary, she works better than ever during that time, because she «simply did not believe that the handicap of one small illegitimate baby would make a crap of difference to my career» (DRABBLE, 1965: 112). In fact, by the end of the novel, her thesis is about to be published, she has been offered a job at a good university, and she is working on different projects, and all this being a single parent and feeling gratified because «my name would in the near future be Dr. Rosamund Stacey, a form of address which would go a long way towards obviating the anomaly of Octavia's existence» (DRABBLE, 1965: 155). In other words, Rosamund is an example of the the premise that women can be more than simply mothers and wives and that maternity does not necessarily imply losing your independence and having your entire life changed for your baby's sake.

However, although Drabble may have created an ambitious and self-confident woman in terms of jobs and motherhood, it is true that the novel also shows the mentality during this time towards single mothers and how this affects women with a lower social status.

Rosamund may be fighting for equality and independence, but she does it from the perspective of a woman with economic support. Rosamund's relatives and friends, and all the people surrounding her during her pregnancy, demonstrate with their words and actions what it actually means to become a single mother at that time, when you are not so privileged, and how motherhood may change women in social terms when you are not part of a selected group, that is, corporality, because corporality also refers to a body that acquires different «languages» because of socialization (GALUTSKIKH, 2013: 238), and these languages are obviously different if you belong to a low social class.

At that time, marriage was the established condition for having a child and this is clearly shown in the novel at various stages. When Rosamund goes to the doctor for the first time, she tells him she is unmarried and from that moment on it is clear to her and readers that her pregnancy will be a stigma. After giving birth she finds a «u» for unmarried hanging on the baby's bed. She has to decline her friend's marriage proposal and hear about abortion or adoption as options for ending the problem, because being a single mother really was a problem at that time.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, her sister, Roger and Joe consider that having the baby will destroy Rosamund's life, as was often the case of other unmarried women and their children because as Beatrice reflects, the baby will also suffer the consequences of illegitimacy in a society that still does not accept it. Yoshiko Enomoto states «Rosamund knows that a society governed by middle-class values does not embrace those who refuse to conform, and she expects to live «in the dark and the cold the years to come,» [...] raising a child born outside the socially accepted institution of marriage» (1998: 119). Although Rosamund does not have to suffer all this, she is completely aware that her social status has helped her and that if she had not been in such a position, her life would have been quite different. D.J. Taylor confirms Rosamund's thoughts saying: «Rosamund survives the potential embarrassment and humiliations of single parenthood merely by virtue of her social position» (1993: 165) because she earns her own money.<sup>4</sup> This is not true for many other women in the hospital and Rosamund experiences these problems and tells them to readers as well.<sup>5</sup> For instance, she is aware that she was allowed to stay with her daughter at the hospital after her operation because of her relationship with Mr Protheroe,

<sup>3</sup> David Paintin states that «Unwanted pregnancy was a serious problem for women in the 1960s. The pill and the intra-uterine device were introduced in 1961, but contraception was not freely available through the National Health Service (NHS) ... Pregnant single women and unmarried mothers were stigmatized. Many single women who became pregnant felt compelled to marry - in 1960, 27 per cent of first births were less than eight months after the date of the marriage ... Those who did not marry were often forced to leave home and to accept the spartan and usually censorious environment of the mother and baby homes. An increasing proportion of single women felt obliged to surrender their child for adoption - adoptions of children under one year old increased from 9,214 in 1961 to 12,308 in 1966.» (1998: 12)

<sup>4</sup> It is important to notice here that it was not until 1964 (with the Married Women's Property Act) that married women were allowed to share properties with their husbands or have their own money.

<sup>5</sup> The National Health Service in England was created in 1946. The system has three main aspects: hospital service, primary care and community services. This last one included maternity, child welfare, midwives, ambulances and vaccination among many other services, mentioned and described in *The Millstone*. Among its premises, the NHS system established that services are provided free and financed from central taxation, so that nobody is excluded. This does not mean there are no privileges for those with influence, as Rosamund explains in the novel.

and following his advice, she decides not to think of all the women that could not stay: «So I did think about myself and I went on coming, regardless of all the others who couldn't come» (DRABBLE, 1965: 138).

Similarly, she realizes that other women also suffer for their babies and that this is also reflected in their physical appearances. At the hospital she meets a woman whose second child is also ill, and after asking her how she bears it, Rosamund explains «she wore her grief well: she spared herself and her associates the additional infliction of ugliness, which so often accompanies much pain» (DRABBLE, 1965: 139). She was there because her husband had some influence at the hospital, but when Rosamund wonders about the rest of mothers, those who have no influence and do not have the opportunity to be with their ill children, she states she used to worry about that as well at first, but that she soon realized it had nothing to do with her: «My concerns are my concerns, and that's where it ends. I haven't the energy to go worrying about other people's children. They're nothing to do with me. I only have enough time to worry about myself. If I didn't put myself and mine first, they wouldn't survive» (DRABBLE, 1965: 140). Rosamund is surprised by this answer, as it actually reflects what many people think, but never say aloud, what she probably thinks but is not ready to say, and what other sort of people say in different contexts. This time, however, they are words uttered by suffering mother and that show that people worry about their own matters just because it is the only way to survive in this context, so Rosamund says «I saw what she meant; I say, in her, what all the others meant. I don't think I replied» (DRABBLE, 1965: 141).

Rosamund's social conscience remains intact but not in terms of motherhood, as she would never place anyone in a more privileged situation than the one in which she would place her own daughter. For her, nothing is more important than her child, and she makes it constantly clear. Her social body is cut off from her «maternal body» and readers are able to see the different forms of corporality here: social and physical. She may appear somewhat contradictory, as she has been raised by a woman who is a great feminist and who taught her about inequalities and unfairness, but until she gives birth, she had not been aware of «the culturally conditioned aspect of the mother and wife role» (COSSLETT, 1994: 19). She may feel divided between her feelings towards social differences and her feelings towards taking advantage of her social privileges, but when her daughter is involved, she has no doubt of what to choose, her child is her number one priority. This is also a consequence of what becoming a parent means and Rosamund, like other mothers, has to learn it, although this does not imply losing complete contact with other people's problems.

To return to the concepts of body and corporality, the cultural body is considered a movement from purely physical elements to the human existence of the body (GALUTSKIKH, 2013: 237-8). This is also clearly shown in the novel, and especially in Rosamund's change of attitude towards many of the things that surround her. In the novel, Rosamund moves from having a complete lack of knowledge of her own physical body to being able to interpret not only her own physical attitudes, but also other women's. This provides her life and body with real human existence, especially after Octavia's illness. Before that Rosamund had tried to differentiate herself from the rest of pregnant women or mothers she knew, giving priority to her condition of intellectual and independent woman.

She did not want to become just a mother but something else, and she did it, although the very process of being pregnant did not completely help achieve so. The baby's birth «is supposed to put the middle-class intellectual Rosamund in touch with both «womanhood» and reality» (COSSLETT, 1994: 94). She learns to accept others' experiences and suffering. Throughout the novel, it becomes clear that pregnancy and becoming a mother can make a woman more self-aware and more mature, and this turns out to be the protagonist's case. She demonstrates that these two features connect women and help them open their hearts to the things that surround them. Becoming a mother can turn into a fulfilling experience and Rosamund shows this. She learns to get out of her protective shell and «is physically and psychologically educated through her unwanted pregnancy» (WOJCIK-ANDREWS, 1995: 9). Rosamund says: «I had always felt for others in theory and pitied the blows of fate and circumstances under which they suffered; but now, myself no longer free, myself suffering, I may say that I felt it in my heart.» (DRABBLE, 1965: 68)

Her change of attitude towards the exterior world becomes clearer as the novel advances and she discovers what true love means. Love becomes the ultimate force that changes Rosamund and connects her to the world and to her daughter, to the cultural body and corporality. At the beginning of the novel Rosamund valued her independence above anything else and did not clearly understand why she was proceeding with her pregnancy, believing that it might have some hidden meaning that would be revealed to her at some point, and she ultimately understands it. Although she still needs love and companionship, these do not necessarily have to come from a man or a husband. She says «Before Octavia was born, I used to think that love bore some relation to merit and to beauty, but now I saw that this was not so» (DRABBLE, 1965: 137). When she discovers that she is pregnant, she is afraid of falling into two of the stereotypes of that time: whether to become a feminist that decides to abort in order to have control over her own body, or to become the ideal woman who keeps the baby but forgets about the rest of her own existence as an individual woman to simply become a mother. However, once she has Octavia in her arms for the first time, she discovers that pregnancy and motherhood have other meanings: «Love, I suppose one might call it and the first of my life» (DRABBLE, 1965: 102). Elaine Showalter explains that this «interaction between mother and child, the love that comes unbidden like the operations of grace, is for Drabble the most instructive and surprising relationship» (1991: 306). For Rosamund, this intrinsic love for her child will not mean to become a common mother, like her sister or her sister-in-law.

Motherhood also implies responsibility and this is something Rosamund has also learnt thanks to the baby. Some time before, Rosamund had only taken care of herself, and she had not minded dealing with uncomfortable situations or enduring discomfort. Indeed, she had not even worried about suffering if that implied not disturbing others. When Octavia is born, her attitude changes, as she understands that what she suffers also makes Octavia suffer, as she is responsible for her daughter:

*As a child, I used to endure any discomfort rather than cause offence. I would eat things I loathed, freeze to death in under heated sitting-rooms, roast under hair-dryer...rather than offend hosts, waitresses, hairdressers. To me the pain of causing trouble was greater than anything that I myself within myself could endure. But as I grow older, I find myself changing a*

*little. Partly it is because, with Octavia, I cannot inflict all hardship on myself alone: what I take for myself, she gets too. (DRABBLE, 1965 142)*

In normal circumstances, mothers are not selfish because there are too many people that depend on them, and this is also a way maternity changes women, this is another representation of corporality. Therefore, love and responsibility become the two feelings that will change Rosamund's existence after giving birth and that will determine the relationship between maternity and corporality in terms of cultural body.

In order to understand how maternity and corporality are connected, it is necessary to envision the three definitions of the human body. If corporality refers to the changes that these three different bodies suffer due to the social or cultural factors that surround them, it is clear that it is a dominant word in Rosamund's life. Maternity affects Rosamund's diverse physical, social and cultural bodies to different extents.

Firstly, her physical body suffered the evident physical changes of pregnancy and birth, even more when the baby becomes ill, but more importantly her changes are more interior: she moves from a total lack of interest and knowledge of her own and other women's physical bodies to being able to understand not only hers, but that of others too. She becomes closer to other women and their physical experiences and her change of attitude helps raise her voice against those who did not want to understand her or those who wanted to impose their own thoughts. She starts to feel empathy for other women although at the same time, she distances herself from those who turn maternity into the ideal of female fulfillment, and this is even reflected in her physical body and her capacity to recover from the effects of birth at an unusual speed or having the baby even when the expert nurses did not think that she was in labor. Secondly, her social body and corporality are also connected. Pregnancy does not affect her social status, but she still has to fight to keep the baby and to be different from what was imposed by social norms at the time. She changes and constructs her own personality attending to her own wishes and not to others'. Maternity helped her notice social differences in terms of privileges and inequalities. She ponders the issue of patriarchy when she says that the surgeon who allows her stay in hospital does so because he knows her parents, and question what happens to those without money or influence. She learns that becoming a parent also implies social responsibilities towards her daughter and that she has to stop thinking individually to start making decisions that do not affect her daughter's welfare. Finally, her cultural body also reflects corporality. Maternity helps Rosamund open her mind and her heart, something she had never experienced before. Love and responsibility become key words to achieve this, and although they may imply a problem or an impediment for the development of women's interests, in Rosamund's case, maternity and responsibility never become millstones in her life; on the contrary, they help her develop her physical, social and cultural bodies. This is what corporality means and this is how it is reflected in the novel, turning the end of the novel into a kind of catharsis that summarizes all the explained above:

*There she lay, her eyes closed, her fists sweetly composed upon the pillow, and I looked from her face to George, and I acknowledged that it was too late, much too late. It was no longer in me to feel for anyone what I felt for my child; compared with the perplexed fitful illuminations*

of George, Octavia shone there with a faint, constant and pearly brightness quite as strong to eclipse any more garish future blaze. [...] Love had isolated me more securely than fear, habit or indifference. There was one thing in the world I knew about, and that one thing was Octavia. I had lost the taste for half knowledge. (DRABBLE, 1965: 172)

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