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Writing Trauma, Writing Time and Space

Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* and
the *Lear* Group of Father-Daughter Incest Narratives

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Julkaisun nimike Trauman, ajan ja tilan kirjoittaminen Jane Smileyn <i>A Thousand Acres</i> -romaanin ja <i>King Lear</i> -ryhmän isän ja tyttären väliset insestikertomukset		
Tiivistelmä Trauma on ilmiö, jota ei koeta sillä hetkellä kun se tapahtuu, vaan johon tietoisuudella on pääsy Traumaa ei koeta sen tapahtumahetkellä, vaan tietoisuudella on pääsy siihen vasta myöhemmässä ajassa ja toisessa paikassa ja silloinkin vain häiritsevinä mielikuvina ja pakonomaisena uudelleenkokemisen tarpeena. Trauma asettaa haasteita traditionaalisille käsityksille todellisuuteen viittamisessa. Kirjallisuudessa trauma esitetään, dramatisoidaan ja työstetään läpi aikajakumossa mutta myös paikan parametreissa – maantieteellisissä, ruumiillisissa ja tekstuaalisissa. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan kuinka traumaattiset insestikokemukset voidaan – paradoksaalisesti – esittää, tulkita ja työstää psykologisesti käyttäen apuna ajan ja paikan viittauksia. Väitöskirjassa tulkitaan Jane Smileyn romaania <i>A Thousand Acres</i> (1991) vertaamalla sitä <i>Kuningas Lear</i> -aiheen teksteihin ja asettamalla ne dialogiin nykyisen traumateorian kanssa. Romaani sijoitetaan uusien Lear-versioiden rinnalle, joita ovat kirjoittaneet naiset ja naisryhmät kuten The Women's Theatre Group Elaine Feinsteinin kanssa, Mairi MacInnes, Margaret Atwood, Lucy Ellmann, Valerie Miner, Ann Tyler ja Laura Esquivel. Väitöskirjassa asetetaan moderni traumateoria vuoropuheluun ekokritiikin kanssa ja analysoidaan psykologista traumaa suhteessa Smileyn romaanin kuvaukseen tuhannesta auranalasta, jotka on myrkytetty kasvinsuojeluaineilla. Uudelleentarkastelun ja -tulkinnan kohteeksi otetaan traumaattisen menneisyyden sijoittaminen maisemaan, joka on ymmärretty symbolisesti naispuoliseksi, koska ympäristötuhoa ja tyärten raiskausta on kohdeltu rinnasteisina. Ruumiillisuus kartoitetaan suhteessa saastutettuun maanviljelysmaahan, ja se on rikki revittyä kahdessakin mielessä: trauman vieraannuttamaa ja saastutetun ympäristön myrkyttämää. Keho nousee romaanissa kuitenkin paradoksaalisesti esiin luotettavana todistajana sekä seksuaalista hyväksikäyttöä että luonnon tuhoamista vastaan. Smileyn romaanin kaltainen traumafiktio voi itsekin muodostua muistomerkiksi, joka todistaa ja muistuttaa traumaattisesta hetkestä, kunhan tekstissä ei ymmärretä liikaa vaan välitetään trauman ajan ja paikan tajua hämmentävä voima. Johtopäätöksenä todetaan, että eri kirjailijoiden tapa käyttää <i>Lear</i> -tarinaa eri aikoina voidaan pitää varhaisemman lähdetekstin ei-koetun tai vielä käsittämättömän isä–tytär-inestien hetken intertekstuaalisena toistona. Sellaisena niiden voidaan katsoa olevan yhteydessä henkilökohtaisten traumakertomusten kanssa. Nämä paluut aiempaan ilmaisevat yritystä työstää kokemus tekstuaalisesti, jotta toistopakko loppuisi, mutta samalla ne pakottavat lukijan sisällyttämään traumakertomuksen osaksi kulttuurimuistiaan.		
Asiasanat Traumateoria, isä-tytär-inesti, intertekstuaalisuus, ekokritiikki, Jane Smiley, <i>A Thousand Acres</i> , <i>Lear</i> -kertomukset		

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Sammandrag Trauma, ett fenomen som inte upplevs när och där det inträffar utan som endast är tillgängligt i samband med en annan tid och en annan plats, då det istället visar sig i påträngande bilder och återupplevande beteende, utgör en specifik utmaning vad gäller referentialitet i traditionell betydelse. De senaste tjugo årens publikationer om trauma och dess representation inom olika områden vittnar om just detta. Denna problematik ligger också till grund för den föreliggande uppsatsen vars syfte är att undersöka hur traumatiska upplevelser som incest paradoxalt nog kan representeras, läsas och kanske genomarbetas via temporala och spatiala referenser. Genom att läsa Jane Smileys <i>A Thousand Acres</i> (1991) i relation till gruppen av <i>Lear</i> -berättelser i dialog med nutida traumateori och samtidigt placera in romanen i ett sammanhang av andra nutida arbeten skrivna av kvinnor – The Women's Theatre Group med Elaine Feinstein, Mairi MacInnes, Margaret Atwood, Lucy Ellmann, Valerie Miner, Ann Tyler och Laura Esquivel – påstår föreliggande avhandling att olika författares bearbetningar av samma <i>Lear</i> -berättelse i olika tider kan ses som intertextuella återupplevelser av ett icke-upplevt eller inte fullt ut fattbart ögonblick av far-dotter-incest i en tidigare källtext. Som sådana kan de anses utgöra ett kontinuum med personliga traumaberättelser. Dessa återvändanden signalerar samtidigt försök till ett textuellt genomarbetande så att de repetitionerna kan få ett slut men tvingar också läsaren att komma ihåg traumaberättelsen som ett sorts kulturminne. Trauma i litteraturen representeras, utageras och genomarbetas dock inte endast genom tidsreferenser men också genom spatiala sådana – geografiska, kroppsliga och textuella. Den föreliggande avhandlingen utgår från modern traumateori i dialog med ekokritik och analyserar framställningen av psykiskt trauma i relation till beskrivningen av de med bekämpningsmedel förgiftade tusen tunnlanderna i Smileys roman, och genom att spåra ett samband mellan miljöförstörelsen och våldtäkterna på döttrarna tar den i förnyat övervägande innebörden av att placera ett traumatiskt förflutet i ett landskap som historiskt sett symboliskt har konstruerats som feminint. Det kroppsliga, kartlagt i relation till det förorenade jordbrukslandskapet och utplånat i dubbel bemärkelse – främmandegjort av trauma och miljöförgiftning – träder i romanen paradoxalt fram som ett tillförlitligt vittne både till de sexuella övergreppen och till förstörelsen av naturen. Slutligen, traumafiktion som Smileys roman kan i sig själv potentiellt utgöra ett forum för att vittna om traumatiska ögonblick och sålunda ersätta förstörda fysiska eller geografiska platser som minnesplatser, förutsatt att texten inte förstärker för mycket, utan kan kommunicera traumats upplösande spatio-temporala kraft.		
Nyckelord Traumateori, far-dotter-incest, intertextualitet, ekokritik, Jane Smiley, <i>A Thousand Acres</i> , <i>Lear</i> -berättelser		

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Abstract <p>Trauma, a phenomenon which is too shocking to be fully registered upon occurrence and which instead only manifests belatedly and somewhere else in intrusive images and compulsive re-enactments, offers specific challenges to traditional notions of referentiality. The last twenty years or so have witnessed in different fields an upsurge of publications devoted to the phenomenon and its representation. This study seeks to explore how traumatic experiences such as incest can be represented, read, and perhaps worked through in terms of temporal and spatial references. By reading Jane Smiley's <i>A Thousand Acres</i> (1991) in relation to the <i>Lear</i> group of father-daughter incest narratives in dialogue with contemporary trauma theory, while also contextualizing the novel against other contemporary female-authored <i>Lears</i> by The Women's Theatre Group with Elaine Feinstein, Mairi MacInnes, Margaret Atwood, Lucy Ellmann, Valerie Miner, Ann Tyler, and Laura Esquivel, this work argues that different authors' frequent appropriations of the same <i>Lear</i> story across time can be seen as intertextual (re-)enactments of a not-yet-graspable moment of father-daughter incest in an earlier source and as such can be considered part of a continuum with personal trauma narratives. These repeated returns simultaneously signal attempts to come to terms with the trauma textually but also to implicate the reader in recalling the story of trauma as a form of cultural memory.</p> <p>This study also seeks to demonstrate that trauma in literature is represented, acted out, and possibly worked over, not just through references to time but also to space – geographical, bodily, and textual. Drawing on modern trauma theory in further dialogue, with ecocriticism, this thesis reads the articulation of psychic trauma in relation to descriptions of the poisoned farming landscape in <i>A Thousand Acres</i>, reconsidering the implications of situating a traumatic past spatially in a toxic landscape that has been gendered female by tracing a connection between the destruction of the land and the abuse of the daughters' bodies. The bodily space of violation, mapped in relation to the contaminated body of land and doubly erased – turned foreign by trauma and through being poisoned through the land – paradoxically emerges as a faithful witness to both the sexual violation and the land abuse. Finally, this present study argues that trauma fiction itself, such as Smiley's novel, can become a memory-site for remembering and bearing witness to the past traumatic moment, and so replace toxic physical or geographical places as memory spaces providing the text does not understand too much but can communicate the spatio-temporally disruptive force of trauma.</p>		
Key words Trauma theory, father-daughter incest, intertextuality, ecocriticism, Jane Smiley, <i>A Thousand Acres</i> , the <i>Lear</i> narratives		

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It has now been ten years since I read Jane Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres* for the first time as an undergraduate student at the University of Vaasa, and embarked on an undertaking that, after many developments, has resulted in this study. Along the way I have incurred many debts.

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Malax, October, 2010

Marinella Rodi-Risberg

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1 INTRODUCTION

[T]he traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time.

— Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 1995

Psychic trauma is generally defined as a reaction to an overpowering event resulting in psychological damage,¹ but instead of understanding trauma according to event and/or response, Cathy Caruth – unarguably one of the key figures in contemporary trauma theory – has famously redefined it according to “the *structure of its experience*”: “the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it” (1995a: 4, italics in original). In her conception of trauma Caruth draws on Sigmund Freud’s notion of *Nachträglichkeit* – an early Freudian concept developed in his studies on hysteria and one that refers to a non-chronological movement of remembering involving a link between two events; at a critical time of psychological distress previously forgotten memory traces return and are reworked or reinterpreted to match subsequent events, desires, and psychic developments. In her reformulation of Freud’s concept, Caruth emphasizes a belatedness inhering in the traumatic moment itself; the traumatic experience is not fully registered in the first place, but experienced as trauma only belatedly and someplace else when and where it re-surfaces in a fragmented form as traumatic flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and repetitive re-enactments. Rather than remembered as something that happened in the past, then, the trauma becomes part of the survivor’s identity, and is compulsively performed in the present, or in Freud’s terms, acted out (see Freud 2003a: 36), as though it happens in real time. For Caruth, it is precisely this time-and-placelessness, the collapsing of the distances between past and present, here and another place that constitutes the force of trauma (1995a: 9).

Caruth’s definition of trauma’s intrinsic spatio-temporal structure in turn raises issues of representation, memory, and witnessing with specific implications for

¹ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is defined by The American Psychiatric Association in their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) in the following manner: “the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others” and “the person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror” (1995: 427, 428).

literary studies. At the core of trauma lies the conundrum that can be articulated thus: if trauma, by escaping consciousness upon impulse, manifests itself as an epistemological crisis that destroys the perceptions of time and space and instead repeatedly returns as intrusive images and compulsive behavior – in other words is re-enacted rather than remembered or understood – then how can it be testified to, represented, read, and, perhaps, textually worked over? These are central questions propelling as well as underlying the present study, which is an exploration into psychic trauma – with particular reference to incest trauma – that seeks to examine the relationship between the concept itself in relation to time and space and its literary representation, as well as to work out a way to interpret these representations. Literature becomes the forgotten unforgettable place of trauma that it so urgently needs. Instead of lamenting the limits of literature to represent the unrepresentable as it were, trauma narratives demand what Caruth calls a “new mode of reading and of listening” (1996a: 9), a new creative mode that, as this present study argues, would entail the reading of the temporal and spatial hiatuses that remain after traumatic experience.

Caruth’s spatio-temporal understanding of trauma epitomized in the epigraph to this preamble offers a significant starting-point for the key concerns of this study. In linking the phenomenon of trauma to time and space in her definition, Caruth brings these concepts into sharp focus and consequently temporalizes and spatializes traumatic witnessing: representing trauma paradoxically implies representing it through temporal and spatial references such as disruptions, displacements, and relocations. Her spatio-temporal definition of trauma signals the psychic gap or rupture of the mind in trauma but also hints at possible recovery; as trauma disrupts normal parameters of temporality and spatiality, repossessing time and space brings about a coming to terms with it. In addition to centralizing time and space in traumatic telling, Caruth’s focus for her exposition of trauma on Freud’s notion of latency or belatedness, which he initially developed in relation to hysteria and the seduction theory² in the late nineteenth century, implicitly emphasizes the original and close alliance between trauma and sexual abuse. In other words, it marks familial and other sexual abuse as the originary locus for understanding trauma, because the foundational language for discussing this phenomenon was developed in early Freud, and is found in his writings on hysteria. Although he allegedly abandoned the seduction theory, he used and further developed his work on trauma in subsequent writings throughout his life, such as in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

² In short, the seduction theory refers to Freud’s hypothesis in the early 1890s that hysterical symptoms originate in the repression of experiences of sexual abuse (see, e.g., Freud 1984).

The express purpose of the present work is to explore how traumatic experiences such as incest can be represented, read, and perhaps worked through – albeit within the ambit of the challenges and limitations that traumatic experience is heir to – through temporal and spatial references. The linking of trauma to time and space seems at first glance contradictory, as trauma is described as something which cannot be situated either temporally or spatially. This study, however, aims to reconsider this relationship by closely reading the Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Thousand Acres* (1991), Jane Smiley’s (1949–) rewriting of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and a story of paternal sexual abuse, as a trauma narrative in dialogue with modern trauma theory and in relation to other versions from different traditions of the specific *Lear* narrative, while also contextualizing it against the backdrop of well-known and lesser known contemporary versions of the *Lear* story. Other treatments of the same story include *King Lear*, the less known folk narratives of incest behind the play such as the “Thousandfurs” tale, and contemporary *Lears* penned by women writers that may or may not foreground trauma or incest such as the British and North-American female artists The Women’s Theatre Group & Elaine Feinstein (1930–), Mairi MacInnes (1925–), Margaret Atwood (1939–), Lucy Ellmann (1956–), Valerie Miner (1947–), and Ann Tyler (1941–), as well as the Mexican author Laura Esquivel (1950–). This study is incidentally the first full-length study of *A Thousand Acres*, which will serve as a limit-case for discussing the representation of trauma – because the novel so powerfully demonstrates the depiction of trauma through references to both time and space – but will also refer to other contemporary literary incest narratives such as Lorraine Brown’s *The Handless Maiden* (1998), Patricia Chao’s *Monkey King* (1997), Ann-Marie MacDonald’s *Fall on Your Knees* (1996), Sapphire’s *Push* (1996), and Sally Patterson Tubach’s *Memoirs of a Terrorist* (1996) – and including memoirs such as Kathryn Harrison’s *The Kiss* (1997) – all of which will be invoked in the course of this study for comparison. In dramatizing through temporal and spatial references new ways in which trauma can be represented, Smiley’s novel in relation to these other œuvres points to a new strategy of reading that, according to Caruth, is urgently needed in trauma studies.

* * *

After these prelude notes the rest of the introduction will be theory-oriented and will briefly chart the theorization and conceptualization of trauma and its representation in contemporary trauma studies in relation to literary studies and incest narratives, in order to trace and contextualize the development of the specific approach for reading trauma espoused in the present study. First it is necessary to briefly map out the conceptualization of trauma in psychoanalysis and trauma

studies in order to provide the needed specification and contextualization for this thesis.

1.1 Theorizing Trauma; or, Traumatic Theory

Investigations into trauma³ originally began in the study of hysteria⁴ at the Paris hospital La Salpêtrière with French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, with whom Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet studied in the 1880s (Herman 1994: 10), and Freud's letters written between 1887 and 1897 to his colleague and friend Wilhelm Fliess show how the early development of his concept of *Nachträglichkeit*⁵ initially occurs concomitantly with the birth of the seduction theory of the neuroses, which was his first theory of trauma. Freud developed these trauma(tic) theories by treating cases of hysteria in mostly female patients, and first used the term *Nachträglichkeit* in Part II of his posthumously published "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (1950 [1895]): "We invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma by *deferred action*" (1981: 356, italics in original).⁶ In other words, for Freud, the memory of an experience gives rise to an af-

³ For a useful account of the history of the concept of trauma, see Leys (2000).

⁴ "Hysteria" derives from the Greek word for uterus and has as a concept more or less disappeared from clinical practice in the twentieth century (Mitchell 2000).

⁵ The term is often translated as "belatedness" (Caruth 2001: 2) or "deferred action." Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's translation of the Fliess letters uses "after the event" and "deferred action" (2001: 3), of which the latter is included in James Strachey's translation of the concept, but Jean Laplanche proposes the English terms "afterwardsness" and "afterwards" for *Nachträglichkeit* ("après coup" in French) and *nachträglich* respectively (Laplanche 1999: 263). Freud employed this concept in many of his works over most of his career, but it only gained significance after the French reading and translation of Freudian texts, most notably by Laplanche himself, who first saw the significance of the neologism, although Jacques Lacan can be credited with first having observed it in 1953, in the "Wolf Man" case (Laplanche 1999: 261, 260). In fact, and as Laplanche points out, "the whole problematic of *Nachträglichkeit* (afterwardsness) also takes shape through a process of afterwardsness" (1999: 260). For Lacan's discussion of the concept in the "Wolf Man," see "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis" (1953) in *Écrits* (2006: 197-268). See also the Freudian text itself, "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis (The 'Wolf Man')" (1918) (Freud 2001: 7-122). For a discussion of the concept *Nachträglichkeit*, see Laplanche's "Notes on Afterwardsness" (1999).

⁶ In the "Project," Freud describes trauma as split into two moments: one from childhood in which there is sexual content but where this content is not linked to any sexual meaning, and the other from post-puberty in which there is no sexual content but sexual meaning. He uses the example of his case study "Emma" to outline the process of *Nachträglichkeit* in hysteria: "Emma" suffers at the time of analysis from a compulsion or fear of going into shops by herself, and produces a recall of when she as a twelve-year old ran out of a shop in a state of "*af-fect of fright*" upon seeing the two shop-assistants laugh together. She recognizes one of them and "was led to recall that the two of them were laughing at her clothes and that one of them had pleased her sexually." (1981: 353, emphasis in original) She was then able to produce an-

fect, which was not originally aroused upon occurrence, in accordance with a new a posteriori understanding, indicating that the event or the memory of the experience becomes traumatic only the second time around, after it has become internally revived.

Freud also advances the theory of *Nachträglichkeit* in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), co-written with his colleague the Viennese physician Joseph Breuer and published a few months before he wrote the “Project,” and discussed it as “retention hysteria” (Freud 2001: 45, n. 1).⁷ Upon noting that both “traumatic neuroses” and “common hysteria” often originate in psychical trauma and its memories, Freud and Breuer propose in the *Studies* the new term “traumatic hysteria” (Freud and Breuer 2001: 5).⁸ In their jointly written 1893 essay “On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication” published in the *Studies*, they describe “traumatic hysteria” as a memory disorder: “the causal relation between the determining psychical trauma and the hysterical phenomenon is not of a kind implying that the trauma merely acts like an *agent provocateur* in releasing the symptom, which thereafter leads an independent existence,” but “the psychical trauma – or more precisely the memory of the trauma – acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work” (Freud and Breuer 2001: 6, emphasis in original). In other words, it is not a simple question of relay of action, symptoms or discharge. Rather, the event, which is stored in the individual, is internally resuscitated and re-enacted at a later time when the patient is confronted with a similar occurrence. Freud termed the interval of latency between the event and its resurfacing “incubation” (2001: 131). This time the locked-up affect appears as somatic, or psychopathological symptoms, or as Freud terms them, “mnemic symbols,” i.e. symbols of the sealed-off traumatic memory (2001: 90). From the *Studies* comes also the much-quoted line, “*Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences*” (2001: 7, emphasis in original). However, the same book also documents how Freud and Breuer discovered that these symptoms vanished as soon as the memory and its “*accompanying*

other memory of having been sexually attacked twice at the age of eight by the shopkeeper, who “had grabbed at her genitals through her clothes,” events which she asserts she did not think of at the time when she remembered the first scene (1981: 354). “Here we have the case of a memory arousing an affect which it did not arouse as an experience,” Freud concludes, “because in the meantime the change [brought about] in puberty had made possible a different understanding of what was remembered” (1981: 356). Most significantly, this case illustrates how Freud developed his theory of seduction in tandem with his theory of traumatic time.

⁷ See Freud’s discussion of “retention hysteria” in the *Studies* (2001: 285-287), and in particular the “Fräulein Rosalia H.” case (2001: 169 ff).

⁸ Traumatic neurosis and traumatic hysteria represent Freud’s versions of what today constitutes PTSD.

affect” had been verbalized; and so the “cathartic method”⁹ or the famous “talking cure”¹⁰ was born (2001: 6, emphasis in original).

Freud’s case history “Katharina”¹¹ in the *Studies* became critical for the development and conceptualization of the seduction theory, his theory of trauma, and the cathartic method, and clearly illustrates the link between their formulations. On a vacation trip, Freud encountered “Katharina,” who suffered from anxiety attacks and feelings of disgust after having caught her father in bed with her cousin. At the time she did not understand what was going on, but after promptings from Freud, she was able to produce an earlier memory of how she had been sexually assaulted by her father a few years earlier when she was fourteen.¹² Upon this revelation, her “sulky, unhappy face had grown lively, her eyes were bright, she was lightened and exalted,” and thus, Freud concludes, she “had not been disgusted by the sight of the two people but by the memory which that sight had stirred up in her” (Freud and Breuer 2001: 131). It now becomes obvious that it is through “Katharina” that Freud both discovered and developed some of his central traumatic insights.

When Freud apparently recanted the seduction theory,¹³ his new or revised theory, the Oedipus complex¹⁴ – which he grounds in the analysis of his own dreams, his study of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and the tragedy of the King of Thebes, *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles – significantly does not invalidate his theory

⁹ The term “catharsis” with this meaning is attributed to Breuer and was used publicly for the first time in the “Preliminary Communication” essay in the *Studies* (2001: xxii, 8).

¹⁰ The expression was originally invented by one of Joseph Breuer’s patients, “Fräulein Anna O,” or Bertha Pappenheim as was her real name (Freud and Breuer 2001: 30; for the case study, see 2001: 21ff).

¹¹ Her real name was Aurelia Kronich (see, e.g., Warner 1995: 349).

¹² Freud initially disguised the identity of the abusive fathers in the case histories “Katharina” and “Rosalia” in the *Studies*, and instead attributed the molestation to their uncles; it was not until 1924 that he added footnotes revealing the girls’ fathers as the aggressors (see Freud and Breuer 2001: 134, n. 2; 170, n. 1).

¹³ Freud’s alleged turn from an emphasis on actual experience in the seduction theory to an emphasis on fantasy in his theories of the development of child sexuality has been the focus of considerable debate in current incest/trauma studies. Since the 1970s critics such as Jeffrey Masson (1984), Louise Armstrong (1978), Florence Rush (1980), and Judith Herman (1994; see also Herman and Hirschman 1981, 2000) have indicated that Freud’s revision of the seduction theory threw a veil on the subject of incest, shrouding it as a legitimate topic of serious investigation for many decades. David Willbern, on the other hand, believes that Freud never repudiated his seduction theory; rather, he suggests, what he did was “stop insisting on its ubiquity in the aetiology” of hysterical and neurotic symptoms (1989: 76). What is clear, however, is that incest between father and daughter is situated as the *fons et origo* of Freud’s psychoanalysis, in his early trauma theory of seduction and in the Oedipus complex alike.

¹⁴ A letter to Fliess, October 15, 1897, shows an early formulation of his new theory, the Oedipal complex, which he claimed was universal (see Masson 1985: 272).

of trauma; he already believed that hysterics suffer from a memory disorder.¹⁵ In spite of allegedly rejecting his theory of seduction, he maintained his belief in the notion of temporal displacement in relation to actual traumatic experience throughout his career and went on to develop different aspects of it, mostly in connection to events such as war and railway accidents. It is central to “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920), where he returned to studying trauma, and in this book one finds the famous example of the *fort-da* game by which he delineates how shock generates a compulsion to repeat¹⁶ in the individual; a one-and-a-half-year-old boy throws a wooden reel on a string over his cot saying “o-o-o-o,” interpreted by Freud as *fort* (gone), and pulls it in again saying “*Da!*” (here), symbolically countervailing the loss of his mother’s departure by re-enacting the event and her subsequent return (see 2003b: 52-55). In finding that the boy played the departure as a game more frequently than he played the whole sequence of departure and return, Freud drew the important conclusion that the compulsion to repeat overrides the pleasure principle. In his late work *Moses and Monotheism* (1938), written in the pre-war years toward the end of his career, he revisits trauma, this time arguing that the compulsion to repeat after a period of “latency” or “incubation” also operates on a cultural level. The study is an exposition in two parts of the history of the Hebrews, in which Freud twice tells the story of the killing of Moses, whom he suggests is an Egyptian, the subsequent obliteration of the murder from cultural memory, and the unwitting re-emergence of its memory in the next generation.

It is a curious fact that Freud, who mentions in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” that “The clinical picture presented by traumatic neurosis is not unlike that of hysteria” (Freud 2003b: 50),¹⁷ and who after the much-discussed so-called disavowal of the seduction theory, continued to insist upon a temporal theory of traumatic symptoms in his work on other externally-produced traumas such as the after-effects of train accidents and war. Also, as Sigrid Weigel notes, “Freud himself, in his complex accounts of trauma, only raised the issue of the event in the con-

¹⁵ Nor does the Oedipus complex invalidate Freud’s new theory of child sexuality. As Rosaria Champagne astutely notes, there was no need for Freud to give up his theory of seduction in order to theorize about erotic feelings within children because “he had already established a working understanding of the unconscious in the seduction theory proper” as is evident in the “Aetiology” where he focuses on how the unconscious deals with sexual attacks (Champagne 1996: 212, n. 26; 32; see also Freud 1984).

¹⁶ Freud first mentioned the concept of repetition-compulsion (*Wiederholungszwang*) in his paper “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through” (1914) (see Freud 2003a).

¹⁷ In “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” Freud establishes a connection between “traumatic neurosis” and “hysteria,” where the sufferers are “psychically fixated on the trauma,” quoting his and Breuer’s famous line from the *Studies*: “hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences” (2003b: 51; see also Freud and Breuer 2001: 7).

text of his seduction theory”: “It is only in this context,” she continues, and “not in his consideration of war neuroses, traumas in the aftermath of accidents and the structure of the compulsion to repeat which determines the economy of traumatic recollection, that Freud wavers with regard to the question of whether trauma relates to a real or a fantasised event” (2003: 88, n. 6). War and accident neuroses were events that chiefly and more directly confronted men in the bourgeois Viennese society of the time, as opposed to hysteria, which, after supposedly rejecting the seduction theory, he attributed to children’s and women’s fantasies.¹⁸

Incest became linked to trauma again, however, after the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s, when it became known that more women than men suffered from the long-term effects of psychological trauma and that these women were traumatized in private life rather than in war. Until 1980, the year marking the birth of contemporary trauma studies with the acknowledgment of PTSD by the American Psychiatric Association in their official *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM III) – as a result of Vietnam veterans’ activist campaigning – the understanding of trauma derived mainly from research into the effects suffered by combat veterans, i.e. that of adult males. To a large extent due to the efforts made by the noted psychiatrist Judith Herman, who in her book *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992) brought together hitherto separated experiences of trauma caused by domestic and sexual violence, war, and terrorism in her quest for a more inclusive and general approach to trauma, the women’s symptoms came to be understood in connection with PTSD.¹⁹ The study of incest has since been part of contemporary trauma studies but, as is visible in the recovered memory/false memory syndrome debate of the 1990s where the

¹⁸ As E. Ann Kaplan perspicaciously notes, trauma was gendered from the beginning in Freud and Breuer’s study, “in accordance with the way the bourgeois family in Europe was organized in their day”; hysteria was generally associated with familial trauma, with women’s traumatic experiences in the domestic sphere, associated with sick-nursing and “(at first only implied) from extreme sexual repression,” whereas males suffer the effects of accidents (2005: 26). In other words, women were not allowed to suffer from anything “real,” only from “psychological” causes. In a similar manner, men’s narratives, too, were at the time suppressed as they were not allowed to suffer from “psychological” reasons (see Herman 1994: 20-21).

¹⁹ Herman, however, indicated that PTSD as it was defined at the time did not cover the full range of symptoms suffered by survivors of repeated and prolonged traumas such as that of child incest abuse. Laura S. Brown, too, has argued for the expansion of the definition of trauma, believing that the definition of PTSD in DSM III (1980) was indicative of a white middle class male perspective. Women’s experiences, “the private, secret experiences that women encounter in the interpersonal realm and at the hands of those we love and depend upon,” “those events in which the dominant culture and its forms and institutions are expressed and perpetuated,” she argued, had to a great extent been left out of the definition because considered normal and therefore not traumatic (1995: 102).

False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF) disputed memories of abuse recovered in therapeutic sessions, it has not always gone unchallenged.²⁰ The study of war trauma follows a similar trajectory to that of sexual trauma: it was first studied as war neuroses or shell-shock in the context of World War I, and later revived after fifty years in studies of Vietnam veterans in the 1960s and 1970s as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (see Herman 1994: 20-28).

As is clear from this brief overview, trauma's coming into being as a theory, or the very history of research into psychic trauma itself, has a curious structural expression and apparently operates on a level of warped temporality and dislocation, seemingly enacting the traumatic reappearance of a missed experience. Judith Herman consequently calls its past "one of episodic amnesia" where "[p]eriods of active investigation have alternated with periods of oblivion" because its study "has repeatedly led into realms of the unthinkable and foundered on fundamental questions of belief" (1994: 7). "Repression, dissociation, and denial are phenomena of social as well as individual consciousness," she observes (1994: 9), and as trauma reader Kalí Tal notes, "[o]n a social as well as an individual psychological level, the penalty for repression is repetition" (1996: 7). What becomes clear here is that it is not possible to keep events apart from theory or vice versa in historicizing trauma. In an interview conducted by Aimee Pozorski in a trauma-focused issue of the *Connecticut Review* (2006), Caruth asserts:

once the notion of traumatic temporality has been introduced, it is no longer simply possible to place this notion within a larger and more traditional temporal framework (i.e., to place the conceptual event of the theory of trauma within the framework of the empirical, institutional, and cultural histories that are its context), since that would disavow the central insight of

²⁰ The FMSF is a nonprofit organization founded in 1992 by Pamela and Peter Freyd and it consists chiefly of parents claiming to be falsely accused by their grown children of child molestation. These parents argue that psychotherapists make their patients accept fabricated memories as true and they deny the possibility of recovered memory. For accounts of this movement, see, e.g., Champagne 1996; Crews 1995; Haaken 1998. Whether repressed memories exist or not is debated in psychology; some speak for their existence, such as the clinical psychologist Judith Lewis Herman (1992); others, such as cognitive psychologist Elizabeth Loftus (Loftus and Ketcham 1994), challenge these claims. For arguments about the testimonial accuracy of "recovered" memory and the history of traumatic forgetting, see, e.g., Freyd (1996); Herman (1992); Masson (1984); Terr (1994). For arguments about the history of "false" memory, see Loftus and Ketcham (1994). The notion of repressed memory originates in Freud's "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (see Freud 1984: 271), but according to the American Psychological Association, to distinguish between a true repressed and a false memory is not possible at the moment without evidence to corroborate it (American Psychological Association 1995).

the theory, which suggests that our more traditional conceptual histories may have to be rethought. (In Pozorski 2006b: 78)

In Caruth's temporal conception of trauma, history re-enters theory. In emphasizing the inseparability of the history of trauma and its theorization Caruth turns to Freud's own writing. She draws attention to how Freud, in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), relates how, at a time when he was trying to get away from the neuroses, came across his important case study "Katharina" "as if the theory itself emerged as the interruption of a forgetting."²¹ In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" too there is an inextricable link between the famous *fort-da* game of the child and Freud's discussion of it, "moving from an interpretation of the game as departure, as return, and then again as departure": "at this moment in the text," Caruth argues, "the child's own language passes into Freud's text." She also notes how the Viennese doctor's writing in *Moses and Monotheism* is inseparable from the history of the trauma it expounds; the text itself is divided into different parts separated by a space, and the second part is largely a repetition of the first. (In Pozorski 2006b: 79)²²

Like the object of its study, then, the research itself into trauma is not experienced at its inception, but becomes evident only in another time and in another place. Pozorski, puts the point precisely; "the emergence of trauma as a theory [...] was an event that came too soon, and was largely missed, only to return to us repeatedly via literary representations, political studies, and historical events throughout the decades that we align with world-wide atrocity" (2006a: 74). After having briefly touched upon the return of trauma in the history of trauma, or its traumatic history, as well as in political and social activism, this theory-focused introduction will now go on to discuss trauma's repeated appearance in literary representations and relation to literary studies.

1.2 Trauma and Literature: "The Real" and the Real

The last twenty years or so have witnessed in different fields an upsurge of publications devoted to psychic trauma and the question of its representation, of how to

²¹ August 20, 1893, Freud writes to Fliess: "the etiology of the neuroses pursues me everywhere [...]. Recently I was consulted by the daughter of the innkeeper on the Rax; it was a nice case for me" (Masson 1985: 54).

²² Cathy Caruth and E. Ann Kaplan have argued that trauma is recorded in *Moses and Monotheism* itself, which also becomes the story of Freud's own traumatic exodus from the German occupation of Austria to London in 1938 (see Caruth 1995a: 11, n. 6; Caruth 1996a: 12-24, 67-72; Kaplan 2005: 44-47).

responsibly depict apparently untellable events and perhaps work through these non-experiences, as it were. In what seems to be an increasingly traumatized world, texts in such diverse fields as the media, law, psychiatry, historiography, Holocaust studies, science, art, and literature explore how these non-events can be represented and what it entails to testify to trauma, while emphasizing the need to tell and narrate the experience as well as the urgency for witnessing. The confrontation with extremity has demanded a rethinking of the concept of representation, and the increasing interest in trauma studies over the last few decades as well as the prolific publishing of both fictional and non-fictional trauma narratives, finally resulted in the inception of contemporary trauma theory in the United States in the early 1990s by such literary scholars as Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman, former students or co-workers of the deconstructionist literary critic and theorist Paul de Man at Yale University. This development of what can also be referred to as literary trauma theory has in turn led not only to the emergence of a growing importance of the relationship between – but also points to a change in the very concepts of – literature and trauma. Today trauma theory is an established critical category of literary studies (see, for instance, Rivkin and Ryan 2004; Wolfreys 2002a), influenced by psychoanalytic discourse and literary practice (Hartman 1995: 537), in particular by sources of psychoanalytic literary criticism (Wolfreys 2002b: 128). On the other hand, many contemporary authors have insight into modern trauma theory so much so that it is possible to talk about a new evolving literary genre of “trauma fiction” (see, e.g., Vickroy 2002; Whitehead 2004). As Anne Whitehead observes, there is a mutual influence between trauma theory and fiction, “in which each speaks to and addresses the other” (2004: 4).²³

Because of trauma’s curious spatio-temporal structure, which offers specific challenges to traditional notions and norms of representation, a reconsideration of straightforward referentiality is necessary: if the theory and history of trauma manifest as trauma precisely at the site of incomprehensibility resisting narrativization, how can trauma be represented? If traumatic experience eschews linguistic reference, then linguistically speaking, trauma is thought of in non-representational terms. For Caruth, however, despite the negative representability of trauma the phenomenon does not rule out reference altogether. In her focus on what she perceives as trauma’s inherent unrepresentability – it cannot be testified to as such

23 Trauma fiction, Whitehead has found, “is influenced and informed by recent developments in trauma theory” and while “[m]any contemporary novelists [...] base their writing on extensive research in the field of trauma,” she suggests that “it is not necessarily that novelists are reading trauma theory [...], but rather that the rethinking of trauma has been absorbed into the current ideologies of history and memory” (2004: 161, 81, 161).

because it is radically disruptive of referentiality and so is an “unclaimed experience” (1996a) – Caruth elaborates her analysis along the same lines as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992), who emphasize that at the crux of trauma lies the survivors’ inability or failure to witness from within the experience itself.²⁴ However, Caruth indicates, “[t]he return of the flashback as an interruption – as something with a disrupting force or impact – suggests that it cannot be thought simply as a representation,” the “understanding of trauma in terms of its indirect relation to reference, does not deny or eliminate the possibility of reference but insists, precisely, on the inescapability of its belated impact” (Caruth 1996a: 115 n. 6, 7). In other words, referentiality is indirect and belated(ness) in trauma.

The issues of representation, memory, and witnessing raised by trauma suggest that the question(s) of referentiality must be intrinsically literary. Freud sensed this to be the case and, as already mentioned, often turned to literature to explain his theories. Today theorists (re)turn to literature in trying to formulate the effects and consequences of trauma as well as to understand the phenomenon culturally. Both Caruth and Felman emphasize in their writings that literature is a nonpareil realm for representing traumatic experience. Literature becomes a site for a belated enactment and witnessing of what can be referred to as an unclaimed moment of trauma. Caruth uses the image of the wound “that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (1996a: 4), to indicate that trauma can only be understood through literary or symbolical language. Arguing that the language of trauma is inherently literary, and emphasizing that Freud drew on literature for his theorization of the phenomenon “because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing,” she suggests that this epistemological crisis in trauma functions as an interface between psychoanalysis and literary language: “it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet” (1996a: 3). For Felman, too, the question of representing trauma or the “crisis of truth,” which trauma entails, is tied to literary language and to witnessing; as trauma renders impossible a witnessing from within, a belated figurative and literary representation of traumatic experience displaces referential truth (Felman and Laub 1992: 5). Critics have also noted how Caruth’s and Felman’s

²⁴ Although Felman and Laub here refer to survivors of historical trauma, in particular the Holocaust and the Second World War and its representation, their observations and the questions that they raise concerning the limitations and possibilities of witness may be true of, and surface also in relation to, other kinds of trauma. Consequently, their writings have relevancy for different types of trauma narratives as well such as those of incest, the particular focus of this present work.

own writings on trauma converge on a specific literary language to impart traumatic speech(lessness).²⁵ In addition, as early as 1895, in *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud marvelled at the literary quality of his case studies: “it still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories” (Freud and Breuer 2001: 160).

Trauma emerged in literary studies in the 1990s as a possibility for the integration of, on the one hand, the concern in literary criticism at the time with poststructuralist and Lacanian abstract high theory, and on the other, “the real” in terms of the traumatic event and its socio-historical, political, cultural, and ethical meanings and functions.²⁶ As Ana Douglass and Thomas Vogler note, trauma “seemingly reconciles the opposition between the poststructuralist emphasis on the text, with the real understood as an effect of representation, and ‘the real’ understood as an event marked by trauma” (2003: 4). After poststructuralism entered what was in the 1970s the socially-oriented Humanities “the real” was to an extent pushed to the background. Then in the 1990s deconstructionists like Caruth and Felman began their theorizations of trauma at a time when Hartman and Laub led the Fortunoff Video Archive Project²⁷ at Yale University (Kaplan 2005: 35).²⁸ Felman’s collaboration with Laub resulted in their landmark publication *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), in which she strives to bring “the encounter with the real” as trauma into her teaching (1992: 41). Caruth’s groundbreaking edited volume *Trauma: Explorations in*

²⁵ See, e.g., Lacapra, who notes that “both Caruth and Felman [...] in their affectively charged modes of writing, convey something of the ‘feel’ and pathos of the experience of trauma” (2001: 109, n. 20).

²⁶ The Lacanian real and reality is not to be equated, however. The Lacanian reader Madan Sarup explains: “the Real resists symbolisation. The Real is ‘the impossible to symbolise’. [...] For Lacan explanation of the Real is always in terms of the impossible. The Real is that which is outside the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The Real is that which is excluded, the impossible to bear. Lacan’s notion of the Real has little to do with any assumptions about the nature of the world, with ‘reality’. The Real is a concept that cannot exist without the barrier of the Symbolic, which predates the birth of the subject.” (1992: 104)

²⁷ Today the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony, which works to record, collect, and preserve Holocaust witness testimonies, and to make these available to educators, researchers, and the general public.

²⁸ It is difficult to determine whether Caruth’s temporal conceptions of trauma derive more from psychoanalysis or deconstruction. According to Dominick LaCapra, Caruth’s (and Felman’s) “version of trauma theory [...] may itself be interpreted as an intricate displacement and disguise of the de Manian variant of deconstruction [...] In this view (close to Lacan’s), the real or the literal is traumatic, inaccessible, and inherently incomprehensible or unrepresentable; it can only be represented or addressed indirectly in figurative or allegorical terms that necessarily distort and betray it” (2001: 107, n. 20). It is also important to note that psychoanalysis is significant as a reference for much of deconstruction and their focus on e.g., temporality and “the return of the repressed.” For a brief but useful discussion of the relation between deconstruction and trauma studies, see Kaplan (2005: 34-35).

Memory (1995), in which she incorporates interviews and essays addressing different kinds of traumas from such fields as sociology, psychiatry, filmmaking, pedagogy, and literature, set the stage for a more interdisciplinary approach to “acknowledge the unthinkable *realities* to which traumatic experience bears witness” (1995a: ix, emphasis added). Previously the preserve of psychoanalysis and the social sciences, experts from one particular discipline no longer dominate its studies as the sole authorities on the subject; instead trauma breaks down the boundary lines between different fields. Whether different traumas affect different individuals in a similar way is a subject for debate and Caruth has been accused of overly extending the definition of trauma,²⁹ but she believes there is something which “seems oddly to inhabit all traumatic experience: the inability fully to witness the event as it occurs, or the ability to witness the *event* fully only at the cost of witnessing oneself” (1995a: 7, italics in original). Caruth’s inclusiveness then relies on her careful consideration of the structure of traumatic experience, and as trauma critic Anne Whitehead puts it, “[Caruth’s] work represents an important attempt to think through the hiatuses and dislocations which necessarily inhabit trauma” (2004: 5).

With the introduction of the subject of trauma to the humanities, “the real” has, as Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler put it, “returned to mainstream discourse like the Freudian repressed, this time as the traumatic event,” which “bears a striking similarity to the always absent signified or referent of the poststructuralist discourse, an object that can by definition only be constructed retroactively, never observed directly”: because it “violates expectations and traumatizes the perceiving subject,” and hence “cannot be anticipated or reproduced,” the traumatic event “allows a return to the real without the discredited notions of transparent referentiality often found in traditional modes of historical discourse” (Douglass and

²⁹ LaCapra, for instance, has issued a word of caution concerning her claims and believes she runs the risk of conflating historical losses with structural traumas experienced by all individuals, thereby universalizing psychic pain and downplaying the importance of specific historical problems and implying “the dubious ideas that everyone [...] is a victim, that all history is trauma” (2001: 64). Taking LaCapra’s warning a step further, Sigrid Weigel has criticized Caruth’s (mis)readings of Freud in *Unclaimed Experiences*, in which she believes Caruth universalizes the concept of trauma as a model for historical analysis in which history itself is understood as belated and repetitive trauma, thus generating a blindness for the differences between specific historical events (see, e.g., Weigel 2003). Aware that she runs the risk of being criticized for generalizing, for effacing the particularity of an event, Caruth herself still believes that “[t]he linking of traumas, or the possibility of communication or encounter through them, demands a different model or a different way of thinking that [...] may also allow for an encounter that retains, or does not fully erase, difference” (1996a: 124, n. 14).

Vogler 2003: 5).³⁰ In other words, the real is experienced merely through representation. As Hartman notes, “The real – the empirical or historical origin – cannot be known as such because it presents itself always within the resonances or field of the ‘traumatic’” (1995: 544). According to Hartman, not only is the violence of a culture represented in its literature and art, there seems to be something inherent in the study of trauma that facilitates a move beyond the text to the “real” world:

Trauma studies provide a more natural transition to a “real” world often falsely split off from that of the university, as if the one were activist and engaged and the other self-absorbed and detached. There is an opening that leads from trauma studies to public, especially mental health issues, an opening with ethical, cultural, and religious implications. (1995: 543-544).

In other words, the study of trauma is more or less inextricable from, rather than opposed to, the “real” world. While literary criticism such as this present thesis may concern itself with literary representations of trauma, it also gestures beyond literature to traumatic events and experiences as a reality and a real problem.

Literary works that depict trauma, rather than looking away from its external reality, often explain social causes of abuse and offer social critique. Narratives of trauma are concerned with socio-political, cultural, pedagogical, historical, and ethical issues and functions. In tackling the consequences of situations *in extremis*, trauma fiction signals an ethical function: it deals with both the causes for and the consequences of a particular traumatic experience from a more personalized, integrated, and complete scope than explorations into trauma in other fields may do. Far from replacing historical, psychological, and scientific examinations, literature adds to the body of knowledge and understanding derived from these other sources as well as benefits from them. As Laurie Vickroy argues, while trauma-fiction writers draw on historical as well as psychological research, “literary and imaginative approaches [to trauma] provide a necessary supplement to [these] studies” because they “bring a kind of sociocultural critical analysis that helps readers formulate how public policy and ideology are lived in private lives” (2002: 221-222). For Deborah Horvitz (2000), too, these narratives, in bearing witness to a trauma, also, obliquely or explicitly, point to the particular socio-historical or cultural context in which the trauma is produced and legitimized,

³⁰ According to Thomas Elsaesser, rather than recovered memory the theory of trauma concerns “recovered referentiality” (Kaplan 2005: 70): “acknowledging (deconstruction’s) deferral and (psychoanalysis’s) double time of *Nachträglichkeit*,” trauma relocates history into trauma theory (Elsaesser qtd. in Kaplan 2005: 70).

thus unmasking the repressive ideologies often responsible for the trauma in the first place. This study considers also incest as cultural trauma, along with slavery and other cultural traumas, to the point where it could also be considered in a sense social/communal – through media coverage, support organizations – and novels.

But if literary representations of trauma are necessarily negotiated by the socio-cultural and historical factors of the “real” world with which they interchange but of which they are merely (mis)representations, on what level can they be true? The real in terms of experiential or referential truth is crucial in a context of trauma, because trauma is so often contested, but what can fiction offer that historical documents and purely scientific explanations of trauma constrained by truth claims and demands for neutrality cannot provide? Acknowledging both the real and the complexity of reference in the representation of trauma, trauma fiction is positioned precisely in the space between the real world and writing, often imaginatively reworking history’s unacknowledged but traumatic events. Historian and trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra, who explores the demand for truth in connection to literary trauma, asserts that “narratives in fiction may also involve truth claims on a structural or general level by providing insight into phenomena such as slavery or the Holocaust, by offering a reading of a process or period, or by giving at least a plausible ‘feel’ for experience and emotion which may be difficult to arrive at through restrictive documentary methods” (2001: 13). Although LaCapra here refers to the representation of events such as the Holocaust and slavery, his observations and the questions that he raises concerning the emotional “feel” for a particular trauma may be true also of that of sexual abuse because that is also something which has been suppressed in our culture, and, consequently, his point may have relevancy for incest fiction as well. Thus fictional narratives of trauma may convey both aesthetic and cultural meanings and be both emotionally valid and psychologically true. It is also important to remember the factitious nature of ordinary recall, which is subject to challenges: even historical documents and autobiographical accounts are fictionalized to a certain extent because in reviewing the past in the present, past experiences are never literally or exactly reproduced, but are necessarily bound up with subsequent events as well as fantasies and other memories and hence reconstructed. Paradoxically, then, fiction may be truthful and truth invariably contains some fiction which means that truth can be more false than fiction.

Today’s trauma literature reflects at a formal level the problems of referentiality posed by trauma. Realism may strike some readers as more believable than figurative representation, but many other critical theorists favor a non-realistic approach to representing trauma, and so discussions of referentiality in trauma lite-

ature has centered on the question of whether to use realist or other than realist modes in its representation. Kali Tal in her study, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1996), treats only trauma narratives written by survivors in her discussion of how individual traumatic experience relates to cultural representations thereof in regard to the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and sexual abuse, because she believes that literary representations of trauma “are mediated by language and do not have the impact of the traumatic experience”; because certain words tend to acquire a different meaning in survivor discourse, “the traumatic experience is reinscribed as metaphor,” and only those writers who have experienced trauma directly as survivors know and can write the signs of trauma (1996: 15, 16). Therefore, she believes, only survivors have the right to narrate traumatic experiences and symbolic language needs to be eschewed in these stories because figuration functions in the hands of the powerful as a way of codifying and appropriating the experience for national and cultural myth-making. In this way the event comes to signify other things than the traumatic experience itself in a reductive and coherent cultural narrative created in a political struggle for power to control its meaning. Jane Kilby, too, denounces the notion that more innovative inventions and strategies can better render traumatic experience than more traditional writing can: “Experimental fiction is no more or less language bound than conventional testimony, and thereby it offers no more or less privileged access to the truth of trauma.” Instead, an emphasis on experimental literature “serves to privilege the powers of the author, when trauma, as I understand it, puts authorial power in crisis.” (2007: 50, 50-51)

While one way in which narratives of trauma can transmit a “feel” for the “real” is through realistic or more literal renderings of traumatic experience, many scholars believe trauma literature can seek passageways or make inroads into the traumatized psyche through a more experimental style. Trauma literature is not bound by truth claims and the limitations that necessarily constrict testimonies in real life and is therefore free – within the ambit of the limitations posed by traumatic experience itself as a phenomenon – to explore ways in which trauma allows representation, for instance, through symbolic language. Julian Wolfreys believes that traumatic understanding is “incommensurable with any strictly realistic representation or adequate knowledge” and that to the extent literature bears witness it does so “through the symbolization of what remains unsymbolizable and unrepresentable” (2002b: 141). Douglass and Vogler, too, believe that “[a]n event that defies all representation will best be represented by a failure of representation” and they doubt that realism is “the most effective mode for representing trauma” (2003: 32, 33). In contrast to Tal, they also do not see the necessity of first-hand experience to depict trauma: “the power of successful cul-

tural representation [is not] dependent upon direct personal experience or eyewitness of the events represented” (2003: 33).

Trauma scholars such as Laurie Vickroy, Anne Whitehead, and Ronald Granofofsky all argue for a stylistically innovative mode of depicting trauma that mimics its processes. In her book *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002), where she explores fictional depictions of trauma in a context of subjugation and colonialism in the works of such authors as Marguerite Duras, Toni Morrison, Dorothy Allison, Pat Barker, and Larry Heinemann, Laurie Vickroy found that trauma narratives, although fictional, can convey traumatic experience as authentically as survivor testimonies because of their experimental narrative techniques, including symbolization, where they not only represent trauma as a content or theme but “they also incorporate the rhythms, processes, and uncertainties of trauma within the consciousness and structures of these works” (2002: xiv). For Vickroy, these writers employ fictional techniques such as figurative language to represent trauma and its concerns with dissociation, shattered identities, and fragmented memories, thus making traumatic experience more accessible and real to readers.

Like Vickroy, Anne Whitehead emphasizes a non-realistic mode for rendering trauma. In her volume *Trauma Fiction* (2004), a study which yokes together literary trauma with trauma theory through the readings of novels by such authors as Pat Barker, Binjamin Wilkomirski, Caryl Phillips, and Toni Morrison in conjunction with texts by trauma theorists Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman, she suggests that “traditional literary realism may not be suited for rendering traumatic events” (2004: 87). “Trauma fiction,” she observes, “often demands of the reader a suspension of disbelief and novelists frequently draw on the supernatural” to suggest “that there has been a rupture of the symbolic order” and that hence “[t]he real can no longer appear directly or be expressed in a conventional realist mode” (2004: 84). Whitehead believes that “the more experimental forms emerging out of postmodernist and postcolonial fiction offer the contemporary novelist a promising vehicle for communicating the unreality of trauma, while still remaining faithful to the facts of history” (2004: 87). In fact, she attributes the origin of the newly developing genre she terms “trauma fiction” in the two theoretical movements postmodernism and postcolonialism, together with “a postwar legacy or consciousness” (2004: 81). Trauma fiction, she argues, “relies on the intensification of conventional narrative modes and methods” on the levels of reference, narrative, and plot in the form of “recurring literary techniques and devices” such as repetition and intertextuality (2004: 84). In other words, trauma forces writers who represent traumatic knowledge to signal that this is something which can only be conveyed through a degree of distortion.

Like Whitehead, Ronald Granofsky believes that the postmodernist genre presents useful techniques for depicting trauma. In his *The Trauma Novel* (1995), he analyzes a new subgenre of literary symbolism which he terms the trauma novel, surfacing after 1945 in works by such authors as Doris Lessing, William Golding, Margaret Atwood, and J. M. Coetzee. Although the trauma novel originated out of modernist writing, it is situated on the border between modernist and postmodernist writings as it shows a development toward more postmodernist techniques. The trauma novel examines the impact of collective trauma on the individual mind by rendering the imagined disaster, the protagonists' responses to it, and possible recuperation through figurative language. Among other things, these novelists interrogate normative categories of knowledge such as time and space through symbolization. For Granofsky, while mimicking the traumatic processes of dissociation the dislocation of symbolization works as a defence against suffering.

Other trauma scholars believe that trauma can successfully be represented in either realistic or non-realistic modes or that it needs to be represented in both. E. Ann Kaplan notes in her *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005) that trauma can be equally effectively rendered by using a realist mode as by using more non-realistic strategies. In her reading of Sarah Kofman's memoir *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, which provides a more or less realist story, and Marguerite Duras's *The War (La Douleur)*, which offers "examples of the fragmentation and certainly of the influence of fantasy," she observes that the former provides "as powerful an emotional rendering of trauma as anything I have read, and yet the style is clear, simple, 'realist' narration," and that Duras's style does not make her depiction of "traumatic memory more powerful than Kofman's." Instead, Kaplan offers, "the authors find varying strategies through which to communicate what the traumatic events mean to them emotionally." (2005: 155, n. 4)

Deborah Horvitz stresses the need to represent trauma both realistically and with attention to imagination and fantasy in other than realist modes. In her *Literary Trauma: Sadism, Memory, and Sexual Violence in American Women's Fiction* (2000) – a study of literary trauma that links cultural and psychological masochism in American women's fictional works from the turn of the nineteenth century and the final decades of the twentieth century by such writers as Leslie Marmon Silko, Gayl Jones, Dorothy Allison, Joyce Carol Oates, Margaret Atwood, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman – Horvitz considers the evolving genre of something she terms "poststructural realism" or "postmodern realism" in which the opposing theoretical genres of realism and postmodernism are brought together (2000: 81, 26, 23). Thus she explores "how individuals internalize the material conditions of

their lives [...] through symbols, fantasies, and metaphors in order to build a unique and personalized interpretation of the world” (2000: 5).

In seeking to construct a new approach to reading trauma, both the figure of the body and landscape are theorized as sites where the symbolic and the real meet. Trauma readers and scholars Kathryn Robson and Laura Di Prete in their respective *The Inscription of Trauma in post-1968 French Women’s Life-Writing* (2004) and *“Foreign Bodies”: Trauma, Corporeality, and Textuality in Contemporary American Culture* (2006), argue for the centrality of the figure of the body as a medium for representing trauma. Figuring the image of trauma as a bodily wound, Robson examines its literary representation in contemporary French women’s writings of lived experiences. Di Prete reads the articulation of psychic trauma as well as its working through through bodily figuration, while also literalizing the concept of the “foreign body” (Freud’s metaphor for traumatic memory)³¹ to refer to real material bodies erased by trauma, in the work of such artists as photographer Sally Mann, Toni Morrison, Don DeLillo and Dorothy Allison. Situating his work on trauma and the Holocaust in his readings of place, landscape, and memory in Wordsworth’s poetry, Geoffrey Hartman, on the other hand, has emphasized the symbolic value of place in trauma in the form of what he labels “memory place.” In Hartman’s interpretation Wordsworth is interested in locating the memories of feelings from the past contemplated in the present, in giving them a specific place (see Caruth 1996b: 644-645). While he questions the possibility of a Wordsworthian memory place in connection to Holocaust sites, which have robbed the mind of reflective moments in real pastoral places and thus ruined their symbolic function, as one of the co-founders of the archive of video testimonies at Yale, he has found that the Archive itself functions as a memorial place (in Caruth 1996b: 645, 648).

A figurative approach to writing trauma does not foreclose either realism or referential truth. On the contrary: as Hartman astutely notes; “The symbolic [...] is not a denial of literal or referential but its uncanny intensification” (1995: 547), and the discussion of realistic versus more non-realistic forms of expression regarding the representation of trauma in contemporary trauma studies can be seen as reflecting or corresponding to the longstanding debate in psychoanalysis concerning whether trauma originates in real events or in fantasy life. In fact, not only does this debate mirror the realist/non-realist debate regarding the represen-

³¹ Freud’s first mentioning of the concept “foreign body” (*Fremdkörper*) occurs in his and Breuer’s *Studies on Hysteria* (2001: 6). See also his *Moses and Monotheism* (1967: 120-121). Chapter 6 of this present study will discuss the term further.

tation of trauma, but it is also possible to think about the whole question of real/realist and fantasy/figurative in temporal and spatial terms: the literality and figuration inherent in traumatic knowledge can be said to reflect respectively the temporal and spatial aspects of trauma. Hartman has found a correlation between the two incongruous forms of traumatic knowledge – the actual traumatic event that escapes consciousness and the dissociated memory of it – and literature: “On the level of poetics, literal and figurative may correspond to these two types of cognition” (1995: 537). This would mean that the literal operates structurally on the level of the temporal as a traumatic event which is not registered as it occurs, whereas the symbolic corresponds to the spatial in terms of dissociated reactions to the traumatic event by the split psyche. A symbolic mode signals the spatial side of traumatic memory, not as opposed to, but as complementing literality in the form of references to time in traumatic representation. In other words, the representation of trauma relies on both realist and figurative expressions, and key stylistic characteristics that tend to occur and recur are temporal and spatial references. The distinction between the two kinds of traumatic knowledge and forms of representation will be reflected in this present study’s division between time and space in Parts I and II respectively. Before the synopsis and an exegesis of this study’s tempo-spatial method to reading trauma, however, it is to the demands of representing the trauma of sexual abuse – which in particular has been situated at the border between fact and fiction – that the present introductory chapter will now turn.

1.3 Theorizing Incest Narratives

Because father-daughter incest – one of the greatest producers of victims in the twentieth century³² and a foundational trauma of Western culture – is frequently referred to as a “well-suppressed secret” (Armstrong 1978: 238), tellings are often challenged and seen as subversive. Apart from the traumatic event itself precluding internal witnessing, sexual traumas are also often unwitnessed *sub rosa* occurrences without external eye-witnesses; the victim is frequently alone with the perpetrator when the assault happens. Psychiatric and psychological studies show that children usually do not tell because they are coerced by the perpetrating care-

³² Some studies show that actual incest is more prevalent than most want to believe (see, e.g., Herman and Hirschman 1981, 2000; Russell 1986). According to sociologist Diana E. H. Russell’s study, *The Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women* (1986), 16 percent of women in the U.S. were molested by a relative before the age of eighteen, fathers (including biological, step, foster, and adoptive ones) making up 24 % of the perpetrators. The prevalence rate for father-daughter incest abuse in the study was 4.5 percent.

giver to keep the secret. Often they are threatened that if they tell they will destroy the family stability and so they are afraid to say anything (Herman 1994: 98). Children find themselves in a double bind because they depend on parental care and desire to preserve an attachment to parent/abuser for their survival (see Freyd 1996). Both the psychological aspect of denying incest and the cultural taboo against knowing about it are strong. Incest tellers' stories are constrained by conceptual parameters of what is deemed acceptable in terms of violence and sexuality in a given culture. Herman notes that "the most traumatic events of [the survivor's] life take place outside the realm of socially validated reality" (1994: 8). While it can be argued that incest tellings portray women as mere victims and that these narratives are hence disempowering, not telling is usually viewed as tantamount to the perpetuation of the oppression. Silence leads to denial, and, as Janice Doane and Devon Hodges put it, "frees the field for perpetrators" (2001: 14). Therefore, and despite the fact that child sexual abuse has for the last twenty-five years been part of public discourse in North America – where it was first discussed in the public arena – speaking out is an important albeit an insurgent act, which challenges paternal, societal, and institutional authority as it breaks the silence of "the best kept secret" (Rush 1980).

But why should a literary study into incest trauma concern itself with survivor discourse and father-daughter incest clinical research? This study clearly dissents from Hortense Spillers's view that father-daughter incest fiction should be kept separate from the reality of actualized incest: "Whether or not father-daughter incest actually happens, and with what frequency, is not a problem for *literary* interpretation. For good or ill, it belongs to the precincts of the local police department (and the 'cat' should go to jail)" (1989: 158, italics in original). Instead this study sides with Minrose Gwin in this issue who doubts the possibility of "disengag[ing] the reading of fiction about father-daughter incest from its reality (which is usually kept comfortably *outside* the precincts of the local police department and remains the secret inside the house)" or "disentangl[ing] either writing or reading about incest from the ideological productions of the everyday world" (2002: 62, italics in original). She believes that father-daughter incest fiction reveals the gendered power dynamics underlying child sexual abuse: "it is clearly the relation of such fiction to the cold hard facts of many girls' lives [...] that equips it to perform" the function of "remov[ing] the transparency from gendered power relations within the family." As Gwin puts it, father-daughter incest fiction is even "better equipped to tell the cultural story of father-daughter sexual abuse" than are autobiographical accounts because, as she puts it "it is not laden with exigencies of literal and specific truth claims." (2002: 64)

The first contemporary incest narratives depicted from a daughter's perspective appeared in the 1960s and 1970s were African American, such as Maya Angelou's debut book, the autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) and Toni Morrison's first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970), which challenge white patriarchal culture by linking incest to white paternalistic dominance over African Americans epitomized in the history of slavery in the US, and these, in turn, also made it possible for white feminists to explore father-daughter sexual abuse in the late 1970s and 1980s and define male supremacy in the patriarchal family as its cause. The first book-length feminist treatise on father-daughter incest (in English) to indict paternalistic rule and debunk myths about incest as consensual, harmless, and beneficial, is Louise Armstrong's *Kiss Daddy Goodnight* (1978). According to Armstrong, this kind of sexual abuse "arises out of an assumed prerogative, superstructured with rationale, protected by traditions of silence, and, even more than in rape, an assurance of the object's continuing fear, shame, powerlessness and, therefore, silent acquiescence" (1978: 242). Armstrong's study was followed by early examples of incest publications both from historical and psychological perspectives such as Florence Rush's historical analysis of the phenomenon, *The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children* (1980), and Herman and Lisa Hirschman's landmark publication, the clinical study *Father-Daughter Incest* (1981). Herman (1981, 2000) – unarguably one of the most influential authorities on the subject – found in her study that the incestuous white family group has a strong patriarchal family structure. Daughters who grow up in this kind of incestuous family exhibit ambivalent feelings of love and fear toward their fathers because they want to put an end to the abuse by telling someone but are afraid that if they do they will destroy the family upon which they depend.³³ Feminist studies also helped spawn incest fiction such as Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* and survivor accounts emerging in the last twenty odd years. Ellen Bass and Louise Thornton's anthology *I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (1983) is an early example of a collective attempt to counter the father's imposed silence on the sexually assaulted daughter.³⁴

³³ In her essay "The Daughter's Seduction: Sexual Violence and Literary History" (1989), Christine Froula links literature and sexual abuse by likening women authors' predicaments before second-wave feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s to those of incest-abused daughters that Herman has clinically described: "a daughter who, prohibited by her father from speaking about the abuse, is unable to sort out her contradictory feelings of love for her father and terror of him, of desire to end the abuse and fear that if she speaks she will destroy the family structure that is her only security": "Metaphysically, the woman reader of a literary tradition that inscribes violence against women is an abused daughter." (Froula 1989: 112, 123)

³⁴ Trauma narratives written by white survivors of sexual abuse such as Bass and Thornton's first began to appear in the United States as an effort to enable women "to challenge the laws

While incest has long been an important – albeit historically often veiled – literary theme,³⁵ literary scholarship on the subject has until recently been relatively rare. Despite abundant depictions of incest down the years such as folktales, the Shakespearean romances, and today’s outpourings of scriptings of incest, it is not until the last two decades or so that a substantial number of publications dedicated to the treatment of literary incest has emerged. According to the British Library and Library of Congress records, merely two books on literary incest were published before 1975,³⁶ two books on incest in American and English literature were published in the 1970s, six in the 1980s, as compared to as many as eleven only in the 1990s (Barnes 2002: 3). Of these, most have been feminist and/or psychoanalytical, such as Rosaria Champagne’s *The Politics of Survivorship: Incest, Women’s Literature, and Feminist Theory* (1996), which argues for a politicization of incest narratives and survivorship through reading aftereffects as texts, and Jane M. Ford’s psychobiography *Patriarchy and Incest from Shakespeare to Joyce* (1998). Yet, Minrose Gwin argues, even among the critical books published on the topic in the 1990s, feminist literary criticism has not caught up on the deluge of incest narratives by women writers that have appeared in the last few decades (2002: 70-71).

The theoretical discussions and critical works on reading incest that do exist can be divided into two templates or strands dominant in the field: on the one hand, there are those critics who primarily foreground interrogations of power or a cultural-political context such as Minrose Gwin and Janice Doane and Devon Hodges, and on the other hand, those who strongly emphasize the importance of reading incest as trauma, insisting more on traumatic impact and the psychological difficulties of telling, such as Jane Kilby and Kathryn Robson. The first group more or less takes an unproblematical relation between text and life for granted, whereas the latter emphasizes the constraints put by trauma on the representation itself. One of the main arguments of this present thesis is that incest needs to be

and social conditions that protected sexually abusive men,” bearing “witness to the fact that violence was perpetrated systematically and regularly by American men upon American women in a society that supported the oppression and subjugation of women” (Tal 1996: 156).

³⁵ There is an element of censorship involved in representations of incest and accompanying trauma. Except for medieval tales, before modern times Renaissance, especially Jacobean writers, depicted it openly, such as Shakespeare in *Pericles* and John Ford in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633).

³⁶ These were Otto Rank’s groundbreaking *Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Sage* (1912) – which was not translated into English as *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation* until eighty years later in 1992 when incest had become somewhat of an irresistible subject for literary criticism – and Donald Webster Cory and Robert E. L. Masters’s *Violation of Taboo: Incest in the Great Literature of the Past and Present* (1963).

read as trauma, that is, with a focus on the exploration of psychological aftereffects, but in conjunction with an analysis of cultural and socio-politic ideologies and situations within which the trauma was produced and is legitimized in the first place.

Minrose Gwin, who, to a degree, follows in the footsteps of Armstrong and Herman, observes: narratives of incest “turn around unerringly to read the ideologies of patriarchal power and dominance – stories of “romance” and “love” – that make father-daughter incest culturally inevitable” (2002: 66). Gwin is also concerned about the appropriation of incest for women’s literature in general and about the exploitation of the subject in the media as titillating entertainment (2002: 69, 72). The answer, she believes, is “that we pay more attention to the way we read women’s fictions about incest, both for what it can tell us about cultural narratives of gender and for its important and compounded contributions to the contemporary discursive network about incest in [the US]” (2002: 73). In her book, *The Woman in the Red Dress: Gender, Space, and Reading* (2002), she suggests a way of reading literature “helplessly” (qtd. in Gwin 2002: 27, emphasis in original),³⁷ through “attend[ing] to space in narrative and the spatial configurations of our own responses to narrative” in order “to bring the cognitive and embodied experience of what [Gillian] Rose calls ‘being in space’ to the foreground in one’s own experience of the world, one’s own critical practice” (2002: 29). The spaces the reader needs to attend to in the case of reading incest are material, cultural, and textual. “[T]raveling” these spaces, Gwin argues, “can be part of an imaginative transgressiveness which creates more space for incest to be spoken, and heard, in all its equivocal and disquieting cadences” (2002: 73). Although Gwin does not emphasize or theorize incest as trauma per se, her mode of reading “helplessly” comes close to reading incest as such but is not backed up by a trauma-theoretical perspective.

In placing North American women’s fictional and non-fictional incest tellings from the late nineteenth century to contemporary times in a historical and cultural-political context in their *Telling Incest: Narratives of Dangerous Remembering from Stein to Sapphire* (2001), Janice Doane and Devon Hodges’s propose a “strategy for listening” to women’s incest tellings that acknowledges “the experience of incest [...] as an actuality” and the difficulties of “gaining a sympathetic audience, avoiding retaliation, and finding a way around the familiar and debas-

³⁷ This word refers to Toni Morrison’s introductory notes of reading her novel *Beloved* (1987), where she describes how the reader needs to come “helplessly” into the unimaginable space of a slavery that lasted for over two hundred years, as the slaves themselves did (Gwin 2002: 27).

ing personae associated with tellers: the liar, the seducer, the hysteric, the victim” (2001: 2). Their “strategy” is based on Caruth’s deconstructive notion of referentiality or more precisely a referentiality that lies outside what Caruth terms “pre-conceived conceptual terms” (Caruth 1995b: 3). For Doane and Hodges, “preconceived conceptual terms” imply “a master narrative, one that shapes expectations about narratives and their relation to a specific referential field” (2002: 9-10, 10) and their “own strategy for listening” involves “to notice where emerging realities [...] are marked in narratives about incest [...] references [that] disrupt familiar patterns of narrating and understanding incest” (2002: 9). Thus focusing on finding a format for telling incest and on where these narratives of incest depart from master narratives, they do not focus on trauma as such, on how tellers convey trauma or how it is played out or enacted in fictional characters and women’s lives.

Some literary critics use a trauma-theoretical lens through which to analyse sexual abuse in incest narratives, but, as Kathryn Robson points out, most literary criticism on narratives of incest bypasses Caruth’s theorization of reading trauma (as outlined in *Unclaimed Experience* in particular). She believes this is because “Caruth does not write specifically on abuse; her perspective is not markedly feminist; she does not focus on female-authored texts.” Robson, who writes on autobiographical narratives in her *The Inscription of Trauma in post-1968 French Women’s Life-Writing* (2004), comes up with yet another reason: Caruth’s “complex model of reference” questions the stable and unproblematical relation between text and life delineated in “criticism on texts recounting sexual abuse” by such critics as Kalí Tal (Robson 2004: 89).

A few recent books devoted to trauma fiction also treat literary incest. Trauma scholars such as Deborah Horvitz, Laurie Vickroy, and Laura Di Prete all discuss one or more narratives of incest such as Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992) but within a wider context of sexual trauma backed up by gender politics (Horvitz), or different/other kinds of trauma in general and weighted toward sociocultural investigations (Vickroy and Di Prete), but rather than relying on Caruth’s theory of traumatic experience for their analyses of the incest stories, these critics chiefly use the work of such sexual abuse experts as Judith Herman, Jennifer Freyd, and also Roberta Culbertson, who focus more specifically on the trauma of incest as sexual abuse. Robson herself uses Caruth’s theory in her analysis of Béatrice de Jurquet’s autobiographical fiction of father-daughter incest abuse by rethinking Caruth’s image of trauma as a wound, “as an image of spatial and temporal rupture of the mind and of memory, a rupture figured in Jurquet’s writing by recurring images of imbalance and falling” (2004: 34). However, Robson’s reading does not include a feminist analysis of power. Jane Kilby, too,

makes use of Caruth's understanding of trauma in a discussion of incest in her recent study *Violence and the Cultural Politics of Trauma* (2007), where she focuses on survivor testimony. In offering a new reading for a cultural politics of trauma based on Caruth's concept of the phenomenon's unrepresentability, Kilby focuses on the reading of popular incest survivor testimony in the form of the recovered memory/false memory syndrome debate, the incest memoir, survivor art, and talkshow confessions, emphasizing that a feminist analysis of the social silencing of incest advanced by such feminists as Herman and Armstrong must incorporate also the silencing psychological aftereffects of abuse. However, while Kilby in her invaluable book makes use of Caruth's theory, she discusses the representation of survivor discourse in the incest memoir, not in incest novels.

It is significant that Caruth, who does not specifically theorize sexual abuse, in the preface to her edited volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) begins her discussion of a new way of listening to trauma with the recovered memory/false memory controversy surrounding incest tellings in the 1990s. Noting that this debate teaches us the importance of learning "to distinguish between wholly false, suggested memories and memories that are essentially veridical,"³⁸ she continues:

But the concern with false memories also teaches us, I believe, another and equally important lesson: the difficulty that many people have in believing memories that seem to them to be false simply because they do not appear in easily recognizable forms, and the urgency of creating new ways of listening and recognizing the truth of memories that would, under traditional criteria, be considered to be false. (1995a: viii)

In other words, for Caruth, the challenges to incest tellings generate the need for new modes of reading and listening to trauma. She returns to the debate in the introduction to the same volume, entitled "Trauma and Experience," when illustrating her notion of indirect "access" or referentiality in trauma. Arguing that not only today's controversy over false and recovered memories but also the discussion centering on Freud's supposed recantation of the seduction theory is reductive in its insistence on positioning trauma either in symptoms or events, as in fantasies or real external experiences respectively. Caruth believes that, in our focus on situating trauma within the individual or without in particular incidents, we risk "miss[ing] the central Freudian insight into trauma, that the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located,

³⁸ The word "veridical" is used in psychology to denote a dream or vision that correlates with reality or is verified or corroborated by later events.

in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time”: “It is the fundamental dislocation implied by all traumatic experience that is both its testimony to the event and to the impossibility of its direct access” (1995a: 8-9, 9).

This study proposes that it is necessary to read narratives of father-daughter incest fiction as trauma narratives with a focus on the exploration of the psychological impact in conjunction with an analysis of cultural politics as there are both psychic and social forces to sexual abuse and its tellings and these are connected. A feminist analysis aids in what Herman calls “explaining how such widespread abuses visited mainly by one sex upon the other could be so long denied or condoned” (2000: 220) and in coming up with strategies that will allow for the possibility for change. In addition, the symptoms or signs that remain after traumatic experience – which are the specific focus of incest narratives – attest to the cultural and socio-political ideologies and material circumstances within which the trauma was created and is currently sustained. Reading these narratives with the aim of trying to decipher these signs is a politically urgent matter because socio-politically and culturally constructed ideologies have a bearing both on real cases of child sexual abuse and fictional representations thereof. In this study, reading these narratives also signifies reading time and space, and therefore an exposition of the tempo-spatial approach to reading trauma proposed in this study is now in order.

1.4 Toward a Reading of Trauma in Terms of Time and Space

This study’s double focus on references to time and space is a contribution to Cathy Caruth’s (re)quest for a new way of reading, for finding new ways of listening to trauma. The understanding of trauma (and incest) that is revealed in these pages largely derives from the aforementioned works in this study’s introductory survey of the field of trauma and incest studies. The above outline in no way does justice to the complexity of the arguments in contemporary discourses of trauma and incest, but rather than as a comprehensive account it can be seen as a synthesis of the prevailing features, principles, and notions of trauma and incest studies and some of the major issues raised by key scholars within the field today relevant to this study. This present work is rooted in a trauma-theoretical perspective informed by, and showing similarities with, the writings sketched in the overview above, but aims to offer a different and an imaginative alternative, problematizing and adding to the scholarship devoted to the reading of trauma, a model of reading that, as this study suggests, is already implicated in many trauma narratives

themselves; this study aims to contribute to literary trauma studies by reconsidering and expanding the idea of representing and reading trauma by using the concepts of time and space. While this study's model of reading trauma derives from Caruth's theorizations it expands beyond it, and this section will trace the trajectory of this approach through an explication of Caruth's reading (and to some extent Freud's) of two scenes from Torquato Tasso's magnum opus *Gerusalemme liberata* (*Jerusalem Delivered*).

In the introduction to her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996a), Caruth starts her exegesis of a new mode of reading trauma by revisiting Freud's exposition in chapter three of "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920) of two passages from Tasso's romantic epic of *Tancredi and Clorinda*. To demonstrate the "daemonic" nature of the representation of trauma in compulsive repetition, or the death drive (2003b: 60),³⁹ Freud summarizes the two scenes of the *Gerusalemme* narrative – which tells the story of the siege of Jerusalem by the Christians in their first crusade in 1099 and the battles between the Christians and Moslems – thus:

The hero Tancred unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda, she having done battle with him in the armour of an enemy knight. After her burial he penetrates the strange charmed forest that so frightens the army of crusaders. There he smites a tall tree with his sword, but blood gushes from the wound, and the voice of Clorinda, whose spirit has magically entered into that very tree, accuses him of yet again doing harm to his beloved. (2003b: 60-61)

According to Freud, *Tancredi's* double wounding of his beloved done unawares, first in fighting, where he does not recognize her in her armor, and then in the woods where she is entombed in a tree and misrecognized again, sheds light on the compulsion to repeat in traumatic neurosis; by a seemingly mysterious force, i.e. a force for which the motive is unconscious and cannot easily be found, *Tancredi* unwittingly re-enacts the traumatic moment. *Tancredi's* unknowing wounding of *Clorinda* shows the latent compulsive nature of traumatic repetition in which traumatized individuals unconsciously are forced to belatedly and repeatedly return to the trauma as though "a daemonic current [is] running through their

³⁹ Initially Freud conceptualized re-enactment as a compulsion to repeat in an attempt to take control of the traumatic experience but thought that this concept did not accurately convey the "daemonic" nature of this phenomenon and consequently named it the "death drive" (Freud 2003b). Most theorists, such as Pierre Janet (Freud's contemporary), have preferred to use the first term, "repetition compulsion," as they "speculate that the repetitive reliving of the traumatic experience must represent a spontaneous, unsuccessful attempt at healing" (Herman 1994: 41).

whole existence” (Freud 2003b: 60). This exigent nature of trauma will be the topic for Part I of this study, where it will be linked to writers’ frequent return to the same narrative – in this case the *Lear* story – in terms of intertextual (re-)enactments of a missed textual trauma in the source text.

Like Freud, Caruth in her commentary on his summary focuses on Tancredi’s experience of the temporal nature of the trauma, on what is not immediately grasped but which has to be repeated later, but whereas he sees in Tasso’s story “[t]he most moving poetical depiction” of “an endless repetition of the same fate” (2003b: 60), she views Tasso’s narrative also as a “striking” example of “the moving and sorrowful *voice* that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released *through the wound*” (1996a: 2, italics in original). In other words, Caruth emphasizes the ethical imperative of trauma in the belated address produced by the voice. In Caruth’s analysis, the voice from the wound testifies to the “reality or truth” of the trauma that has escaped Tancredi’s consciousness and represents that which is inaccessible in any other way, commanding the reader’s listening and witnessing “the address of the voice [...] as the story of the way in which one’s own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another’s wound” (1996a: 4, 8). In other words, Clorinda testifies to what Tancredi cannot remember or know, and so emerges as his double in a sense. The reader is alternately cast in the role of victim and witness, dissolving the boundaries between time and space, self and other, so that trauma cannot be located in any one person or place but rather is transferred to, interlocks with, or implicates, all of us everywhere.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Caruth’s (and Freud’s) casting of Tancredi in the role of trauma victim is not devoid of problems, however. Sigrid Weigel argues that Caruth’s interpretation of Freud’s reading of Tasso’s tragic epic misreads Tancredi’s perpetrator guilt: “it is precisely this mode of trauma – a terrified perception, or the horror of recognizing the way in which one’s own history has become entangled in an act of killing – that may be of particular relevance for the aftermath of Nazism on the side of the perpetrators” which is overlooked by what she deems as Caruth’s effacing the specificity of particular traumatic events (2003: 91-92). Also Ruth Leys invokes Nazism, saying that the “chilling implications” of Caruth’s interpretation of Tancredi as a victim includes turning Nazis into “victims,” too (2000: 297). However, while Caruth’s claim does to some extent erode the borders between perpetrators and their victims, she never refers to the Holocaust in her argument. Yet interpreting Tasso’s Christian hero as a victim does raise questions of perpetrator trauma, of whether perpetration in itself causes trauma, and the complicated relation between aggressor and victim, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 of this thesis; suffice to say here that the passage from the poem exemplifies Caruth’s theory of reading trauma and that her interpretation communicates her central purpose to demonstrate how the reader is interpellated by the address and thus implicated in the trauma of the other.

Although Caruth en passant remarks in a footnote that Tasso's narrative appears to illuminate not merely the temporal but "*both* the temporal and spatial aspects of the notion of trauma," and so a topic worthy of pursuing, she does not continue to cogitate on this relation between time and space in trauma or attempt to define spatiality in a traumatic context any further in her book (1996a: 114, n 3, emphasis added).⁴¹ It is true that the quoted passage above shows both the temporal and spatial aspects of trauma but she fails to address issues raised by the relation between these in Tasso's narrative and does not think through the implications of this relation for understanding trauma and its representation. Nor does her new mode of reading suggest how trauma can be read in terms of space. Thus, the questions as to why psychic trauma needs to be theorized, represented, and read through both time and space remain largely unaddressed and unexplored in her theorization. This study recognizes and addresses this oversight or blind spot and is devoted to pursuing precisely these questions, which seem significant to an understanding of trauma and its representation, offering a slightly different interpretation by extending the concept of space in this context. Starting out from Caruth's and Freud's contentions about the dislocation inherent in traumatic experience, this volume suggests that references to time and space image the traumatized mind, signalling not only the twofold nature of traumatic experience but also bespeaking in turn the fragility of our perceptions of these concepts in the face of trauma. Because these references gesture toward a psychological split in trauma, they should not be theorized, read apart or interpreted separately. Instead, it is necessary to reconsider their relation through the problem of trauma, to define trauma through this relation, and to learn to read trauma for disruptions and dislocations in terms of these temporal and spatial references respectively.

Apart from illuminating a complex and an intricate temporal structure in traumatic repetition, what stands out about this passage in Tasso's story is also how it illustrates a spatial side to trauma in addition to the temporal in a wider sense than filling up the space of the mind – even a material, physical or corporeal aspect – to traumatic memory and suffering with gendered implications: the violent scene of the first slaying of Clorinda in the twelfth of the twenty cantos in Tasso's epic emphasizes the space of her body, and is in itself suggestive of sexual violence, not an uncommon "weapon" of war:

⁴¹ Caruth's understanding of the spatial dimension of trauma is focused on the mind, however, and derives in part from Jean Laplanche, who "underscores the way in which Freud places the temporal story alongside a spatial one that is not spatial in the physical sense but rather about 'extension'" and from Jacques Derrida, who "suggests that in Freud a topographical structure is essential to the possibility of an archive (as the possibility of memory)" (Caruth 1996a: 114, n. 3).

Ma ecco omai l'ora fatale è giunta
 che 'l viver di Clorinda al suo fin deve.
 Spinge egli il ferro nel bel sen di punta
 che vi s'immerge e 'l sangue avido beve;
 e la veste, che d'or vago trapunta
 le mammelle stringea tenera e leve,
 l'empie d'un caldo fiume. Ella già sente
 morirsi, e 'l piè le manca egro e languente.
 (1982: XII, 66)⁴²

The passage is *enceinte* with violent sexual allusions; key words such as “'l sangue” [“blood”] “il ferro” [“his iron”], “punta” [“weapon”] as well as verbs such as “Spingere” [“drives”], and the phrase “Che vi s'immerge e 'l sangue avido beve; / e la veste, che d'or vago trapunta / le mammelle stringea tenera e leve / lempie d'un caldo fiume” [“His sword into her bosom deep he drives, / And bath'd in lukewarm blood his iron cold; / Between her breasts the cruel weapon rives / Her curious square embost with swelling gold”] all evoke a scene of Tancredi sword-raping Clorinda's body. In other words, the killing is characterized as a symbolic rape.⁴³ In addition to disclosing the violent nature of male sexuality or the sexual nature of rape,⁴⁴ Clorinda's text-body is re-troped as a site of both pleasure and pain, confusing not only Tancredi's but also the reader's now ambiguous position in relation to the act. In this scene the private crime of male sexual violence and politico-religious conflict symbolize one another (the lovers are from opposing camps: she belongs to those fighting on the side of the King of Jerusalem and the

⁴² But now, alas! the fatal hour arrives
 That her sweet life must leave that tender hold;
 His sword into her bosom deep he drives,
 And bath'd in lukewarm blood his iron cold;
 Between her breasts the cruel weapon rives
 Her curious square embost with swelling gold;
 Her knees grow weak, the pains of death she feels,
 And, like a falling cedar, bends and reels.
 (1968: XII, LXIV, Trans. Fairfax)

The numbers indicate canto and strophe.
⁴³ It can be argued that on account of theirs being a love story, it is possible to interpret the sexual undertones as alluding to lovemaking, especially if one emphasizes the tenderness expressed in these lines and the blood as virgin blood in the context of a nuptial wedding night (in the next strophe Clorinda is referred to as “vergine” [virgin] (1982: XII, 65). Fredi Chiappelli interprets the scene thus (Tasso 1982: 509-510, n. 64). Such an interpretation, however, would mean that the metaphorical *le petit mort* (little death) of orgasm is literalized in Tasso, as Clorinda actually dies from the insertion of “il ferro” [the iron] which would seem to equate female sexuality with victimization and male sexuality with violence.

⁴⁴ The author of the present study here refers to the central question in feminist debates on rape; is sexual violence grounded in violence or in sexuality? For an account of the discussion, see Sielke 2002: 13-15.

Mohammedans, he belongs on the Christian side). The allusion to rape in Tasso's scene interlaces the trauma with the female body and gendered violence, both issues which remain unaddressed and ignored in Freud's reading and strangely unsaid in Caruth's analysis. It now becomes evident that the *Gerusalemme liberata* is more important for articulating the link between trauma and female victimization in modern trauma theory than what may have been betrayed by Caruth's or Freud's interpretations.

Also the second scene, which is linked to the hero's first slaying, is pregnant with corporeal, gendered, and bloody rape metaphors, but this time in connection to nature, as Clorinda is morphed into a tree and thus forced to participate in the literal conflation of herself with the natural world:⁴⁵

Pur tragge al fin la spada, e con gran forza
percote l'alta pianta. Oh meraviglia!
manda fuor sangue la recisa scorza,
e fa la terra intorno a sé vermiglia.
Tutto si raccapriccia, e pur rinforza
il colpo e 'l fin vederne ei si consiglia.
Allor, quasi di tomba, uscir ne sente
un indistinto gemito dolente,
(1982: XIII, 41)⁴⁶

The question of the conflation of the tree and Clorinda in the thirteenth canto remains misrecognized in both Freud's and Caruth's readings, although obvious sexual connotations are evident in Freud's account of the scene, where he uses words such as "penetrates," "he smites a tall tree with his sword," "blood gushes from the wound" (2003b: 60-61). This Tassian scene poignantly shows the age-long sexist connection between women and nature and the disassociation of these things with males which pervades traditional Western culture in philosophic, scientific, and religious thought. "Wounding," Roberta Culbertson notes, "is an intensely social act as well, in which the carrier of the weapon is also the carrier

⁴⁵ Note that in the scene where Clorinda is slain for the first time she is already there compared to "a falling cedar" in the English translation.

⁴⁶ He drew his sword at last, and gave the tree
A mighty blow that made a gaping wound;
Out of the rift red streams he trickling see
That all bebled the verdant plain around;
His hair start up; yet once again struck he,
(He nould give over till the end he found
Of his adventure), when with plaint and moan,
As from some hollow grave, he heard one groan.
(1968: XIII, XLI, Trans. Fairfax)

of subtle and not-so-subtle cultural messages” (1995: 172). Chapters 5 and 6 of the spatially-focused Part II of this study will deal with the material and corporeal aspects of trauma, including the gendered inflections.

Ultimately material space is linked to the symbolic value of place in trauma as the traumatic memory is entombed in a tree, and it is from the natural world that Clorinda addresses Tancredi. In this way, the mysterious forest not only constitutes a literal burial ground for the dead, but it also symbolically exhibits a place for traumatic memory. The role of landscape in relation to traumatic memory is an issue that will be explored in chapter 5 of this present thesis. A focus on Clorinda’s trauma, which is more or less neglected in both Freud’s and Caruth’s commentaries, where her plight is compromised in the emphasis on Tancredi’s trauma, and a reading of the cited scenes in Tasso’s epic itself – which Caruth may or may not have (mis)read – divulges another interpretation: if instead of reading the voice that cries out as “the other within the self that retains the memory of the “unwitting” traumatic events of one’s past,” as Caruth suggests (1996a: 8) – i.e. as part of Tancredi’s own split self – one focuses on the voice as Clorinda’s dislocated memories articulated through a misrecognized or dissociated body, it is possible to read the memory which is unavailable other than in Tancredi’s compulsive repetition of violence as ensconced in the tree and testifying not only to Tancredi’s trauma but also to Clorinda’s. On this reading, Clorinda and Tancredi are cast as each others’ witnesses, confirming Caruth’s articulation that trauma precludes witnessing from within as it cannot be located anywhere. In addition, Caruth’s maxim that trauma implicates all takes on additional import as Clorinda and Tancredi not only witness for each other but also for the grove. Upon realizing his deed after the second scene, Tancredi acknowledges not only Clorinda but also the tree: “ch’a gli alberi dà vita / spirito uman che sente e che ragiona” (1982: XIII: 49).⁴⁷ Tancredi is now a witness both to Clorinda’s pain and through her predicament also to suffering nature that he also has slain. The enchanted forest is a symbolic place yet also a literal territory, and needs to be understood both as a memory site for Clorinda’s traumatic memory and as a natural territory. To conclude, inscribed in the traumatic scene in Tasso’s poem is revealed a twofold structure of displacement i.e. both temporal and spatial: the trauma is repeated or re-enacted as well as remembered in another place and another time. Thus, as this study offers, Tasso’s narrative can be read as an allegory or parable of trauma(tic) theory itself.

⁴⁷ “Each tree through all that wood / Hath sense, hath life, hath speech, like human kind” (1968: XIII: XLIX, Trans. Fairfax).

1.5 Reading Trauma in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* and the *Lear* Group of Father-Daughter Incest Narratives

The present study will be divided into two parts. This division is not random or just a way of organizing the chapters, but reflects the dual understanding of trauma that has emerged in these pages, that is, the spatio-temporal aspects of how trauma is theorized in contemporary trauma theory. The first Part, "Trauma's Time and Intertextuality" focuses on the temporal aspect of representing and reading trauma, examining memory and narrative in connection with intertextuality in the context of traumatic temporality. More specifically, it considers the implications of Caruth's temporal conceptualization of trauma as a misalignment or disjunction of the conventional parameters of the temporality of memory for writing and reading trauma. This first half explores the relationship between trauma, intertextuality, and time not only in the light of contemporary trauma theory but also in relation to Freud's writings on repression and repetition compulsion (upon which Caruth's theorizations are based) as well as Anne Whitehead's elaboration of intertextuality's role in trauma fiction, with particular reference to *A Thousand Acres* in relation to *King Lear* and the folk narratives behind the play such as the "Thousandfurs" tale. In addition, Smiley's novel will be contextualized against the backdrop of other contemporary female-authored reworkings by The Women's Theatre Group & Elaine Feinstein, Margaret Atwood, Lucy Ellmann, Laura Esquivel, Mairi MacInnes, Valerie Miner, and Ann Tyler.

The temporal readings in Part I argue that authors' frequent appropriations of the same *Lear* story can be seen as intertextual (re-)enactments of a traumatic return after a period of latency or repression to a missed textual trauma or an unclaimed moment of father-daughter incest in an earlier source and so demonstrate how trauma is represented not merely through temporal references and repetitions within a single text but also across time in various versions by different artists on intertextual and metatextual levels. Intertextuality here mimics the temporal element of compulsive repetition in trauma which suggests not only acting out or traumatic memory, but also attempts at remembering, mastering, and perhaps working through it. In addition, the frequent intertextual returns not only show how trauma in a previous text haunts later generations of writers but also act as meta-narrative comments on the unavailable experience of the precedent work. On the one hand, the repeated returns signal attempts to come to terms with the trauma textually so that the cycle of repetition can come to an end. On the other, these works also implicate the reader to remember these incest narratives as a

form of cultural memory, to not let the trauma fall below the horizon of consciousness or be forgotten.

While *A Thousand Acres*'s intertextual references explored in the first half of this study correspond to the temporal aspects in contemporary understanding of trauma, Part II "Trauma's Space: Landscape, Corporeality, and Textuality" explores instead the spatial aspects of how modern critical theorists define traumatic experience and its representation, and thus changes the temporal focus of the study into a spatial perspective. (In reality there is no such sharp division between the temporal and the spatial aspects of traumatic experience as in the division into the two parts of the present work; rather, as trauma can be said to take place precisely between time and space the two converge.) With specific reference to Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, the second half of this present work seeks to explore the representation of trauma through references to space – geographical, bodily, and textual. This part reconsiders Caruth's definition of trauma as a spatial dislocation of the psyche in connection to Geoffrey Hartman's commentaries on memory place and in relation to a more physical or corporeal dimension of traumatic experience expounded in contemporary scientific and theoretical discourses on trauma, in dialogue with ecocriticism, a juxtaposition that Smiley's novel appears to demand. Redefining the relation between trauma and space thus, this Part contends that trauma in literature is acted out and possibly worked through not just intertextually through references to time but also through spatial references. Before putting theory into practice, however, it is first necessary to introduce the specific relationship between trauma's time and intertextuality, or trauma's repeated appearance in literary representations across time.

PART I TRAUMA'S TIME AND INTERTEXTUALITY

[T]rauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on.

— Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 1996

Trauma [...] does not fit into a single story, cannot simply be recounted and left behind; instead, it must be retold endlessly.

— Kathryn Robson, *The Inscription of Trauma in post-1968 French Women's Life-Writing*, 2004

This study focuses Part I on the representation of trauma in the context of traumatic temporality or history, examining memory and narrative in connection to intertextuality. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, the question of the relationship between memory, historicity, and narrative was central to the inception of trauma studies in Freud's early theories and has become a rapidly expanding major concern in the humanities today. If trauma is disruptive of temporality, what is the relation between the past, the present, and the future in trauma, and how can this relationship be represented? This first half of the present thesis explores what can usefully be termed intertextual trauma fiction as a form of subversive cultural memory and critical tool that also engages the reader, who is encouraged not only to read intertextually, but also implicated to remember.

With the burgeoning interest in trauma in recent years by such literary scholars as Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman, the study of memory – previously the province of psychology – has entered the field of literary research. Over the past twenty-five years or so literary studies have increasingly focused on representations of memory, a concept that takes on a different meaning in a context of trauma. Today the concept of trauma links the twin notions of memory and history⁴⁸ to literature so that historiography and literary studies meet in an attempt to recover and narrate long forgotten and repressed events of the past that need to be storied, worked over, and remembered. The emphasis on the skewed temporal structure of experience in trauma theory, inherited from Freud's concept of *Nach-*

⁴⁸ Memory and history are often understood in dichotomous terms. For a brief discussion on the relationship between the two, see Douglass and Vogler (2003: 18-19).

träglichkeit – which describes a temporally disruptive direction of remembering involving the reworking and re-interpretation of previously forgotten memory traces – represents a profound challenge to traditional notions of memory and narrative, one that both complicates and remodels the way historicity and causality is viewed. An epistemological crisis with a curious temporal structure, trauma destroys conventional ideas of memory, narrative, and history as we have come to know them, defying traditional epistemological constructions and narrative frames, as well as putting into question more conventional ways of interpretation. In other words, trauma has a time of its own, “trauma’s time,” as Aimee Pozorski calls it, the “belatedness of trauma itself” (2006a: 71). Traumatic reference indicates a complicated relation to remembering the past, temporalizing representation. The implications for literature are that trauma arises as verbal slippages between the text, the past, and the real world: literary works that bear witness to trauma are often characterized by re-enactment expressed through repetitive and other traumatic symptoms and aftereffects pointing to their origin not only – or sometimes not at all – within the text but often outside, that is, intertextually to other texts. This first part will discuss intertextuality in relation to trauma’s time with specific reference to Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* and its intertextual connections to *King Lear* and the folkloric tales behind Shakespeare’s play, as well as other contemporary returns to the same story by The Women’s Theatre Group & Elaine Feinstein, Mairi MacInnes, Margaret Atwood, Lucy Ellmann, Valerie Miner, and Ann Tyler, and Laura Esquivel.

In the introduction to her edited work, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Cathy Caruth emphasizes a non-linear and an unchronological relation to memory that is both haunting and literal. Her point of departure for reconsidering the connection between trauma and history is the second chapter of Freud’s “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920), where he describes the belated effects of experiences from World War I trench warfare, comparing them with accident neurosis:

Now it is a distinctive feature of the dream-life of patients with traumatic neurosis that it repeatedly takes them back to the situation of their original misadventure, from which they awake with a renewed sense of fright. People have shown far too little surprise at this phenomenon [...] To take it for granted that night-time dreams automatically thrust them back into the situation that provoked their illness would be to misunderstand the nature of dreams. (2003b: 51)

According to Caruth, Freud is taken aback by how the trauma is unwittingly and hauntingly repeated in the dream in its literal, rather than in an unconsciously disguised, form. Basing her understanding on the neurobiological scientist Bessel van der Kolk’s recent findings on dissociation, and the literal nature of traumatic

recall (see, e.g., van der Kolk and Lisa Fisler 1995; van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995), Caruth suggests that the failure of understanding at the heart of trauma and the consequent literal and repetitive quality of traumatic remembering bespeaks a possession by a history that was not grasped or registered as it occurred but which belatedly and unbiddingly returns in the form of flashbacks and compulsive behavior whereby the traumatized individual unconsciously tries to grasp the traumatic event. This repetitive and literal quality lends the whole experience an aura of being hounded: “To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (1995a: 4-5). “It is this *literality* and its insistent return,” she notes, “which thus constitutes trauma” (1995a: 5, italics in original).⁴⁹ For Caruth, there is a “delay or incompleteness in knowing, or even in seeing, an overwhelming occurrence that then remains, in its insistent return, absolutely *true* to the event” (1995a: 5, italics in original). The past is not directly accessible and so cannot be known as a completely owned experience, only endlessly repeated as it makes itself known and felt through largely unmediated repetitions or temporal disruptions. In her formulation, “[t]he traumatized [...] become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (1995a: 5). Thus, for Caruth, history is only accessible indirectly through belated deferral, and as trauma, as it were.

To further illustrate her point, Caruth also turns in her introduction to Freud’s late work *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), where he developed his temporal theory by drawing parallels between the structure of the history of the Jews and traumatic processes in the individual. Freud observes here that the traumatic event returns after a “latency” period as “the return of the repressed” (1967: 84, 164):

It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or

⁴⁹ For a discussion and detailed critique of van der Kolk’s theory as well as of Caruth’s stance, see especially chapters 7 and 8 respectively in Ruth Leys’s *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000: 229-297). One of the problems is not only that, as she sees it, Caruth conflates the veridical and the literal but also that van der Kolk’s theory is built on a shaky foundation of weak scientific evidence. What is more, Leys warns that there is no way of disproving his and Caruth’s claim that traumatic memories are literal and unrepresentable: “if – as van der Kolk and Caruth argue – testimony about the past is necessarily a misrepresentation, then any claim to discover in the traumatic repetition, including the traumatic nightmare and flashback, a content other than that of the literal imprint, has to be viewed as the falsifying effect of a desire to narrate or represent the truth of a traumatic origin that is inherently and constitutively exempt from all such representation – which is also to say that their theory of trauma is *immune to refutation*” (2000: 253, original italics).

whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a “traumatic neurosis.” This appears quite incomprehensible and is therefore a novel fact. The time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the “incubation period,” a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease [...] It is the feature one might term *latency*. (1967: 84, original emphasis)

Emphasizing the belated structure that inheres in traumatic experience, Caruth points out that it “is not so much the period of forgetting that occurs after the accident, but rather the fact that the victim of the crash was never fully conscious during the accident itself: the person gets away, Freud says, ‘apparently unharmed’” (1995a: 7). Thus, trauma can only be experienced in and through latency: “The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself” (1995a: 7-8). In other words, that which impresses Caruth most here is not the incomprehensibility and the unassimilable nature of its impact. *A contrario*, it is the relay or *belated* effect of the shock that re-surfaces in flashbacks or dreams, in effect, the intrusion of the experience of trauma into the quotidian life of the traumatized individual in the sense that that which was not known continuously haunts survivors, truncating their diurnal lives. In this traumatic repetition, the past is relived in the present as it were.

In her description of trauma’s effect on history, Caruth shows her indebtedness also to Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s contemporary theorizations, which are, in turn, influenced by Freudian notions of temporality. To quote Laub, who, highlighting the temporal aspect of traumatic experience, observes how survivors are caught in a past which irrupts into and contaminates the here and now:

Trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect. The survivor, indeed, is not truly in touch with either the core of his traumatic reality or with the fatedness of its reenactments, and thereby remains entrapped in both (1992: 69).

The emphasis on the words “fatedness,” “reenactments,” and “entrapped” underscore the hounding of the individual by the event rather than the agency of the survivor. Trauma belongs to what Freud called “the timelessness of the unconscious” (Freud 2001: 11): “unconscious psychic processes are in themselves ‘timeless’. This primarily means that they are not temporally ordered; that time does not alter them in any way; and that the notion of time cannot be applied to

them” (2003b: 67). The time of trauma is trifurcated: it is not merely a horrid event sealed off in the past but it is something which inundates present life stories, and forecloses a future. Pozorski puts it precisely: “After a traumatic event, there appears to be neither a before nor after. The time of trauma is what comes after. And before” (2006a: 71). Thus the saying “the past is never the past” never seems as true as when it comes to trauma, which is found oscillating between past, present, and future in a kind of non-time or in-between-time.

Traumatic memory narratively structures Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres*, which represents the temporal problem of trauma regarding memory and narrative in terms of the return of the repressed or latency on different levels. First, it bespeaks a traumatic time warp, enacting a case of latency within the text itself, both on a thematic and a structural level. An incubation period is incorporated into the narrative structure, as the novel’s central theme, the sexual abuse which the main character and narrator Virginia Cook Smith (Ginny) and her sister Rose Cook Lewis suffered at the hands of their father Larry twenty years earlier, is not told in diegetic terms until halfway through the book. Instead, the novel initially gives the appearance that their lives on the farm “seemed secure and good” and that Ginny just “had stopped thinking about the past” (2004a: 5, 136). Yet, although she does not consciously remember that she was incest-abused at fifteen, Ginny has not succeeded in completely confining the trauma to oblivion. Smiley’s writing is structured around the temporally dualistic nature of latency; it points to the past to forebode what will be revealed in the future, and therefore the novel has a double temporal structure: the plot unfolds in the present where events take place in a chronological order, but Ginny is helplessly stuck in the past, not fully present in the present, which is indelibly marked by the past, so that fragments of that past repeatedly irrupt into the novel’s chronology. Until revealed, the spectre of the absent past functions as a haunting presence in the form of implicit references to the experience, thus creating a compulsive repetitive effect, hounding not only Ginny but also the other characters in various ways. It is not until half-way through the novel that the sexual abuse is mentioned for the first time, by Rose, and finally two-thirds into the novel Ginny has an abreaction of the trauma (Smiley 2004a: 228), which tellingly demonstrates that the psychic time of trauma is always belated.

However, the return of the repressed emerges and operates also on an intertextual level in Smiley’s narrative, which harks back to Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and the folktales behind it, and thus encourages a reading between texts. Most critics and reviewers have discussed some of the novel’s intertextual relations, mostly those to *Lear* (see, e.g., Keppel 1995; Strehle 2000; Schiff 1998; Brauner 2001; Leslie 1998; Alter 1999; Mathiesson 1999), but also to other texts such as the Alger

myth (Amano 2005)⁵⁰ and the classic myth of Demeter and Persephone (Carr 2000a). However, so far, save for this present study, there appears to be no previous analysis of *A Thousand Acres* as primarily a trauma narrative. Thus, it would appear that an intertextual approach to the novel limits its focus. This is not the case. The present work argues that rather than being constricting in scope, viewing the novel through the lens of intertextuality instead can precisely reinforce a focus on trauma; Smiley's rewriting of *Lear* and the folktales behind it signals a metatextual return to an instance of trauma in these preceding works. It can hence be argued that Smiley's novel demonstrates conformance with a structural expression of trauma.

Since Freud many writers – caught in the tension between remembering and forgetting intrinsic to trauma as a phenomenon as well as to its theorization and history – have returned to traumatic moments in our culture in an effort to work through these events. In the words of Pozorski:

A recipient of the 1930 Goethe Prize, a prestigious German literary award, Freud set in motion not simply a traumatic theory of trauma, but several generations of writers within this traumatic history as well – all writers who unwittingly happen upon repeated representations of traumatic events even as we try to heal from them, or even forget. Literary events among authors in this tradition betray a sense that they, too, are trying to come to terms not only with Freud's ideas, but also the implications of these ideas: implications for understanding the alienating effects of trauma itself. (2006a: 74)

Today, different writers return to traumatic events; sometimes one and the same author returns to the same traumatic moment across a single body of work, and sometimes different artists return to the same traumatic event, which means that these works perform traumatic memory in the form of repetitions of missed literary events of trauma on a meta-literary level. While psychoanalysts such as Freud, psychiatrists, and sociologists periodically may have shied away from research into trauma, artists have abidingly, albeit often obliquely so in the case of incest, returned to and explored traumatic experiences in an attempt to make sense of them. Jane Ford aptly says about literary depictions of incest, “creative artists will always be recognized as the precursors of subsequent explorers of the subject” (1998: 17). Whereas tragedies in the past examined situations *in extremis*, as is evident from the time of the ancient Greeks to Shakespeare and Jaco-

⁵⁰ The Alger myth is a criticism of the rags-to-riches theme communicated in the later part of the nineteenth century in the US through the books for young males by Horatio Alger Jr. The stories have traditionally been described as emphasizing a valiant struggle against poverty and adversity to finally realize the American Dream, a promise of prosperity and success.

bean drama, in modern times the tragic plays of the past are in great measure replaced by trauma literature. This study argues that Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, along with other contemporary versions of the same *Lear* fable, constitute examples of intertextual re-enactment by different artists and authors to a missed or repressed traumatic situation – father-daughter incest – thus demonstrating the recurrent force of incestuous trauma. Smiley herself also distinguishes her writing of *A Thousand Acres* from her previous non-traumatic books on account of a “sense of an impersonal relationship to the novel [...] unlike what you may call the afterbirth of any of my previous novels”; she “found it difficult to write” and says that “it wasn’t dear to me” (1999: 174). The chapters of the present part of this study explore the implications of trauma’s time for representing trauma intertextually.

In *Image-Music-Text* (1977) Roland Barthes famously described the plurality and interconnectedness of any given text as “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash [...] a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture” (1977a: 146). This definition of intertextuality⁵¹ encompasses the notion that all texts are inter-texts, relational, and “*already read*” (1977b: 160). In this study, the concept more narrowly denotes texts that present the reader with a specific and familiar group of plot elements, characters, narrative structures, and storylines, or that simply return to an earlier source text.

Intertextuality shares a structurally temporal characteristic with trauma; like trauma, it “is profoundly disruptive of temporality” (Whitehead 2004: 91), and is given new significances in a context of trauma fiction where, as Anne Whitehead astutely puts the point, “[i]ntertextuality can suggest the surfacing to consciousness of forgotten or repressed memories” (2004: 85). The Barthesian “death of the author” and the birth of the “modern scriptor” changes temporality:

The temporality is different. The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an *after* [...]. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*. (Barthes 1977a: 145, original italics)

⁵¹ Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes are credited with developing the concept in France in the 1960s, Kristeva being the originator of the term “intertextuality” itself. For an excellent overview of intertextuality in English, see Allen (2001).

The articulation of the text, according to Barthes, paradoxically appears in a permanent or continuous present-tense. Thus the time of intertextuality profoundly ties in with the seemingly unending present of trauma's time.

Intertextuality is often found in trauma fiction. According to Whitehead, intertextuality is even "a key stylistic device" of this kind of literature (2004: 89). Intertextual fiction may, for instance, emphasize the atemporal nature of trauma by dissolving temporality in the narrative, highlight traumatic repetition by closely following the movement of previously known stories so that a character seems inescapably stuck in his or her suffering and fated to a repetition of a pre-existent narrative, that is, a victim of an ineluctable fate (Freud's repetition-compulsion), or it can comment on previous works by changing the source text in major ways, making it possible to imagine another destination or ending for the characters (Whitehead 2004: 89-90, 94).

In addition to Smiley's novel, intertextuality is a frequent presence in works by such authors as Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison, who may draw on previous trauma narratives or even earlier characters from their own corpus for their stories. As Whitehead has pointed out, Morrison refers to the character Beloved from the novel that carries her name in the figure of Wild in *Jazz* "in order to suggest that the former was not exorcised at the close of the previous novel and has returned to haunt succeeding generations": "Through intertextual reference to her own fiction, Morrison reveals that the trauma of slavery has not been laid to rest but resurfaces in the lives and actions of the protagonists" (2004: 85). The "forgotten" trauma of sexual abuse, too, is widely felt today and emerges in Morrison's fiction as a powerful symbolic analog or strategy of metaphorization vis-à-vis slavery: Morrison intertextually refers to the molested daughter Pecola from her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) in the eponymous main character of *Beloved* (1987) in the scene where Paul D in a symbolic rape "touch[es]" Beloved's "inside part" (1987: 117), proposing in this way that Pecola returns to hound the protagonists in a later narrative, to draw a startling and shocking parallel between violated daughters and fathers violated by slavery.⁵² In other words, Morrison suggests what the incest-abused African-American protagonist Precious in Sapphire's debut book *Push* (1996) comes to understand; "we is a nation of raped children," and indeed also "the black man in America today is the product of rape" (Sapphire 1997: 68-69, 69). In fact, one of the most powerful dimensions of

⁵² In representative terms, the figure of Beloved is strongly redolent of Pecola as is evidenced by the way in which the narrator in *The Bluest Eye* on the novel's penultimate page refers to Pecola as "beloved," and to Pecola's father Cholly as "the one who loved her enough to touch her" (1990: 163).

Morrison's work is her ability to link or even synthesize different forms of oppressions such as colonial, racist, or sexist and their resulting traumas. Chapter 4 of this thesis discusses intertextual relations in a traumatic context between Atwood's *Cat's Eye* (1989) and *The Robber Bride* (1993).

The poststructuralist formulation of intertextuality, which entails the notion that the creation of texts is social, collective, and relational, powerfully resonates with Caruth's conception of traumatic experience/memory as one which cannot be locatable in any one individual but instead implicates all of us. The Author, a modern capitalist construct as Barthes (and Michel Foucault)⁵³ has shown, was born in modern times with the notion of "originality" in print culture (see Ong 1982: 133). Rather than the product and property of a single authorial subject, Barthes's notion of textuality is "woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages (what language is not?), antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony" (1977b: 160).⁵⁴ In addition to the plurality of voices within the text itself, intertextual narratives engage the readers, leaving it to them to supply the significance of the story and the relation between the various texts. As John McLeod notes of intertextual literature: "A re-writing often implicates the reader as an *active agent* in determining the meanings made possible by the dialogue between the source-text and its re-writing" (qtd. in Whitehead 2004: 93, italics in original). In trauma fiction that draws on intertextuality, too, as Whitehead observes, it is up to the reader to "fill in the gaps of the text and to actively assemble meaning" (2004: 94).

While some feminist critics have had problems with accepting poststructuralist notions of de-authoring the text, others have embraced them. Nancy Miller argues that women cannot afford to do away with authorial agency because this also does away with the question of female subjectivity, and thus the possibility of discussing issues of gender. In addition, she argues that the Barthian notion of "already read" has not been accessible to women in our literary tradition (Allen 2001: 154-159). For others, such as Elaine Showalter, instead of looking for a specific feminine way of writing or an *écriture féminine*,⁵⁵ Bakhtinian theories of the dialogic nature of discourse offer a critical lens through which to discern women's voices

⁵³ See Foucault's "What is an Author?" from 1969 (1998).

⁵⁴ By drawing on Kristeva's writing on Bakhtin, Barthes develops the concept of the stereophonic, the idea of multiple voices in all writing (Allen 2001: 72).

⁵⁵ *Écriture féminine* originated in the 1970s France and refers to a feminist theory, which favors a cyclical and non-linear mode of writing based in experience rather than in language in opposition to, and to signal its difference from, masculine writing. The term was first used in 1975 in Hélène Cixous's "Le rire de la méduse" ("The Laugh of the Medusa") (see Cixous 1980).

“within patriarchal culture and society” and a place “to begin exploring the manner in which the writing of women, along with other marginalized groups, is always a mixture of available discursive possibilities” (Allen 2001: 160; see also Showalter 1988). Similarly, the Barthesian idea of the stereophonic, which can be seen as overlapping with the Bakhtinian double-voiced discourse, would include also women’s writings within the patriarchist/male literary tradition and so also offer a critical focus through which to recognize the blended discursive nature of this marginalized writing.

The question of female authorial agency also resonates with feminist concerns regarding personal memories of sexual abuse in father-daughter incest tellings. In recent years, there has been a myopic or one-sided focus on the individual in telling incest to the exclusion of a feminist politics of sexual abuse and an analysis of “the *trauma* of incest” (Kilby 2007: x, emphasis added). The speaking out about incest that was emphasized in the radical feminism of the 1970s has “become an end in itself,” as Louise Armstrong, puts it (qtd. in Kilby 2007: viii-ix). In a similar vein, Marita Sturken argues that “[d]iscourses of the political have [...] been replaced by formulas of individual oppression and fulfillment” (1999: 241).⁵⁶ Recognizing Caruth’s efforts to “get beyond privileging the individual as the site of trauma,” Jane Kilby emphasizes the need to move away from this individualistic focus on personal memory in speaking out about sexual abuse to a more collective approach, simply because traumatic experience forecloses authorial subjectivity (2007: 5). Rather than stay with the individual testimony, she suggests the need “to establish a sense of common reality” and from there discuss “radical solutions or collective strategies for change,” or rather, the possibility for change (2007: 114). This view does not efface personal experiences of trauma, as Barthes’s formulation of intertextuality does not imply that there are no individual authors. Even Barthes himself “writes of a certain desire *for* the author” (Allen 2001: 75, original emphasis). As no texts are uninfluenced by, but rather a mixture of, references from other texts, instead of not being heard, marginalized voices are being heard together in a multi-voiced discourse. Thus intertextuality resonates with Caruth’s notion of trauma in which the trauma of one individual “is tied up with the trauma of another” (Caruth 1996a: 8), in the same way as one text is always tied up with other texts. In intertextual trauma fiction these aspects converge.

⁵⁶ According to Marita Sturken, “[t]he recovery movement [...] demonstrates the ways in which the political is increasingly considered to be harmful in late twentieth-century American culture” (1999: 241).

“Appropriation” is a key word here both in relation to intertextuality and trauma. In an intertextual context the term is sometimes seen in a negative light; Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier note that textual “appropriation” evokes notions of “hostile takeover, a seizure of authority over the original” (2000: 3). In trauma discourse, charges of appropriation in the sense of co-opting someone else’s lived trauma have been raised in connection to Shoshana Felman’s and Dori Laub’s work. Laub’s notion of testimony, whereby the therapist “comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself” (1992: 57), has made Kali Tal wary of what she believes to be Laub’s failure to differentiate between secondary traumatism⁵⁷ and a survivor’s first-hand experience (Tal 1996: 56-58). Both Tal (1996: 54-56) and Deborah Horvitz (2000: 20-21) caution against what they feel is Felman’s conflation of primary and vicarious trauma in her famous graduate seminar class where she compared her students’ distress at watching videotaped interviews with Holocaust survivors in the Yale collection with the trauma of first-hand survivors and describing the experience as the “*break[ing] the very framework of the class* (and thus emerg[ing] outside it)” (Felman and Laub 1992: 48, italics in original).

However, as texts can no longer be considered the original utterance of individual writers, so individual survivors cannot be thought of as the owners of a particular trauma. As Jane Kilby asserts;

we can no longer afford thinking about testimony as the property of the survivor, as her testimony and her testimony alone. For it is only *if* we figure trauma as entering ‘the representational field as an expression of personal experience’ as Jill Bennett argues, that the question of its vulnerability to ‘appropriation, to reduction, and to mimicry’ arises in the first instance (2007: 38, emphasis in original).

In a similar manner, it is only when we figure texts to be wholly the pure expression of an individual author that issues of appropriation in its most pejorative sense are raised. “[H]istory, like trauma,” Caruth observes, “is never simply one’s own,” but “that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas” (1996a: 24). In other words, one person’s past/trauma connects up with that of another’s and so belongs to us all.

⁵⁷ Secondary or vicarious trauma refers to the effects that can occur to individuals who witness traumatic situations second-hand in real life or through the media, film, or literature, or to those who work with or listen to trauma survivors’ accounts of traumatic events. Symptoms include but are not limited to headaches, withdrawal from others, changes in sleep patterns, sadness, and problems with memory. (See, e.g., Kaplan 2005: 39-41)

Perhaps nowhere is this notion of timelessness, intertextuality, and collective (re)telling as clearly present as in the folk tradition. In the field of folklore originality and ownership of texts as well as unified authorial identity are constantly being challenged. The folkloric scholar Stephen Benson makes clear that twentieth century literary criticism's concerns with "the questioning of ideas of authorship, the work and the text, and theories of intertextuality" all "find parallels in the traditions of the folktale" (2003: 21; see also 252, n. 6). Folk and fairy tales, like intertextual theories, undercut authorial and textual autonomy. Fairy tales "are determinedly and openly 'intertextual' and 'stereophonic'" (Harries 2001: 17). One tale does not speak with a single voice and requires the participation of the auditor/reader. In addition, fairy tales are intertextual narratives in the sense that they integrate the discourses not only of the authors and readers but also that of history itself. Chapter 2 of this study explores the connection between the folkloric *Lear* story and Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* in a context of trauma's time and intertextuality.

Barthes's description of the plurality and atemporality of the text in terms of a weaving symbolism – every text is like a piece of fabric, spun of a multi-yarn of references, combined with, and modifying, threads from other texts in the here and now – also resonates with the temporality of traditional storytelling as weaving or spinning tales from the past into the future: the Latin etymology of the word "fairy" – *fata* – refers to a goddess of destiny which means that fairies, like goddesses, have full knowledge of the past as well as the future and so can "foretell events" (Warner 1995: 15). Isidore of Seville famously describes the pagan notion of the three Fates in relation to the tri-partite division of time as spinning on a distaff onto which the past is "already spun," the present is "drawn between the spinner's fingers," and the future is to be found in the "wool twined on the distaff," and "must still be drawn out by the fingers of the spinner onto the spindle, as the present is drawn to the past" (qtd. in Warner 1995: 15). However, even as the boundaries between the three times bleed in trauma into an ongoing present, so the Sybil, "as a cross-cultural symbol" of storytelling, is not bound by, but abrogates, temporal difference; her stories "apply to the rolling present whenever it occurs" (Warner 1995: 71).

In the folk narrative tradition, storytelling is connected to collective memory,⁵⁸ repetition, and witnessing with significant bearings on the representation and

⁵⁸ "Collective memory" or "collective remembering" in this study refers to shared and transmitted cultural and collaborative constructions of imaginative and/or factual events by a particular group or society through for instance storytelling. Often this kind of creating a history of one's own is done to mitigate or neutralize and commemorate painful experiences.

reading of trauma. Folktales are iterable and formulaic. As Maria Tatar observes; “Reading fairy tales from the world over, one is struck time and again by a feeling of *déjà lu* or *déjà entendu*” (1987: 63-64). This continuous repetition aids in remembering.⁵⁹ Oral folktales were in the past spaces for a form of collective remembering: “collective memory was constructed over time and stored in ritual forms of repetition such as prayers and memorial ceremonies, common stories or myths, and thus given what Pierre Nora calls a ‘memory-place’ (*lieu de mémoire*)” (Douglass and Vogler 2003: 17). Narrating traumatic events aided in mitigating loss by (re)creating memory in the teller and listener alike as performative remembering, a form of bearing witness to individual or collective memories, the witnessing itself taking place in the repetition and transmission of stories between the teller and the audience. As pointed out by Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler, “Witness must be repeatable, even tautological; it exists in fact *as* repetition and echo, in a series of recurrences at the same level of intensity [...] Active repetition is crucial to witness, a practice made urgent by the continuous danger of forgetting.” (2003: 44) The relation between listener and teller/text points to the ethical imperative and function of the storytelling process.

Today the memorialization and witnessing function of folklore has to some extent been recovered by contemporary intertextual trauma fiction where the modern reader replaces the hearers of yore. Chapter 2 of this study, “*A Thousand Acres* and *Lear*’s Folkloric Analogs: “Incestuous Fathers”,” will explore Smiley’s re-creative return to the traumatic event of incest in the repressed narratives behind *Lear* readable in the light of Freud’s alleged abandonment of the seduction theory, arguing that her use of the intertextual relations to the folk material suggests the recovery of repressed or forgotten traumatic memories of sexual abuse within the novel itself as well as in our storytelling and literary tradition and our culture. Moreover, her retelling emphasizes a link between the need for repetition – inherent in the folk narrative tradition – and the purpose of remembering a trauma, which is then preserved in the form of cultural memory.⁶⁰ This will be more fully

⁵⁹ As Walter Ong points out, “The entire oral noetic world or thought world relied upon the formulaic constitution of thought. In an oral culture, knowledge, once acquired, had to be constantly repeated or it would be lost” (1982: 23-24).

⁶⁰ Marita Sturken, too, in her essay “Narratives of Recovery: Repressed Memory as Cultural Memory,” draws parallels between fictional recovered-memory narratives and cultural memory. She believes that the spread of contemporary recovered memory narratives “in popular psychology books, TV talk shows, television movies, fictional depictions, and Internet discussion groups” turns individual rememberings into cultural memories simultaneously as these recalls “are entangled with other forms of cultural memory: scenes from old films, images from television movies, fragments of written texts, vague remembrances of history, episodes of *The X-Files*” (1999: 239). While the subject of cultural memory has primarily emerged in connection to studies on Holocaust trauma, where cultural remembering for obvious reasons is

discussed in Chapter 2. The retelling of repressed traumatic stories or events repossesses time and counteracts cultural amnesia by offering a place for remembering and witnessing. What is more, Smiley's allusions to the folk tradition also highlight the need for female retellings of marginalized tales of father-daughter incest and the reader's role as witness: since incest has often been suppressed by the patriarchal hands of male collectors, editors, and writers that have often dominated and presided over different versions of the tale behind *Lear*, the recovery itself of women's retellings as well as the demand for the reader to remember offers resistance to the dominant oppressive ideologies responsible for the censorship of the tales.

To intertextually recover, and to make valid and culturally visible crimes and sufferings that have often been negated in the past, signal the ethical and political function of contemporary intertextual trauma fiction such as Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres*. As bearers or receptacles of cultural memory, these stories become politicized as cultural narratives not only because they explore the psychic aftereffects of traumatic experience but also because they function as written documents of cultural memory and as such they challenge the "grand narratives" of history and enter into contentious areas of debate concerning the writing of history about what version to put into historical records. Many writers in the later part of the twentieth century have often employed intertextual activity in conjunction with feminist, psychoanalytical, postcolonial, post-structuralist, or Marxist theories, as a form of resistance to and critique of dominant cultural discourses of gender, sexuality, race or class (see Allen 2001). As was noted above, Whitehead has identified intertextuality as a strong feature of trauma fiction: "Intertextual resistance," she emphasizes, "can also take the form of critical dialogue with the author of the source text" (2004: 91). The tendency to recognize marginal characters and their narratives and to repossess their history is something which trauma fiction has in common with postcolonial literature, which struggles to bring a "forgotten" past to public awareness (see, for instance, Whitehead 2004: 82; Vickroy 2002: x).⁶¹ Here Caruth's insight into trauma's belatedness profoundly implicates intertextual trauma fiction: linking Caruth's definition in which the traumatic experience "is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (1995a: 8) to the temporally disruptive nature of intertextuality

crucial, Mieke Bal correctly points out that essays such as Sturken's exemplify how knowledge and critical terminology derived from its study in that context also have relevance for thinking about remembering sexual abuse (1999: xi).

⁶¹ Women are also now included in broadened definitions of "the colonized" together with "subjugated and oppressed classes, national minorities, and even marginalized or incorporated academic specialties" (Said qtd. in Vickroy 2002: 36).

itself, Whitehead suggests that “[w]riting in another place and at another time, the modern novelist is able to make fully evident that which was only partially available to the author of the source text” (2004: 92).

This study suggests that the intertextual novelist can not only presently make evident that which has not been fully known to, or realized by, the writer of the earlier text, but also critique, resist, and upset oppressive ideological power structures embedded in that previous text. Here Caruth’s emphasis on the inherent temporal disruption of trauma in her understanding of Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, which alludes to the potential of gaining mastery over earlier traumatic situations, profoundly ties in with American feminist poet Adrienne Rich’s political concept of “re-vision,” a political strategy for critically reviewing canonical narratives “afresh,” which counsels women to rewrite themselves into refashioned texts: “the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction [...] to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us” (1984: 35). In Chapter 3, “*King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres* as Simultaneously Present: Re-Writing *Lear*, Re-Writing Incest,” this study explores the intertextual connections between Smiley’s novel and Shakespeare’s play *King Lear*, arguing that in returning to the tragedy, Smiley’s text exposes what was not fully known, or merely dramatized covertly in *Lear*, but which was present in the folktales behind it – namely incest – in an effort to master and reinterpret a past traumatic literary moment in the simultaneity of trauma’s eternal or continuous present. Smiley follows Shakespeare’s play carefully in the initial part of her book where the eldest daughter Ginny/Goneril emerges as the return of the repressed from Shakespeare’s play and is depicted as trapped and suffering in a prior narrative, but reads it differently toward the end of the novel as she imagines an alternative future, showing how the daughter struggles to escape the limitations imposed on her in Shakespeare’s canonical work and its orthodox interpretations of her as evil. In other words, in *A Thousand Acres* the eldest daughter testifies to her own marginalization in Shakespeare’s drama and recovers her own traumatic story. Foregrounding the father’s abusive relationship with his daughters as well as its haunting repercussions, Smiley’s rewriting acts as a critical re-reading of power relations and oppressive social contexts in *Lear* which would not have had the same cultural meaning for an audience in Renaissance England: in debating with Shakespeare, Smiley’s novel shows that the patriarchal logic of the play determines the tragic outcome of both *Lear* and his daughters.

This literary return of repressed narratives and figures connects with the Freudian concept of “the uncanny” (from the German word *unheimlich*), which entails the coming back of something familiar or homely (*heimlich*) that has become es-

tranged for a period of time from the conscious mind through repression.⁶² The uncanny here overlaps with the sense of the demonic in repetition compulsion described by Freud in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” which he began writing immediately after finishing his essay “The Uncanny” (Whitehead 2004: 120).⁶³ McLeod observes of the emergence of marginalized characters in intertextual fiction, “At the limits of conventional knowledge, these figures return as disruptive ‘unhomely’ presences that cannot be articulated through existing patterns of representation” (qtd. in Whitehead 2004: 91). For Whitehead, “uncanny presences” in trauma fiction “have the potential to disrupt the binary logic on which colonialist, nationalist and patriarchal narratives depend” (2004: 91).

The context itself in which *A Thousand Acres* was written bears witness to an uncanny return of the repressed as Smiley was one of the first white contemporary American novelists to grapple with this difficult material at a time when incest was reappearing in public discourse after a decades-long latency period. In her overt treatment of a father-daughter incest theme, Smiley – along with authors such as Mary Gaitskill and Kathryn Harrison – follows in the footsteps of contemporary African-American women writers such as Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and Alice Walker, in bearing witness to a suppressed trauma in Western culture. This kind of recuperation of formerly marginalized historical realities points to the ethical function of Smiley’s testimony. In addition, Smiley’s literary return to what is a previously silenced trauma in literature and culture can also be said to signal her own re-enactive narrative attempt to come to terms in writing with the topic. As Whitehead observes, “[i]ntertextual writers necessarily produce works which are highly self-conscious and self-reflexive” (2004: 92). In *A Thousand Acres*, she not only struggles with Shakespeare’s play from Goneril’s viewpoint as a reaction to silenced voices in the male-authored literary canon, but also deals with the theme of incest itself on a cultural level.

The literary return to a moment of trauma indicates that this is a loss which has not been mourned. Caruth precisely describes traumatic re-enactments as a “repeated *possession*” of the traumatized individual (1995a: 4). Intertextual references in a text can allude to what has been lost, both on individual and collective levels. This includes depicting traumatic events that non-survivor novelists have

⁶² Freud’s first mentioning of the uncanny occurs already in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913), where it is used in connection with the meaning of taboo in the sense of “dangerous, forbidden, and unclean” in opposition to its meaning as “sacred, consecrated” (1998: 16).

⁶³ Freud links repetition compulsion to the uncanny in his 1919 essay “The Uncanny,” noting that “the fact that anything that can remind us of this inner compulsion to repeat is perceived as uncanny” (2003c: 145).

not themselves experienced directly, such as is the case with Smiley, who does not identify herself as a survivor of incest. As Whitehead observes, for such writers “[a] self-conscious use of intertextuality can introduce reflexive distance into the narrative” (2004: 92). That which is not known from a previous work, because it was missed, and thus has not been sufficiently claimed and worked over, returns to haunt authors to the point where they set up a similar scenario in a new text. This return in literary form resonates with traumatic temporality in that what was not understood at the time demands a belated acting out in Freudian terms. The re-exploration of trauma in the form of a literary repetition of the fateful experience offers some degree of textual working through for writer and reader alike as well as for the characters in the texts.

This study argues that not only Smiley but also other authors appropriating the same *Lear* fable constitute “writers who unwittingly happen upon repeated representations of traumatic events” (Pozorski 2006a: 74) – to use Pozorski’s words quoted earlier in this section – in this case to the same literary traumatic moment of father-daughter incest. The frequent return to the site of trauma indicates that this is something which is acted out rather than something which has been sufficiently made sense of and it can be said that the works themselves comment on a metafictional level on the unavailable experience in an apparent attempt to work through it. The fourth and last chapter of Part I of this study, “Ex-Centric Narratives: Other Contemporary Female-Authored *Lears*,” includes an overview of the play *Lear’s Daughters* (1987) by The Women’s Theatre Group & Elaine Feinstein, the novels *Cat’s Eye* (1988) by Margaret Atwood, *Sweet Desserts* (1988) by Lucy Ellmann, *Como agua para chocolate/Like Water for Chocolate* (1989/1992) by Laura Esquivel, *The Quondam Wives* (1993) by Mairi MacInnes, *A Walking Fire* (1994) by Valerie Miner, and *Ladder of Years* (1995) by Ann Tyler. Like Smiley these diverse writers tell ex-centric narratives from the perspective of marginalized female characters in *Lear*, thus de-centering and resisting Shakespeare’s patriarchal narrative and dominant cultural discourses of gender. However, aside from Smiley’s novel, only the play *Lear’s Daughters* actually depicts active father-daughter incest, which indicates that, although there is a return to the same source text, and sometimes also to the folktales behind it, representing incest may sometimes be about absence, about displacing or avoiding the topic. In other words, incest is materially absent or repressed but intertextually implied in these novels, only implied intertextually, as it were. Even textual acting out without actually dealing with the issue may have healing potential if read intertextually as resistance to forgetting the unclaimed literary trauma of the preceding text. This study next turns, however, to a narrative where father-daughter sexual abuse is present in the highest degree, namely to Smiley’s re-enactive return to the repressed incest tales behind *Lear*.

2 *A THOUSAND ACRES AND LEAR'S FOLKLORIC ANALOGS: INCESTUOUS FATHERS*

The kyng, which made mochel mone,
 Tho stode, as who saith, all hym one
 Without wyfe: but netheles
 His doughter, whiche was pereles
 Of bewtee, dwelt about hym stille.
 But whan a man hath welth at wille
 The flesh is freel and falleth ofte,
 And that this maide tendre and softe,
 Whiche in hir fathers chambre dwelte,
 Within a tyme wist and felte:
 For likyng of concupiscence,
 Without insight of conscience
 The father so with lustes blente,
 That he cast all his hole entente
 His owne doughter for to spille.
 The kyng hath leiser at his wille,
 With strengthe and whan he tyme seye
 The yonge maiden he forleie.
 And she was tender, and full of drede,
 She couth nought hir maydenhede
 Defende: and thus she hath forlore
 The floure, whiche she hath longe bore.

— John Gower, “The Story of Apollonius of Tyre”⁶⁴

Charles Perrault’s last verses of his tale “Peau d’Âne” (“Donkeyskin”) [1694],⁶⁵ a story in which a daughter is punished for resisting her widowed father who wants to marry her, state that “The tale of Donkeyskin is hard to believe” (qtd. in Warner 1995: 346). “Peau d’Âne” is a version of an old folk narrative – a story in the “Cinderella” cycle variously titled “Donkeyskin,” “Thousandfurs,” “Allerleirauh,” “Catskin,” “The Bear”⁶⁶ according to different extant versions and translations and classified thematically by folk scholar Jack Zipes (2001) as “incestu-

⁶⁴ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* [1554], book 8, 291-312, in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. 6, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 7 vols, 1966), 376-377.

⁶⁵ For Perrault’s story, see Zipes (2001: 38ff).

⁶⁶ This present study will use the name “Thousandfurs” for these tales in which a daughter flees her incestuous father: not only does this rubric beautifully sum up and cover all different kinds of fur such as cat, bear, and donkey, used by the heroine in the different variants of the tale, more importantly, it emphasizes the link to the title of Smiley’s novel, *A Thousand Acres*.

ous fathers” – that lies behind Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. This story can be traced at least as far back as to mediaeval times as in John Gower’s version (from which the epigraph to this chapter is borrowed). Its spread is one of repetition, repression, and return, as this chapter will make clear.

Perrault’s words mirror the history of disbelief that historically characterizes women’s incest tellings. Hortense Spillers puts the point accurately: “On one level of imagination incest simply *cannot* occur and never does” (1989: 158, original emphasis). Dominant socio-cultural parameters, operating both on conscious and unconscious levels, determine what is unthinkable as well as traumatic at a particular time and place, and so traumatic experiences have been frequently disclaimed. As Geoffrey Hartman puts it, “What is perceived to be traumatic or is strongly defined as such depends on the sensibility and norms of each society” (2003: 260, n. 8). Hence telling must follow a specific and comprehensible socially-defined format not readily available in a traumatic context. These claims for a specific paradigm act as what literary critic and survivor of sexual abuse Roberta Culbertson terms “cultural silencers” to non-narrative traumatic memories (1995: 170).

Difficulties of believing in the reality of traumatic recall emerge not only in relation to those listening to accounts of trauma but also to survivors themselves. Culbertson speaks of the seeming unreality of traumatic experience: “abused children [...] describe being in a golden light, in forests and castles, floating above themselves, being among the stars” (Culbertson 1995: 176). Traumatic memories have a dreamlike quality or “take on a cast of unreality,” Culbertson suggests, precisely because they are not stored as ordinary non-traumatic memories in narrative form (1995: 171). Instead of viewing post-traumatic numbness, dreams, and nightmares as non-real, as escapes from reality which they are usually viewed as, Culbertson sees them as “flights into the super-real” (1995: 188). This supernatural world contains pieces of reality mixed with fantasies, dreams, and stories. In the child’s mind, “the lines between life and death, ordinary and nonordinary reality or states of consciousness, and the inner and outer dimensions of existence are all more fluid than they become in later life” (1995: 181), causing the distinction between the two dimensions to blur.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ In Freudian terms, these are screen memories (*Deckerinnerung*). In his 1899 essay with the same name, he describes this phenomenon thus; “a memory, whose value consists in the fact that it represents thoughts and impressions from a later period and that its content is connected with these by links of a symbolic or similar nature.” This kind of memory, he continues, “owes its value as a memory not to its intrinsic content, but to the relation obtaining between this content and some other, which has been suppressed” (2003d: 15, 19).

Traumatic memory does not resurface in the same linear and organized way as ordinary memory, which can be straightforwardly expressed in words, and hence its truth value is frequently challenged. Traumatic memories resurface through the literal return of the traumatic encounter in the form of repetitive symptoms such as flashbacks and hallucinations that convey the trauma rather than through a coherent narrative. The traumatic repetitions establish a link between the past experience and the present time, a link that can only be expressed in re-enactments. These re-enactments raise questions for both interlocutors and survivors as to the truthfulness of the witnessing; does the experience belong to reality or fantasy? As Cathy Caruth puts it, “the fact that this scene or thought is not a possessed knowledge, but itself possesses, at will, the one it inhabits, often produces a deep uncertainty as to its very truth” (1995a: 6). Ever since Freud, the core issue in regard to trauma has been whether it originates in real occurrences or the individual’s fantasy life; as Ana Douglass and Thomas Vogler put it, “in witness/trauma discourse [...] each conceptual point on the map is a contested site” (2003: 2). Father-daughter incest tellings especially have historically been situated on the boundary lines between reality and fantasy, and have constantly been challenged and repressed.

The reception by Vienna’s psychiatric community of Freud’s first public enunciation of the seduction theory and the debate in the 1990s concerning so-called “false memories” poignantly bear out the connection between fact and fiction in discussions of trauma. Freud’s paper “The Aetiology of Hysteria” (1896), read before the Viennese Society for Psychiatry and Neurology in April 1896 was called “a scientific fairy tale” by the chair, neurologist Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing (qtd. in Masson 1985: 184), and in the following year Freud allegedly rewrote his “tale” as a story in which women’s symptoms rather than testifying to actual lived experiences were interpreted as bearing witness to their fantasy-life. Today, too, “the idea of incest as fantasy is often invoked to discredit the truth of narrations of incest and to call into question memories said to be conjured up in therapy” (Doane and Hodges 2001: 2), visible in the recovered memory and false memory syndrome schism at the end of the twentieth century where the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF) disputed memories of abuse recovered in therapeutic sessions as more fantasy than fact. In other words, it appears that the trauma of sexual abuse, by its very existence, blurs the margins between fact and fiction in public discourse.

Trauma, then, like fairy tales, can be said to occupy the interface between truth and fantasy. Although fairy tales frequently repeat real life circumstances and situations (Warner 1995: xix), in its most pejorative sense they denote a retreat from reality into a realm of fantasy and wish-fulfillment, “invention, the unrelia-

ble consolations of romance” (1995: 19). Similarly, despite studies that document sexual abuse against children as a serious and pervasive social problem, widespread attitudes about incest include the notion that it “happens more often in the fantasy life of individuals than it does in real life” (Doane and Hodges 2001: 2). This present work will not take sides in the debate, but recognizes that the true/false discussion also influences trauma fiction, not only in that many incest novels evoke fairy tales, but also in that these representations of trauma often take the form of latency. With Caruth this chapter argues that “[w]hile the insistence on the reality of violence is a necessary and important task, particularly as a corrective to analytic therapies that would reduce trauma to fantasy life,” in trying to determine whether trauma is situated within or without we may lose sight of Freud’s core understanding of trauma’s inherent belatedness (1995a: 8).

Sidestepping the true/false dichotomy of incest tellings and instead exploring memory and narrative in relation to trauma’s time through intertextuality, this study reads the contemporary recovery of previously repressed fairy tales⁶⁸ of incest as the enactment of an instance of the Freudian concept of latency or the return of the repressed on a metatextual level that signals the retrieval of cultural memory. This first chapter of Part I explores the intertextual link between Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* and the repressed incestuous fairy tales that lie behind Shakespeare’s *King Lear* as the recovery of previously repressed or forgotten memories of father-daughter incest not only within Smiley’s narrative but also in Western literary tradition and cultural plot. Fictions about incest, like Smiley’s story, are not bound by demands for truth claims, but can freely explore the relation between trauma’s time, memory, and narrative. This chapter suggests that Smiley’s narrative emphasizes the importance of recovering repressed narratives of paternal incest and of collectively remembering these as cultural memory, as a form of resistance against cultural forgetting. Before an identification of the ancient tale behind *Lear*, and a discussion and an interpretation of the intertextual relationship between Smiley’s story and the folk material can begin, however, the following section will provide the necessary specification of the relation, or seemingly diametrical opposition, between fantasy and reality in connection to trauma.

⁶⁸ It is inherently impossible to precisely classify various tales. For a discussion on the terms “fairy tale” and “folktale,” see Maria Tatar (1987: 33-34); see also William Bascom (1984: 7-8). Since the particular tale type focused on in the present study often includes elements of both fairy and folk, there will not be a sharp distinction between the terms in this study but they will be used more or less interchangeably with each other. The relation that will be of importance here is not between fairy tales and folktales but between reality and fantasy; the blurring of distinctions between fairy and folk echoes the bleeding borders between fact and fiction in telling trauma as cultural memory.

It will do so in the context of the return of repressed fairy tales of incest in our culture by exploring the history of repression and censorship of the “Thousand-furs” tale, readable in the light of Freud’s alleged disavowal of the seduction theory and contemporary discussions of this.

2.1 The Return of the Repressed: Recovering, Repeating, and Remembering (Folk)Tales of Father-Daughter Incest

Each night I am nailed into place
and I forget who I am.
Daddy?
That’s another kind of prison.
It’s not the prince at all,
but my father
drunkenly bent over my bed,
circling the abyss like a shark,
my father thick upon me
like some sleeping jellyfish.

—Anne Sexton, “Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty)”⁶⁹

In tandem with the rediscovery of sexual abuse in the late twentieth century, previously repressed fairy tales of incest have re-emerged in different modes and fields. Forgotten incest tales have appeared in fairy-tale scholarship such as the folklorist scholar, novelist, and historian Marina Warner’s study *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (1994), which is a recovery work of the female fairy-tale tradition in general, including female storytelling of incest tales; in psychological research on actual cases of sexual abuse such as Judith Lewis Herman and Lisa Hirschman’s *Father-Daughter Incest* (1981), which begins with an account of the story in which a father wants to marry his daughter to illustrate how the “subject [of incest] is entirely enmeshed [...] in myth and folklore” (1981, 2000: 3); and in contemporary literary incest retellings such as the Canadian author Loranne Brown’s debut novel *The Handless Maiden* (1998) – an imaginative retelling of the folktale of “The Maiden Without Hands” as a story of grandfather-granddaughter incest – and the novel which will be the special focus

⁶⁹ This quotation is from *The Complete Poems: Anne Sexton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982/1981), 290-295.

of this chapter, Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, a retelling of the "Thousand-furs" tale.

It is a Freudian commonplace that what has been repressed invariably returns, and whereas the contemporary retrieval of previously repressed folk texts of incest can be read in the context of a more general cultural critique subsumed into the field of a broader revisionist feminist agenda of commenting on dominant discourses of gender and of generally bringing marginalized female voices to light, it can also be read as an instance of the Freudian return of the repressed operating on a cultural level.⁷⁰ In his early writings, Freud links traumatic memory to the notion of *Nachträglichkeit* in hysteria such as in Draft K, "A Christmas Fairy Tale"⁷¹ – in which he describes the return of traumatic memory as "distorted [...] in time" "insofar as it relates to a contemporary or future action" (Masson 1985: 165). In the later *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud's case study of humankind, he argues that "all phenomena of symptom-formation can be fairly described as 'the return of the repressed'" (1967: 164) expounding on the idea in terms of cultural *anamnesis* or the collective reminiscence of past cultural events after a period of temporal delay or latency. Throughout his career, Freud preoccupied himself with how the return of the repressed constitutes the actual trauma that, according to Cathy Caruth's insight, takes the form of belatedness: "return is displaced by trauma" as the traumatic experience is not fully registered as it occurs, but is experienced only belatedly and somewhere else; for Caruth, the nature of traumatic experience excludes a reaction in the sense that repression bespeaks an intrinsic latency within the experience itself (1996a: 17). This chapter argues that the return of previously repressed incest tales after an incubation period has the appearance of memory retrieval in the sense that the recovery of old stories of incest denotes the recovery of traumatic memories thereof in our culture.

Incest is known to have become an important motif in literature in the Western world by the eleventh century (Zipes 2001: 26; see also Rank 1992: 315) and found expression in different early versions of the folktale that lies behind *Lear* –

⁷⁰ The word "repressed" or "repression" (*Verdrängung*) was first used as a psychoanalytical term in the meaning of defense in 1893 in Freud and Breuer's "Preliminary Communication" in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) (2001: 10, n. 1): "the patients have not reacted to a psychical trauma because the nature of the trauma excluded a reaction, as in the case of the apparently irreparable loss of a loved person or because social circumstances made a reaction impossible or because it was a question of things which the patient wished to forget, and therefore intentionally repressed from his conscious thought" (2001: 10). It is important to note, however, that intentionality here does not denote conscious intent but the presence of an unconscious motive (2001: 10, n. 1).

⁷¹ Draft K, "A Christmas Fairy Tale," was enclosed with a letter to Fliess of January 1, 1896 (see Masson 1985: 162-169).

the story of a daughter who resists her coercive father's demand for her hand in marriage – only to largely disappear in Western Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. In medieval times incest in this cluster of narratives was, along with fantastical elements, accepted as real in the supernatural world of the tale: “The tenor of the stories never questions the status of the plot as truth”; “the material is presented as matter of fact, however fanciful” (Warner 1995: 346). However, in the Romantic era, as the interest in the psychology and interior motives of fictional characters become increasingly important, the father's incestuous designs on his daughter were no longer readily and unquestioningly received, and so this tale type came to be culturally suppressed. As Marina Warner explains:

When interest in psychological realism is at work in the mind of the receiver of traditional folklore, the proposed marriage of a father to his daughter becomes too hard to accept. But it is only too hard to accept precisely because it belongs to a different order of reality/fantasy from [...] other magical motifs: because it is not impossible, because it could actually happen, and is known to have done so. It is when fairy tales coincide with experience that they begin to suffer from censoring, rather than the other way around. (1995: 349)

While magic had made “it possible to utter harsh truths, to say what you dare” by “disguising the stories' harshly realistic core” (1995: xvii), incest in wonder tales was no longer seen as a mere implausible motif among the rest in an enchanted realm, but as related to the real world outside the tale. The spell had been broken, as it were.

While censoring had in oral cultures been carried out by the receivers, that is, the narratees, of the tales (Tatar 1987: 152), it was now taken care of on an editorial level by those (read: males) in charge of the literary versions of these stories. In other words, the lurid tales in which the daughter is threatened by her concupiscent father were marginalized with one wave of the hand as it were by the collectors, editors, and writers that at the time dominated and presided over their production and transmission (see Warner 1995).⁷² Maria Tatar's research on the editorial and textual history of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Nursery and Household Tales*), *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales* (1987), shows how difficult it was for Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm to face the tales' “hard facts”

⁷² While there is a tendency to view the repression of the incest motif in fairy tales by editors and collectors as a conscious act of suppression of acknowledged criminal or morally deplorable acts, it should also be recognized that a patriarchal culture brings with it a blindness to certain forms of abuse.

of incest. While the two brothers “made a point of adding or intensifying violent episodes” in the tales, they removed completely or downplayed other motifs such as “incest and incestuous desire” (1987: 5, 8). In those cases where “incest constituted so essential a part of a tale’s logic that even Wilhelm thought twice before suppressing it,” he “resorted to weaving judgmental observations on the subject into the text,” such as in “Thousandfurs,”⁷³ where the father “may persist in pressing marriage proposals on his daughter throughout all editions,” but who, “by the second edition [...] receives a stern reprimand from his court councilors” (1987: 8).

The tale about the ardent father who wants to marry his daughter has survived in Europe, however, in a Christianized version as the martyrology of the seventh-century princess Saint Dymphna, whose official *Vita* was written in Flanders in the thirteenth century (ca. 1237-48). This hagiography begins with Dymphna, daughter of a king of Brittany, Ireland, secretly becoming a Christian. Soon, however, her mother dies and the king has to promise her that he will not marry again unless he finds a bride as beautiful as she is, whereupon after some time he announces his desire to marry his daughter. The princess escapes from her father, crossing the Irish Sea over to Belgium with the court fool and his wife, but her father finds and beheads her. She was fifteen years old. (Warner 1995: 335-337) The virgin martyr was canonized in the fifteenth century and is the patroness saint of the mentally ill, associated with miracles of curing insanity. The fact that the mentally ill were placed under the patronage of the martyred virgin who fled from her designing father has to do with a deep affinity between insanity and incestuous transgression in medieval thought (1995: 339). Today the Virgin Saint haunts the fringes of contemporary incest tellings such as in Kathryn Harrison’s adult father-daughter incest memoir, *The Kiss* (1997), where her *Vita* serves both as a point of identification and difference,⁷⁴ or in Ann-Marie MacDonald’s first novel *Fall on Your Knees* (1996), in which her *Life* constitutes one small part in a long process of

⁷³ For Grimm’s 1857 version, see Zipes (2001: 47ff).

⁷⁴ The narrator in Harrison’s novel initially identifies with the martyred Virgin – whom she read about at the age of ten when she received of her mother a set of *Lives of the Saints* (1998: 113) – and encloses the incestuous relation with her preacher father in a symbolics of sacrifice in an attempt at constructing some meaning: “I tell myself that if I give myself over to him to be sullied, then by the topsy-turvy Christian logic that exalts the reviled, I’ll be made clean [...] trusting in the ultimate goodness of God, and the way in which he sometimes takes unexpected and even repugnant forms, like beggars and lepers, like Saint Dymphna’s father. How could she have been martyred without him?” (1998: 165-166). Years after she has ended the incestuous liaison she visits the high altar that depicts the virgin’s Life – executed by Jan van Wavre in the sixteenth century and adorning the Church of Saint Dymphna in Gheel in Belgium – and emphasizes the difference between her and the saint: “I don’t let my father have [...] my life” (1998: 196).

storytelling through which repressed memories of father-daughter incest finally resurface.⁷⁵

The virtual disappearance of incest stories from fairy-tale collections coincides with the suppression of incest narratives of lived experiences in Western culture (Warner 1995: 347), and has a contemporary parallel in modern times not only in the FMSF movement but also in Freud's alleged recantation of the seduction theory. Warner astutely points out: "The history of Freud's momentous change of mind about the status of paternal incest echoes, in thought-provoking ways, the gaps in transmission of the Donkeyskin fairy tale" (1995: 349), that is, the "Thousandfurs" group of incest tales. According to Marina Warner, historically most tellers have been women, and medieval and later incest narratives have become important records reflecting women's social history from their own perspective (1995: 334). As such, incest narratives such as the one in which the daughter challenges the unlawful desires of her father "may contain memories of actual bodily violation" (1995: 344). Moreover, the telling of these (and other) stories, "either as a historical source, or a fantasy of origin, gains credibility as a witness's record of lives lived, of characters known" (1995: xix), and in the case of father-daughter incest tales, this storytelling becomes readable as testaments to women's traumas.⁷⁶

The case of Katharina from *Studies on Hysteria* would constitute an illustrative example of Freud's awareness of the complex relation between memory, reality, and fantasy that can also be linked to the fairy tales where the father wants his daughter's hand in marriage:

it is not squaring the circle to say that the 'Donkeyskin' type of story yields a common insight into minds and experiences of young women growing up, and into erotic fantasies on both sides, the father's and the daughter's, conscious as well as unconscious. And that, at the same time as reflecting

⁷⁵ In MacDonald's text, which, like *A Thousand Acres*, chronicles the recovery of memories of father-daughter incest in terms of the return of the repressed, one of the incestuous children in the family, Frances Piper, who was sexually abused by her father at six, enacts the hagiography of Saint Dymphna when playing with her non-abused sisters Mercedes and Lily: "They entered the world of 'The Children's Treasury of Saints and Martyrs' and each had their "favorites": fittingly, Frances "was Saint Dymphna, who had a father who wanted to do wrong with her" (2002: 234). MacDonald's novel emphasizes this kind of enactment and storytelling in the recovery of incest memories and focuses on Frances's memory coming back in pieces through the stories she tells.

⁷⁶ While telling incest fairy tales is indeed a testament to women's traumas, each telling gets a different emphasis and so they may also have a warning or admonitory function, drawing the line for what a particular society deems accepted behavior in a similar way as myths do.

Oedipal desires, the fairy tale expresses fears of actual incest and actual violation (Warner 1995: 350-351).

Even after Freud allegedly changed his thinking about the etiology of hysteria, he did not recant his account of Katharina's abusive experience or question its accuracy despite his having developed the Oedipus complex, which suggests that memories of incest originate in unconscious desires and repressed fantasies; instead Katharina "remains a contradictory figure in his case histories: an actual incestuous child" and "a telling reminder of the connective tissue that binds personal experience with fantasy narratives." (1995: 350). This particular case study can also be seen as a nexus between personal and public forgetting in terms of cultural memory.

The fairy-tale genre with its supernatural or dream-like nature significantly interlocks with the representation of traumatic memory. Roberta Culbertson's account of traumatic experience as dreamlike, as having "the logic of dreams" (1995: 170), connects with Warner's description of fairy tales as "a literature of dreaming rather than representation" (1995: 413). Although all fiction more or less demands a suspension of disbelief, it is the guiding principle of trauma fiction; trauma invariably involves imagining the unimaginable and so literary trauma requires the reader to believe the unbelievable, as it were. Therefore, the supernatural is prevalent in this kind of literature, including realist trauma fiction. Anne Whitehead puts the point that even "the realist novel is troubled by coincidences and fantastic elements which lurk just beneath the surface" (2004: 84). Allusions to fairy tales are frequently encountered in both fictional and more autobiographical incest tellings to convey a more super-real reality.⁷⁷

Also, the achronology of trauma's time in terms of the return of repressed incest fairy tales takes on a cast of supernatural haunting, of traumatic re-enactment on an intertextual level. Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* reproduces Freudian conceptions of trauma at thematic, structural, and intertextual levels in the sense that the same themes, images, and sequences reverberate internally throughout the novel as well as intertextually, thus creating connections in the reader's mind that may have the appearance of something uncanny or magical. Although Smiley does not

⁷⁷ Both Judith Lewis Herman (1994: 98) and Roberta Culbertson (1995: 176) have noted the "supernatural" language of Sylvia Fraser's memoir *My Father's House* (1987), in which the narrator continuously refers to fairy-tale settings and to herself as a fairy-tale princess such as Cinderella (see, e.g., Fraser 1989: 13, 84). Another example is Mary Gaitskill's debut novel *Two Girls, Fat and Thin* (1991), which shows the protagonist Dorothy Never, a father-daughter incest survivor, living in a Never-Never Land, isolated and repressed, in search of a belated mastery of her past.

use any supernatural language in her novel, frequent returns and repetitions of motifs, conditions, and sequences within her text, as well as across the folk narratives linked to the *Lear* material, simulate the *unheimlich* aftereffects of trauma. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, while this repeated telling may hold a significance of acting out rather than working through, apparently failing to offer the reader a way out of the cycle of repetition, the retelling also represents a more positive meaning in that it suggests a remembering, thus countervailing the danger of forgetting that characterizes the history of the spread of the “Thousandfurs” tale.

However, (re)telling father-daughter incest in a fairy-tale context is not without its problems. Feminists have for the last few decades been disenchanted with and critiqued – at first often in an oversimplified manner – the socializing and therapeutic function of fairy tales,⁷⁸ and drawn attention to the potentially precarious nature of female fairy-tale acculturation, arguing that women are acculturated into being passive and obedient and ultimately linking this gendered socialization to father-daughter incest.⁷⁹ In 1975 Hélène Cixous wrote in *Sorties* that the repetition of “*Il était une fois*” [“*once upon a time*”] hypnotizes women to a passive existence of sleep and a long wait for the prince: “Les belles dorment dans leurs bois, en attendant que les princes viennent les réveiller. Dans leurs lits, dans leurs cercueils de verre, dans leurs forêts d’enfance comme des mortes” (qtd. in Harries 2001: 138).⁸⁰ A few years later Florence Rush argued that “[t]he popular fairy tale [...] instructs [...] that each little girl suppress any healthy manifestation of individuality, strength and independence and urges her to blindly and humbly deliver herself to a man no matter how [...] unsuitable he may be” (1980: 107). While these early writings often focused on the presently familiar and classic fairy tales, critiquing a patriarchal system of ideals perceived as incorporated in the tales themselves (see, e.g., Lieberman 1972), second-wave feminism has fuelled more sophisticated feminist fairy-tale research oriented toward the tales’ textual history and sociocultural contexts, and has increasingly demonstrated the importance of

⁷⁸ Although challenges to prevailing ideas about gender in folk- and fairy tales are as old as the genre itself (Harries 2001; 16; Warner 1995; 411, 415; Haase 2004a; vii), it is only for the last forty-odd years that it is possible to talk about more systematic feminist fairy-tale research. For a critical history as well a contemporary map of feminist research on the fairy tale, see Donald Haase’s essay “Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship” (2004b).

⁷⁹ Child psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim belongs to those critics who favor a view of fairy tales as having a socializing function. In his *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), he speaks for the importance of reading fairy tales on a psychological level as communicating to children messages of moral and social behavior for shaping their identity and ensuring successful development.

⁸⁰ “Beauties slept in their woods, waiting for princes to come and wake them up. In their beds, in their glass coffins, in their childhood forests like dead women” (in Harries 2001: 138).

taking the printing and/or publishing history of the tales into account, and also of (re)exploring the history of the tales themselves, for instance by looking at the individual tales making up the various tale types to revise stereotypes (see e.g., Benson 2003: 167-246). One example is Ruth B. Bottigheimer, who has repeatedly emphasized in her research how in the Grimms' patriarchal hands the tales' female point-of-view of the classical versions ultimately shifted to a male one (Haase 2004b: 11), and in her study "The Transformed Queen" (1980) lays bare how Wilhelm Grimm's editorial changes successively weakened the female figure in tales such as "Allerleirauh" or "Thousandfurs." Similarly, Cay Dollerup, Iven Reventlow, and Carsten Rosenberg Hansen have observed how the independence, activity, and resourcefulness of the heroine in this tale diminished from the 1812 edition to the last 1857 version (1986: 24-25). Studies like these show that the best-known tales from abridged editions of fairy tales misrepresent many of the female characters, and that other character types exist in unabridged and earlier versions of the same tales.⁸¹

Sandra Gilbert claims in her essay "Life's Empty Pack: Notes toward a Literary Daughteronomy" that the paradigm for female development in patriarchal society is grounded in father-daughter incest, implied in such works as Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Christina Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children* (1940), and visible in "its most essential psychic outline" in Grimms' "Allerleirauh" (1989: 274): her argument hinges on a grammatical disparity in one equivocal line from the story in German⁸² that makes the daughter's father/king and suitor/king both psy-

⁸¹ What appears to be passivity can in a context of extremity also be "heroic." Kay Stone, who like other feminist fairy-tale scholars distinguished between passive and active heroines in the past, has rethought her definition of active as "heroic" to find that those female figures she once defined as "passive" or "persecuted" "were, in fact, heroic." As an example can be mentioned the female figure in "The Maiden Without Hands" who is "threatened by the devil, mutilated by her own father, sent into exile to suffer alone" and whom Stone previously referred to as "'Persecuted,' an example of the most abjectly abused of all heroines," but which she has recently come to view as "a resourceful woman who does not submit passively to her fate." (2004: 125). Note that this story, related to the narrative discussed in the present study, is available in versions that either depict a pact with the devil or an incestuous father. In the editorial history of the Grimms' fairy tales, Tatar has noted how the devil has at times come to stand in for the desiring parent such as in the case of "The Maiden without Hands," where the Grimms substitute the devil for the incestuous father in one version of the story, where a girl flees from her father's incestuous demands and is severely mutilated (has both her hands and breasts chopped off) for resisting him. The Grimms erased the opening paragraph and in its place introduced a "less sensational account of a pact with the devil," a plot element they had found in another version of the story. (Tatar 1987: 9-10) Stone obviously uses the variant where the incestuous father had been replaced with the devil and consequently does not treat it as a father-daughter incest tale.

⁸² This line occurs when the daughter enters a forest after having escaped her father's incestuous demands at home: "Da trug es sich zu, daß der König, dem dieser Wald gehörte, darin jagte,"

chologically and structurally one and the same. Thus the Grimms' efforts to strip their fairy-tale collections of incestuous content were not completely successful: father-daughter incest returns within the censorship that represses it. Also Dollerup, Reventlow, and Rosenberg Hansen suggest that the princess marries her father in the end; in their 1986 study of the editorial history of Grimms' "Allerleirauh" or "Thousandfurs," they observe that in the 1812 version, "Allerlei-Rauh," "incest is first abhorred [by the heroine], but after humiliations, the girl bows to paternal authority" (1986: 21). "This point has not been made as bluntly before," they argue, "[f]olklorists appear to be hampered by their knowledge of tales that bear some similarity to "Allerlei-Rauh", as they make it clear that the girl escapes from her father" (1986: 21, n. 30).⁸³ What is more, Dollerup, Reventlow, and Rosenberg Hansen argue that in this version, the daughter is portrayed as recognizing incestuous desire "as her motive for getting into contact with the king, her father" as suitor (1986: 24): "now for once, I might see my beloved fiancé again" (qtd. in Dollerup, Reventlow, and Rosenberg 1986: 24). According to Tatar, incest "was broached and pushed to its limits" in "Thousandfurs," the only tale in the Grimms' collection where a father was allowed to figure as the incestuous culprit. While the brothers "may have attempted to describe the marriage in ambiguous terms" there is "one possible aspect of that marriage [which] cannot be entirely suppressed": "In its original version, it confronts the problem of incestuous desire in a wholly matter-of-fact fashion and at the same time points to a resolution of that problem." (1987: 152)

In contemporary incest (re)tellings, the notion of stereotypical female passivity exalted in popular versions of fairy tales frequently translates into traumatic dissociation, often expressed in terms of sleep. Trauma forecloses free choice (Herman 1994: 116). Dissociation and numbness are coping strategies and do not equate passive acquiescence or masochism. Sleeping Beauty or Briar Rose is frequently evoked in such retellings as Anne Sexton's poem "Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty)" (1971), from which the epigraph to this section is borrowed, depicting the powerlessness of the female victim when the prince is "not the prince at all" but the father, and when the wait is not a wait of joyful anticipation but of dread

and the equivocality of the sentence derives from the clause "dem dieser Wald gehörte" (citations from the story qtd. in Haase 2004b: 33, n. 16). The meaning of the sentence depends on whether the clause is interpreted as a non-restrictive or a restrictive clause. In the English translation that Gilbert uses, the clause is translated as restrictive, "the king to whom this forest belong[ed]," and indicates that the daughter marries another king (Gilbert 1989: 274), but the non-restrictive clause "the King, to whom this forest belonged" would entail the daughter's marrying her father (Haase 2004b: 33, n. 16).

⁸³ For a summary (in English) of this version, see Dollerup, Reventlow, and Rosenberg Hansen (1986: 15ff).

(1982: 290); the fairy-tale princess is portrayed as an insomniac who takes Novocain to stay awake for fear of going to sleep. In her memoir *The Kiss* (1997), Kathryn Harrison, too, makes use of Sleeping Beauty: in a striking inversion of the popular wonder story, the father's French kiss at the airport puts his daughter to sleep instead of disentrancing her and marks the beginning of their four-year incestuous affair.⁸⁴ The kiss is described as an anesthetic drug that her father feeds her to control her: "I'll think of the kiss as a kind of transforming sting, like that of a scorpion: a narcotic that spreads from my mouth to my brain. The kiss is the point at which I begin, slowly, inexorably, to fall asleep, to surrender volition, to become paralyzed." (1998: 70) The narrator in Harrison's memoir refers to her slumber or somnambulant-like state produced by the narcotizing kiss "[a]s if under an enchantment," and explains it thus: "I sleep because I'm shocked, and because I'm frightened" (1998: 138). Laura Frost correctly identifies Harrison's narrative voice as "dazed, trance-like" (2002: 218). Posttraumatic narration is of course also evident in *A Thousand Acres* where Ginny's numbness or almost sleepwalking state may give the reader the impression that she is under a spell from which she gradually awakens. (Chapter 7 of this thesis will comment upon Smiley's narrative style in more detail.)

In Caruth's understanding, sleep is a consequence of trauma. In returning in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) to Freud's description of his surprise at the literal return of the scene of trauma in dreams or accident nightmares experienced by his patients, dealt with in her introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and discussed in the introduction to part I of this study, Caruth compares the return to a traumatic experience with waking up from a frightful dream or traumatic nightmares. In Caruth's interpretation, Freud's words, "Now it is a distinctive feature of the dream-life of patients with traumatic neurosis that it repeatedly takes them back to the situation of their original misadventure, from which they awake with a renewed sense of fright" (2003b: 51), illustrate the complex relationship between repetition and trauma in terms of sleeping/dreaming and waking up:

the trauma of the nightmare does not simply consist in the experience *within* the dream, but in *the experience of waking from it*. It is the experience of *waking into consciousness* that, peculiarly, is identified with the reliving of the trauma. And as such it is not only the dream that surprises consciousness but, indeed, the very *waking itself* that constitutes the surprise: the fact

⁸⁴ Leigh Gilmore too, has pointed out that the kiss "bewitches" Harrison and transforms her into a "sleeping beauty," suggesting that Harrison wakes up only after she kisses the lips of her mother's dead body (qtd. in Daly 2007: 153).

not only of the dream but of having passed beyond it. (Caruth 1996a: 64, italics in original)

A return to the site of trauma indicates a release from the past and thus a repossession of time precisely because the repetition invariably – and to the dreamer’s astonishment – encompasses a waking up from the dream or flashback.

Feminist fairy-tale retellings also often overlap with trauma fiction in their cultural critique and exposure of the underlying assumptions of Western cultural plots as well as in their intertextual retrievals of previously silenced voices and occluded presences. Tales told anew give voice to the voiceless to bear witness to a previous historical and cultural exclusion. Feminist recovery work of incest fairy tales in the form of retellings – like other recent feminist fairy-tale retellings – can be interpreted in the context of a more general cultural critique and unveiling of presuppositions implicated in Western hegemonic scripts, an undertaking that, as Stephen Benson observes, “has played a considerable role in feminist theory and fiction over the last four decades and one which seeks, as [Sandra] Gilbert summarizes, to ‘review, reimagine, rethink, rewrite, revise, and reinterpret’ historical and cultural events and documents” (2003: 199). According to Benson:

Implicitly manipulating the revisionary status of narrative itself – the sense in which narrative is always a remembering and a re-telling that seeks to bring about some form of change – contemporary feminist fairy tales enact a process of remembering, repeating, and working through, in which the tales are taken out of a cycle of repetitive orthodoxies of interpretation. (2003: 200-201)

In other words, feminist rewritings can be said to perform a kind of revisionary work as cultural memory. In a similar manner, the “remembering, repeating, and working through” to which Benson refers (2003: 201) may also tie in with remembering, repeating, and working through of trauma in the context of retelling old tales of incest such as is the case with Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres*. Contemporary feminist women writers, who recover and re-narrate old tales by using them as intertexts also recover the old tradition of female storytelling as cultural or folk memory, and thereby resist cultural repression. In other words, recovery here is twofold; it denotes the recovery of “forgotten” tales and the repossession of the old storytelling tradition as the retrieval of collective memory. Before diving into a reading of Smiley’s intertextual return to folk material, however, it is necessary to trace the stories that lie behind Shakespeare’s play in more detail.

2.2 Retrieving the Folk Narratives behind *King Lear*: The “Lecherous Father”

The previous section has shown that the genesis of the spread of the tale where the enamoured father insists on marrying his daughter can be compared to the peculiar temporal movement of trauma in terms of the return of the repressed; from its popular appearance in the Middle Ages to its latency period in the Romantic era, and to its reappearance in the twentieth century, recovered by such works as Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres*. This section will next identify the link between the repressed folkloric analogs of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and Smiley’s novel. However, identification is not enough; it needs to be supplemented by interpretation. Since the 1950s there has been an ongoing discussion between literary critics and folklorists about the need to understand each other’s disciplines; in short, on the one hand the folkloric critic needs to grasp the need for interpretation in addition to identification, and on the other, the literary critic needs to acquire an understanding of the folkloric genre and the methodology used by folkloric critics (Benson 2003: 12; see also 251, n. 3).⁸⁵ As Alan Dundes puts it, “Folklorists [...] are too often wont to stop after making identifications” and “[I]terate scholars falsely believe that the authors they study must have read rather than heard an earlier version of the story line,” and, in fact, many literary scholars simply do not seem to have any knowledge of the tools used in folkloristic identification (1982a: 230-231). While this section will make use of some of these tools for identifying the link between the folk narratives behind Shakespeare’s play and *A Thousand Acres*, the next will interpret the role of the repressed folk material, that is, how it functions and what purpose it serves in Smiley’s recovery of the *Lear* story.

The narrative where a father wants his daughter’s hand in marriage has a long history. Many of its themes stem from mediaeval times (Zipes 2001: 26), and it has been documented independently ever since the twelfth century (Uther 2004: 295). An early European literary version of it is Ser Giovanni Fiorentino’s “Diongia e il re d’Inghilterra” (“Diongia and the King of England”)⁸⁶ from *Il peccorone* (1385). This story, along with the popular medieval romance *La belle Hélène de Constantinople*,⁸⁷ which is found in prose manuscripts from the fifteenth century, is an early literary version of this tale type that may have influ-

⁸⁵ For a short discussion of the need for interpretation in folkloristic studies, see Dundes (1982a: 230-232).

⁸⁶ For the story, see Zipes (2001: 507ff).

⁸⁷ For a plot summary, see Zipes (2001: 26).

enced the later and perhaps more known literary variants such as Straparola's "Tebaldo" (1550) in *Le piacevoli notti (The Most Delectable Nights)* 1550/53),⁸⁸ Giambattista Basile's "L'Orsa" ("The Bear" or "The She-Bear") (1634) in *Lo cunto de le cunti (The Pentamerone)* (1634-36),⁸⁹ Perrault's "Peau d'Âne" ("Donkey-Skin") (1694) in *Histoires ou contes de temps passé (Stories or Tales of Past Times)* (1697), and the Grimms' "Allerleirauh" ("Thousandfurs"). (Zipes 2001: 26) Many of its themes have their origins in Medieval legends and Byzantine and Greek tales, and significant sources include Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-89)⁹⁰ and the English poet John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, written in the fourteenth century (Zipes 2001: 26) and printed in 1532 and 1554 (Hoener 1984: xiv). Book 8 of Gower's work includes a version of the late-antique romance *Apollonius of Tyre*,⁹¹ which "circulated in many different editions from the tenth century onwards, as well as being told again and again, in poems, plays and hagiography" (Warner 1995: 326). In fact, *Apollonius of Tyre* is encountered in manuscripts from the ninth century and was transmitted even before this time both in oral and written form (1995: 332). As is visible from the passage in the epigraph to this chapter, *Apollonius of Tyre*, like Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, is a story which depicts overt consummated father-daughter incest.

Apparently Shakespeare knew of a plot like this from Gower's *Confessio Amantis* upon which he based the incestuous relationship between King Antiochus and his daughter at the beginning of *Pericles*. Gower's "The Story of Apollonius of Tyre" may also have influenced *Lear*, which was written at approximately the same time. As Marina Warner notes, "the troubling question of incestuous love and loss hangs over both plays," but "Shakespeare challenged [Gower's version] with the alternative version in *Pericles*, and transformed it into tyranny in *Lear*, both of them preceding the pedagogical anxiety of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries over any open admission of the theme" (1995: 389, 351).

It is known that several of Shakespeare's motifs and plots for his plays derive from folktales and ever since folklorists' discovery in the late nineteenth century of the folktales behind the anonymous play *The Chronicle History of King Leir* (1605) – which is the main work Shakespeare used for his version of the story⁹² –

⁸⁸ For Straparola's version, see Zipes (2001: 27ff).

⁸⁹ For Basile's variant, see Zipes (2001: 33ff).

⁹⁰ Chaucer's version is "The Man of Lawe's Tale."

⁹¹ For this version, see Bullough (1966: 375ff).

⁹² For Shakespeare's sources for *Lear*, see, for instance, Bullough vol. 7, 1973: 269-420; Foakes 2002: 92-110; Halió 2002: 2-15; Muir 1977: 196-208. Of these, Muir is the only one who does not mention the folkloric influences on the play.

it has been known that the plot in *Lear* partly derives from some versions of “Cinderella” (see, e.g., Cox 1893: lxvii), and this discovery, along with Freud’s reading of *Lear* in his essay “The Theme of the Three Caskets” (1913), helped to spur a more recent interest in the relation between an incest motif in Shakespeare’s play and the “Cinderella” cycle among twentieth century psychocritics (Halio 2002: 10). Alan Dundes, for instance, persuasively argues that *King Lear* can be traced to a subtype of “Cinderella,” a daughter-centered fairy tale with an overtly incestuous plot. Dundes, however, argues that *Lear* is a story of reverse incest, “‘daughter-father’ incest”; “the folktale behind the play and very likely the play itself does entail [...] a projection of incestuous desires on the part of the daughter” (1982a: 235, 236, original emphasis). Dundes notes that it is as much a taboo for daughters to want to marry their fathers as it is for sons to want to marry their mothers, suggesting that stories centering on daughters who resist their incestuous father constitute projection on the part of the girl; consequently he labels what occurs in *Lear* a case of “inverse projection” and reads the absence of the mother as “perfect wish fulfillment” (qtd. in Johnson and Price-Williams 1996: 24). While Dundes in his claim acknowledges the daughter’s desire and fantasy, he blatantly ignores the father’s, and his argument seems to be a way of covering over the father’s seduction and instead putting the blame wholly on the daughter, so common in actual cases of abuse (see, for instance, Herman 1994: 116-118).

Whereas critics of a psychoanalytic bent, such as Dundes, have been vocal about an incest motif in Shakespeare’s play, Freud, although he links Cordelia to Cinderella in his reading of *Lear* in the “Caskets,” never mentions incest.⁹³ For Freud, who was the first psychoanalyst to write on Shakespeare’s *Lear* (Blechner 1988: 310; Halio 2002: 10), and who reads it in the context of the casket scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, the choice between the three daughters in the play – as in the alternation between three women in different myths and folktales including “Cinderella” – entails a choice between three women and what they symbolically

⁹³ Freud published three articles where he discussed fairy tales from a psychoanalytic perspective; in addition to the “Caskets,” and in the same year he published “The Occurrence in Dreams of Material from Fairy Tales” (1913) (see 1978b), and two years prior to that, in 1911, and in collaboration with Ernst Oppenheim, he published “Dreams in Folklore” (see 1978). During this time Freud also published “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis” (1918), or the “Wolf Man” case, where the Grimms’ fairy tales “Little Red Cap” and “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids” figure prominently (see Freud 2001). Jacques Lacan notes about Freud’s interest in both classic and folk literature and its influence on his work: “Freud was steeped in German literature, which, by virtue of an incomparable translation, can be said to include Shakespeare’s plays. Every one of his works bears witness to this, and to the continual recourse he had to it, no less in his technique than in his discovery. Not to mention his broad background in the classics” and “his familiarity with the modern study of folklore” (2006: 244).

represent to man: the mother who gives birth to him, the woman companion, and death. However, as a result of a “wished-for reversal” on the part of the man who will not accept his destiny, the Goddess of Love substitutes for the third woman, the Goddess of Death, and that is why the third woman becomes the youngest and fairest in folklore and myth (1959a: 253-254, quotation on p. 254). The choice itself is a wish fulfillment and “stands in the place of necessity,” and so the old man by choosing the third woman “overcomes death” (1959a: 254). This is, according to Freud, what Lear does in the end when he chooses Cordelia.

Some critics have remarked upon how Freud’s focus on Cordelia (and Cinderella) as representing death sidesteps the incest issue in *Lear* (see, e.g., Dundes 1982a: 235; Chedgzoy 1995: 88 n. 18), and others see the significant circumnavigation or palpable omission as symptomatic of repression on the part of Freud himself. Mark J. Blechner claims that “Freud, the pioneer explorer of the role of unconscious passion and aggression in man’s life, seems in this case to be demonstrating the powerful repression of these motives himself; his focus on the symbolic meaning of the three women, however valid, evades the issues of incest and destructiveness in familial relations” (1988: 310-311). It is significant, however, that Freud wrote on *Lear* and fairy tales such as “Cinderella” at a time when he was preoccupied with, and worked a great deal on, incest, allegedly letting go of the seduction theory and working to develop the Oedipus Complex. The “Caskets” was written between 1895 and 1924, the time that separates the publication of the “Katharina” case in the *Studies* from the added footnote that revealed her father instead of her uncle as the incest-abuser. As Marina Warner states; “We do not have to follow Freud [...] far in his identification with the figures of great and tragic old men, Lear and Oedipus, and perceive Anna Freud, his devoted daughter, in the role of his Cordelia and Antigone” (1995: 390). At a later time, however, Freud privately acknowledged Lear’s incestuous feelings for his youngest daughter as responsible for the king’s tragic downfall in the play. In a letter to J. S. H. Bransom, who had discussed the incest motif in Shakespeare’s play in his 1934 study *The Tragedy of King Lear*, Freud writes that “the secret meaning of the tragedy” concerned Lear’s “repressed incestuous claims on the daughter’s love” (qtd. in Dundes 1982a: 234). What the “Caskets” does is illustrate how delicate the subject was for Freud.

“Cinderella” is one of the most popular fairy tales in the world but it is only partly known, especially in relation to its incest motif.⁹⁴ The love test in the first scene

⁹⁴ Dundes (1982b), Philip (1989), and Zipes (2001) provide different versions of the “Cinderella” tale. Philip’s book gives oral and literary versions from all over the world, whereas Dun-

of *King Lear* has been identified in the international Tale Type Index for folktales, based on the Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson method of cataloguing mainly oral folktales into types, as AaThU tale type 923,⁹⁵ “Love like Salt,”⁹⁶ a story that shares the same plot analysis as tale type AaThU510, “Cinderella” and “Peau d’Âne” (previously “Cinderella” and “Cap o’ Rushes”). “The Love like Salt” story reads as follows: A rich man asks his three daughters how much they love him, and after the two elder ones have compared their love with precious items the youngest says she loves him like salt. The father rewards the elder daughters and casts out his youngest, but realizes the value of salt after she has cooked him dishes without it at her wedding. Many of the works Shakespeare used as sources for his play, for instance, John Higgins’s *The Mirror for Magistrates*, Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, *King Lear*, and also Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1135), which Shakespeare probably used, include the love test.

The “Cinderella” cycle itself has two main categories: the most familiar version of this story belongs to the first, tale type 510A, “Cinderella” proper, in which the daughter’s stepmother is jealous of Cinderella and treats her badly; the other cate-

des and Zipes offer literary versions of “Cinderella” from European folklore. For useful discussions and critical analyses of the cycle and its background, see, for instance, Dundes’s *Cinderella: A Folklore Casebook* (1982b).

⁹⁵ AaThU stands for Aarne/Thompson/Uther, as the German folktale scholar Hans-Jörg Uther’s genre-based and thematically oriented *The Types of International Folktales* (2004) has now superseded the second revision (1964) by Stith Thompson of Antti Aarne’s *The Types of the Folktale* from 1961 as the standard index for the different tale types. AaThU, previously AT, is followed by a number that refers to the classification in Stith Thompson’s inestimable research tool, the *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (1955-58).

For a structuralist critique of the limitations of the AaTh classification system, see, Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (1988: 8-11). Propp chiefly argues that “[c]lear-cut division into types does not actually exist” or if it does, it exists “on the level of the structural features of similar tales” (1988: 11). Thus, Propp defines the folktale according to a uniform structure of events instead of according to types. Torborg Lundell’s discussion “Gender-Related Biases in the Type and Motif Indexes of Aarne and Thompson,” on the other hand, uncovers the gender bias of the AaTh system of cataloguing folktales that ultimately “misrepresents many folktale and fairy tale heroines” through marginalizing or judging differently female activity than male (1986: 161). The new Index constitutes an effort to address the gender-bias in the characterization of main actors, as well as other critical objections to the AaTh system, including an oral bias and a bias toward the European narrative tradition, by, for instance, rewriting the plot descriptions, increasingly referring to significant literary sources, and reviewing oikotypes, all the while bearing in mind that complete consistency according to either type or structure is not to be found in the narrative traditions of the real world.

⁹⁶ Shakespeare obliquely refers to “Love like Salt” when Lear says “a man of salt” (4.5.192) with the meaning of tears. Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations from the play in the present study are from the Folio text, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, printed in the 1623 Folio, Shakespeare’s revision of the play made a few years after the first version, i.e. the 1608 Quarto text, *The History of King Lear*.

gory – the one of principal interest in this study – corresponds to tale type 510B, “Peau d’Âne,” previously “The Dress of Gold, of Silver, and of Stars” (“Cap o’ Rushes”), including variants such as “Thousandfurs” and “Cap o’ Rushes,” and in this category the daughter suffers as a result of her lovesick and besotted father, who wants to marry her or wants to hear her say how much she loves him, respectively.⁹⁷ Marian Roalfe Cox in her *Cinderella* (1893) – the first extensive study of the “Cinderella” cycle, presenting and tabulating over 345 variants – classifies “Cinderella” as A, and she further distinguishes between the tales in which the father demands to marry his daughter – which she categorizes under the rubric “Catskin” – and “Cap o’ Rushes,” classifying the former as B and the latter as C. However, as Dundes points out, Cox realized the kinship between the two tale types; the incidents she terms the “King Lear judgment – Loving like salt” and “outcast heroine” – belong to “Cap o’ Rushes,” but respectively correspond to the incidents she calls the “unnatural father” and “heroine flight” belonging to “Catskin” (1982a: 233-234). Swedish folklorist Birgitta Rooth, too, whose study *The Cinderella Cycle* (1951) has supplemented Cox’s with more variants and an investigation of the tale’s distribution, recognizes the close relation between “Catskin” and “Cap o’ Rushes” and brings them together under the same rubric: “Cinderella” (AaThU510A) is classified as B, “Catskin” and “Cap o’ Rushes” (AaThU510B) as B1.⁹⁸ Thus at the heart of the tale type 510B is father-daughter incest, but whereas “Catskin” contains an explicit incest plot “Cap o’ Rushes” deals with the topic in a more covert way. Hence if *Leir* served as Shakespeare’s principal base for *King Lear* and the “Love like Salt” tale served as *Leir*’s folkloric source, then the overtly incestuous plot had already been partly repressed in “Love like Salt” and consequently also in *Leir*. What this all means is that behind Shakespeare’s play lies a story in which the father-daughter relationship is overtly incestuous.

The beginning of the summary to tale type 510B reads: “A king promises his wife on her deathbed only to marry another woman who is as beautiful as she is (whom a particular ring fits). Because she is the only one who meets this condi-

⁹⁷ Cf. the folklorist Jack Zipes, who chooses not to use the Aarne-Thompson classification system in his anthology of literary fairy tales, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm* (2001), partly because of its oral bias and partly because he does not agree with their definitions of types. Instead he distinguishes between the different tales thematically, categorizing the “Cinderella” tales or AaThU510A under “The Revenge and Reward of Neglected Daughters” and placing the AaThU510B type tales under the rubric “Incestuous Fathers.”

⁹⁸ The AaThU lists 923 as usually or often combined or contaminated with 510B (Uther 2004: 555).

tion, the king wants to marry his grown daughter” (Uther 2004: 295).⁹⁹ The daughter then asks her father for dresses of gold, silver, and stars (to stall the impending wedding), and for a coat made of different furs in which to escape. Cinderella-like she starts to work as a maid in the kitchen of a castle where feasts are held on three consecutive days and which she attends wearing her dresses. The prince falls in love with her but mistreats her in the kitchen. During the feasts he asks her where she comes from but gets only mysterious and vague answers in return that bespeak how badly he has treated the kitchen maid. He gives her a ring through which she is recognized as the kitchen maid (she slips it into his soup or bread) and he marries her (2004: 295). In some variants the father promises his dying wife that he will not marry again unless he finds a woman who can wear her shoe instead of a ring such as in the Tuscan story “La Ciabattina d’oro” (“The Little Gold Shoe”) related by Maria di Monte Mignaiò nel Casentino.¹⁰⁰

In fact, it appears that the whole “Cinderella” cycle is about incest because also the evil stepmother motif can be seen as part of the father-daughter Oedipal drama, although in general – despite the fact that the two categories are related under the same plot rubric 510 – the wicked stepmother and the smitten father do not seem to appear together in one and the same story in the various variants of the “Cinderella” cycle (Tatar 1987: 153).¹⁰¹ For instance, Dollerup, Reventlow, and Rosenberg Hansen found that there is no lascivious father, only the stepmother motif, in an 1810 variant of “Thousandfurs” that the Grimms recorded (1986: 20).¹⁰² Tale type AaThU706, “The Maiden without Hands,” too, which is related to the 510B tales of incest,¹⁰³ has two main motifs; some variants include the persecution of the heroine by a stepmother or another female relative due to sexual jealousy, while other variants contain the lecherous father (or pact with the devil) motif and the daughter cuts off her appendages to preserve her virginity (Tatar 1987: 149-50, 260, n. 18). As Maria Tatar points out, “the father’s desire for his daughter in the second tale type furnishes a powerful motive for a stepmother’s jealous rages and unnatural deeds in the first tale type” (1987: 150).

⁹⁹ According to the AaTh Index, the main motifs for tale type 510 include T411.1 Lecherous father and T311.1 Flight of maiden to escape marriage. The motif numbers are from Stith Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (1955-58), which contains about 40,000 motifs. Significantly, however, Uther’s plot description does not refer to T411.1 but mentions only T311.1 of the two.

¹⁰⁰ This version is tabulated in Cox’s study (1893: 130-131).

¹⁰¹ As Tatar points out, Aarne “must have intuitively recognized a kinship between these two types of tales [510A and 510B], though he never explained just how the two could coexist as a single drama” (1987: 149).

¹⁰² For this tale (in English), see Dollerup, Rewentlow, and Rosenberg Hansen (1986: 13).

¹⁰³ The AaThU lists “The Maiden Without Hands” as usually or often combined or contaminated with 510B (Uther 2004: 379).

The good mother who dies at beginning of the stories in the “Cinderella” cycle is absent in most popular versions, more or less replaced by the fairy godmother, and there is no visible link between the parent and the enchantress. In early versions of this tale, the dead mother reincarnates as an animal helper (Bettelheim 1988: 257; Warner 1995: 204), such as in the Chinese “Yeh-hsien” where the mother returns as a fish that receives the loving care of the daughter,¹⁰⁴ and in the Scotch tale “Rashin Coatie” – “a lightly disguised ‘unnatural father’ story” (Philip 1989: 60) – where the theme of incest is submerged under an evil stepmother-motif, the good mother reincarnates in a calf that feeds the starving daughter.¹⁰⁵ In the Grimms’ version of “Cinderella,” the heroine visits the grave of her mother everyday to weep. A hazel sapling that her father has brought from his travels and that she plants on the grave grows up and is transformed by the mother’s bones into a wishing tree. This hazel tree protects the daughter and provides her with dresses and slippers to wear to the ball, where she meets the prince.¹⁰⁶ Warner singles out Basile’s version of “Cinderella,” “La gatta Cenerentola” (“The Cinderella Cat” or “The Cat Cinderella”) (1634)]¹⁰⁷ as the story that breaks the chain between the mother and the enchantress. His version relates how the heroine Zezolla plots with her governess to kill the evil stepmother in order for the father to be free to marry the governess. After a while the new stepmother too starts to treat Zezolla badly. A fairy then appears in a date tree that her father has given his daughter and transforms Zezolla into a beauty and the prince falls in love with her. Warner emphasizes that “Basile, by omitting any mention of graves or bones, severs the narrative link between the orphan’s mother and the enchantress,” and Perrault and others followed suit (1995: 206). Tales which stage the good mother’s resurrection, as in Shakespeare’s *Pericles* and *The Winter’s Tale*, “have,” as Warner puts it, “not gained the currency or popularity of ‘Cinderella’ or ‘Snow White’ in which she is supplanted by a monster” (1995: 201).

Some scholars believe that it is the father’s relationship to his daughter in the different variants that has often been problematic and that frequently has been projected onto a struggle between a stepmother and her stepdaughter or submerged under an evil stepmother-motif. Lynda E. Boose believes that this displacement in the “Cinderella” cycle has to do with the father’s incestuous desire for his daughter requiring distance and believes this to be true of the romances *Pericles* and *The Winter’s Tale* as well:

¹⁰⁴ For the “Yeh-hsien” variant, see Philip (1989: 17ff).

¹⁰⁵ For “Rashin Coatie,” see Philip (1989: 60ff).

¹⁰⁶ See, Zipes (2001: 468ff) for the Grimms’ 1857 version, “Aschenputtel.”

¹⁰⁷ For Basile’s version, see Zipes (2001: 445ff).

Underlying both narrations of daughter abandonment [...] is a text of unconscious incestuous desire, one that is born to the father along with his daughter and one that is structurally reflected in the emblematically conjunctive death of the mother. Avoidance, abandonment, and discarding of the daughter function in these plays as inverted mirrors that reflect the father's flight from incest" (1989: 30-31).

This duality appears also in *King Lear*: Boose views the first scene of Shakespeare's play as a "violated [wedding] ceremony" in which Lear "casts [his daughter Cordelia] away not to let her go but to prevent her from going" (1982: 333). In other words, the father deserting or casting out the daughter in these works represents his escape from his own incestuous desires toward her. His desires are repressed, however, just as the incest motif of the tale itself for centuries has been largely repressed in fairy-tale collections.

This section has now established an identification of the link between the repressed folkloric analogs of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, and this chapter will next interpret the function of the folkloric influences in the novel in a context of trauma.

2.3 Folk Revisited: *A Thousand Acres* and "Thousandfurs"

Folk material has put its mark on many contemporary incest stories, but although the protagonist in these works does not emerge unmarred at the end as in the unproblematic traditional dénouement of fairy tales, incest narratives today frequently read like fairy tales in that they depict the escape of the main character from a dangerous situation. In addition to Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, a thread of allusions to the "Cinderella" cycle are woven into the intertextual weft of such diverse narratives as the Southern writer Kaye Gibbons's semiautobiographical debut novel *Ellen Foster* (1987)¹⁰⁸ and Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees* (1996), which, in addition to referring to Saint Dymphna, also connects to "Thousandfurs."¹⁰⁹ This section will elucidate the influence of the "Thousand-

¹⁰⁸ While Melinda L. Franklin in her essay "Ellen at the Ball" (1995) correctly links the novel to the "Cinderella" tale, it would also be useful and apt to connect the novel with the "Thousandfurs" tale. In addition to the toil, the dress, the prince, and the magic is found also the death of the good mother, and, most importantly, the incest threat, which Franklin does not mention at all in her essay.

¹⁰⁹ For a reading of fairy-tale aspects in MacDonald's novel, see Isabel Fernández Agüero's article "Fairy Tales in Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees*: Vladimir Propp's functions and a Twentieth Century Novel" (2008), which also to some extent treats the incest mo-

furs” tale upon *A Thousand Acres* and contextualize Jane Smiley’s recovery of the folktales behind *Lear* in her novel, in which the protagonist takes on the identity of her folk sibling, repeating her struggles, against the backdrop of contemporary retellings of fairy tales of incest and a discussion of narratological scholarship in relation to trauma theory. In revisiting the fairy-tale canon for the roots of *Lear*, *A Thousand Acres* expresses the relation between trauma’s time and intertextuality in a way that both replicates and transmutes some of the main assertions of traditional fairy-tale narratology. Smiley interweaves the folkloric echoes of the source tales to trauma by demonstrating through the novel’s intertextual ties to the “Thousandfurs” tale that the eternal present of trauma’s time upsets the symmetrical arrangement of the before, during, and after of traditional and universalizing morphologies, which are all about organizing storytelling into past-present-future, but shows also that repetition inheres in these narratological structures themselves.

A Thousand Acres not only enacts incest through intertextual performance of *Lear*, but also repeats the folkloric sources of the play. Although it is more complex both in structure and character than a traditional fairy tale, it also profoundly reveals its intertextual ties to the fairy-tale genre: Smiley weaves a tapestry or a web of motifs from different variants in the “Cinderella” cycle and her text can be interpreted as both a reading of this tale type, its related variants, and of their traditional and orthodox interpretations, and as a retelling. Smiley’s rewriting of the *Lear* story is in certain aspects more closely related to the folkloric tales behind Shakespeare’s version than to the play itself; what Shakespeare did with the folk material was to change it into a male-centered story told from the perspective of the father, whereas Smiley changes the version back into a daughter’s tale of overt incest, urging the reader to remember, witness, and share the heroine’s trauma. Her novel has imported and incorporated folk material from the tale of the daughter who resists her prurient father’s incestuous demands to suggest the surfacing of the repressed tale’s memories of incest as the recovery of the cultural memory of it. Thus whereas most critics view Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* as a modern reworking of Shakespeare’s *Lear* from Goneril’s viewpoint, interpreting it as a response to occluded voices in the male-authored literary canon (see, for instance, Alter 1999; Brauner 2001; Keppel 1995; Leslie 1998; Mathiesson 1999; Schiff 1998; Strehle 2000), this present study suggests that the novel is also a reaction to previously silenced voices and marginalized presences in the folktale tradition.

tif in the novel, linking it to the tales in the “Cinderella” cycle where the daughter flees her incestuous father.

Smiley herself is aware that folktales lurk behind Shakespeare's *King Lear*, although the novel does not explicitly mention them. She has pointed out that "some folklorists have linked the Lear material to other folk narratives of incest" (Smiley 2001: 162), and explains how it is possible to interpret the eldest daughters' anger and behavior in the play as resulting from abuse: "I'm not saying that Shakespeare ever thought of Lear as an incest perpetrator. I am saying that some people think there's a kind of coded reference to incest in this group of folkloric stories, and that therefore you could plausibly attribute the older sisters' deep, deep anger to abuse that they had undergone" (in Bacon 1998). In addition, she has mentioned that she felt "The conflict between Lear and his daughters, primal and so quickly going out of control, so isolated and depopulated in feeling, seemed Germanic and even Nordic," and she "had found medieval literature to be very close to its folkloric sources, so it was automatic for [her] to imagine Shakespeare cocking his ear backward when he was writing *King Lear*, probing the Germanic side of his English heritage rather than the Latin side" (1999: 168-169). She knew that the "wrestling" she had done writing *A Thousand Acres* "had not been only with Shakespeare, but also with his nameless predecessors" (1999: 173). While the novel enacts both textual and traumatic entrapment as it retells Thousandfurs's story, the recovery of the traumatic moment in the source text through the retelling is not just an iteration of the protagonist's fate in the tale but also a comment on it, in an effort to change what appears to be an inescapable trajectory.

Surprisingly few critics have commented on Smiley's use of folk material in *A Thousand Acres*. This study is the first to do so extensively and to link the novel with the folkloric tales lying behind Shakespeare's play. Unfamiliarity with the folkloric genre and the methodology used by folkloric critics such as the tale type index may be a reason why literary scholars have not discussed the folkloric elements of the novel at any depth.¹¹⁰ Barbara Sheldon in her *Daughters and Fathers in Feminist Novels* (1997) delves deeper into the fairy-tale world in connection to

¹¹⁰ While James Schiff in his essay on *A Thousand Acres* as the latest reworking of *Lear* discusses rewritings in general and mentions "Cinderella" on more than one occasion, even saying that "earlier versions of "Cinderella" [...] exist than those that are the most generally known" (1998: 368), he does not make a connection between the tale and Smiley's novel or between the tale and *Lear*. Drawing attention to scholars such as Ann Thompson, who emphasizes the association of the "Love like Salt" tale that lies behind *Lear* with incest and adultery, and Barbara Melchiori, who links Lear's metaphor of "Those pelican daughters" (3.4.71) with the cannibalistic incest riddle in *Pericles*, in which King Antiochus's daughter says "I am no viper, yet I feed / On mother's flesh which did me breed" (1.1.107-108), Kate Chedgzoy concludes that "[t]hese matters are taken up by the American novelist Jane Smiley in her recent book *A Thousand Acres*" (Chedgzoy 1995: 56), but goes no further.

Smiley's novel than other critics have done so far, but while a useful analysis, Sheldon does not establish a direct connection between Smiley's novel and the "Thousandfurs" tale or discuss incest as trauma in her monograph. Sheldon views Smiley's novel as forming part of a tradition of "counter-narratives" (1997: 24) to something she terms the "master plot of the father-daughter story" encountered in Biblical stories such as Lot, Greek mythology, fairy tales, and classics; "a dominant father-daughter discourse, which determines the ways the roles of fathers and daughters are defined and perceived" (1997: 23). Sheldon identifies the daughter's role in this master plot as including "life with the father [...]; or marriage, sanctioned by the father (sometimes to the father's alter ego or to another 'father-ruler'); or death and social ostracism as punishments for instances of more than temporary self-assertion, rebellion, or for permanent flights from the father and his code of values": one feature of this master plot is "actual or indirect incest" (1997: 25, 26). The daughters in these master plots are obsequious; in contrast those of counter-narratives such as *A Thousand Acres*, "by assuming a voice of their own, telling the story from their perspective, and by transcending the old master plot conventions" instead "struggle to escape from the pattern of submissiveness and passivity epitomized in their fairy-tale *alter egos*" (1997: 27, 38).

Stephen Benson identifies one of the key issues of contemporary feminist fairy-tale retellings as "the sense of being caught within a story [...] and, by extension, within the cultural norms and expectations encoded in, and by, this closed narrative" (2003: 203-204). For almost a hundred years not only folklorists but also formalists and structuralists have sought to demonstrate that most fairy tales share a basic shape.¹¹¹ Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (*Morfológija skázki*) – published in Russia in 1928 but not translated into English until 1958 – based on a study of one hundred tales from Alexander Afanás'ev's collection of Russian folktales, defines the fairy tale according to a scheme of functions, which replace motifs, themes, and/or elements and where "components of one tale can, without any alteration whatsoever, be transferred to another" (1988: 7): usually such functions as an interdiction and its violation make possible the villainy or lack with which the tale customarily starts,¹¹² and which causes the hero's leaving home, leading to a meeting with a donor, which in turn leads to the plot where the hero is tested and then provided with a magical agent. Further on there is typically

¹¹¹ Tatar paints a comprehensive and straightforward picture of structuralist and formalist theories of the folktale (1987: 62-71).

¹¹² Tatar explains how villainy and desire can be equivalent in a fairy tale: "either the presence of evil (villainy) or the absence of good (lack) is the prime mover of events" so that in the final analysis they have the same function (1987: 62). Another way of looking at it is that villainy creates lack, or "the absence of good."

a combat with an adversary in which the hero is branded or marked, and the story evolves toward a return, a recognition, a new appearance, and finally a marriage and/or an ascent to the throne. Not all tales have all of these functions, which succeed each other uniformly, but whichever of these (there are thirty-one) that occur are placed within seven spheres of actions by the roles of the villain, the donor, the helper, the princess (in need of rescue), the dispatcher, the hero, and the false hero. As in Aristotle's *Poetics*, characters are subordinate to the plot: one character can have multiple roles or share functions with other dramatis personae (see Aristotle 1996: 11-12). Feminists have rightly criticized theories that universalize narratives to the exclusion of pragmatic concerns. Barbara Sheldon, although she defines the "master plot of the father-daughter story" recounted above according to structural patterns and functions in Proppian morphology, is critical of the textual entrapment it offers the daughter in the dénouement. Sheldon's critique of traditional morphologies resonates with Elizabeth Wanning Harries's concerns about traditional fairy-tale frameworks such as the Grimms': despite the feminist fairy-tale criticism of the last forty years that correctly critiques the representation of women in fairy tales, feminists "have been less conscious and less critical of the ways the Grimms have determined our conception of the structure of the fairy tale," the predictability of which "help[s] make its gender inequalities and family structures also seem inevitable" (2001: 13).¹¹³

This study suggests that a sense of being trapped in a previous narrative also ties in with compulsion repetition in trauma, and in the case of the "Thousandfurs" tale, the predictability of its structure helps make father-daughter incest appear inevitable. Rather than superimposing folk material on her storyline, in *A Thousand Acres*, trauma resonates with fairy-tale elements: the father-daughter incest, the leitmotif of the tale, provides Smiley's book with thematic material and is linked to traditional tropes such as imprisonment by an oppressive parent, flight, rescue by an oppressive husband-to-be, and recognition. At first sight *A Thousand Acres* appears to be a sequel to the fairy tale; in other words, the ending of the "Thousandfurs" tale becomes the story of the present of the novel, which begins years after the folk narrative left off. The heroine has now been married for seventeen years, but she is stuck in the past and the narrative looks back at her life instead of forward as trauma focuses both plot and story. The novel's first pages establishes this fact by the use of the past tense as Ginny as an adult thinks back

¹¹³ Susan Sniader Lanser, too, has been critical of what she terms the "androcentric morphology," which all but ignores gender and in which "the masculine text" has come to stand for "the universal text": "narratives which have provided the foundation for narratology have been either men's texts or texts treated as men's texts" (1997: 676).

to her young self: “It was 1951 and I was eight” and her life felt safe and “good” (2004a: 4, 5). While this opening seemingly distances the narrative in time like the fixed devices such as “Once upon a time” that characterize fairy tale beginnings, employed for the purpose of signalling the remoteness of the time in which the story takes place, it soon becomes clear that the story repeats itself in the novel not only in the sense that it winds back to the past, but also that the past irrupts into the present as it were: Ginny’s husband Ty proves to be another Larry figure, and Smiley’s heroine has to escape again and learn to her cost that unless worked over, her past is doomed to repeat itself in an endless cycle. The beginning of the novel also paradoxically establishes the presence of the past in the present of the novel, which is interspersed with flashbacks or memories. What is important is the past and remembering, not the future, for it is in the past the truth lies. Intertextuality here allows for a mirroring of traumatic symptomatology through a disruption of temporality. By combining the main structural elements of the fairy-tale genre with the characteristics of the poetics of trauma through foregrounding its temporally disruptive structure, Smiley not only interrogates and critiques theories that universalize narrative form but also discloses the dangers of these kinds of textual enclosures by refusing a fairy-tale happy ending.

Looking back in the opening pages of the novel to her childhood which “seemed secure” (2004a: 5), Ginny enumerates a father, mother, and three daughters. Characteristically a tale starts with a lead-off, enumerating the characters (Propp 1988: 25), and generally concerns a conflict between the hero (or heroine, as the case may be) and his (or her) parents; “Home, normally the locus of stability and security, becomes the abode of powers at once hostile and sinister. Beginning with a stable situation – the nuclear family at home – the fairy tale quickly shifts to a state of disequilibrium. One member of the family disturbs the initial tranquillity and renders life at home intolerable” (Tatar 1987: 72). The number three as in the three daughters in the novel is a significant trope.¹¹⁴ Bruno Bettelheim notes that of all the numbers, three is the one which represents sex in the unconscious (1988: 202) which in this case links it to the sexual abuse.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ While the presence of three daughters is not infrequent in the Cap o’ Rushes type, Cox has tabulated an oral “Catskin” variant from Turkey, “Xylomarie,” where the king has three daughters and persecutes the youngest one with his incestuous motives (1893: 303).

¹¹⁵ This, according to Bettelheim, is not only “because each sex has three visible sex characteristics: penis and the two testes in the male; vagina and the two breasts in the female,” but also because “it symbolizes the oedipal situation with its deep involvement of three persons with one another” (1988: 219).

The presence of an absent shoe introduces the father-daughter incest motif in the novel, obliquely establishing the intertextual ties between Smiley's tale and the "Cinderella" cycle, including "Thousandfurs." When Ginny hears her father rave on the night of the Smileyan version of the *Lear*-storm, which occurs after the old generation and the new have disagreed about the running of the thousand acres for some time, she recalls a violent incident in which Larry had once beaten her with his belt until she "fell down" because she had lost one of her shoes at a school Halloween party (Smiley 2004a: 183). This scene merits a full quotation:

All at once I had a distinct memory of a time when Rose and I were nine and eleven, and we had kept him waiting after a school Halloween party that he hadn't wanted us to go to in the first place. I had lost a shoe in the cloakroom, and Rose and I looked for it madly while the other children put on their coats and left. We never found it, and we were the very last, by five or ten minutes, to come out of the school. Daddy was waiting in the pickup. Rose got in first, in her princess costume, and I got in beside the door, careful to conceal my stockinged foot. I was dressed as a hobo. Daddy was seething, and we knew we would get it just for being late when we got home. There was no telling what would happen if he learned about the shoe.

It was Mommy who betrayed me. When I walked in the door, she said, "Ginny! Where's your shoe?" and Daddy turned and looked at my foot, and it was like he turned to fire right there. He came for me and started spanking me with the flat of his hand, on the rear and the thighs. I backed up till I got between the range and the window, and I could hear Mommy saying, "Larry! Larry! This is crazy!" He turned to her and said, "You on her side?"

Mommy said, "No, but –"

"Then you tell her to come out from behind there. There's only one side here, and you'd better be on it."

There was a silence. Rose was nowhere to be seen. From upstairs I could hear Caroline start to cry and then shush up. Mommy's head turned toward the sound, then back. He said, "Tell her."

She said, "Virginia, come out from behind there. Out to the middle of the room. He's right. You shouldn't have lost your shoe."

I did what she said, five steps. I kept my gaze down, on the fringes of my hobo pants that we'd cut earlier in the day. My hands were covered with the makeup I'd rubbed off my face, so they looked strangely red and black. When I got to the middle of the room, he grabbed my arm and pulled me over to the doorway, leaned me up against it, and strapped me with his belt until I fell down. That was what a united front meant to him." (2004a: 182-183)

The physical abuse here foreshadows the sexual abuse that is to come as the lost shoe in this passage brings sexual undertones to the fore. Smiley uses the traditional shoe symbolism in her novel as a symbol of her father's sexual control over her, which foreshadows his subsequent rape. Bettelheim has extensively examined the erotic symbolism and imagery of the shoe in fairy tales. According to his analysis, the shoe in "Cinderella" symbolizes female genitalia, and he interprets the heroine's escape from the ball as "her effort to protect her virginity" (1988: 265). In the scene from the novel above, it seems it is Larry who is most upset about the missing shoe and thus anxious to protect his daughter's virginity for himself; his anger at the lost shoe indicates this. The fact that her mother calls Ginny "Virginia" here after Larry has told her to tell their daughter "how it is" also refers to her virginity. Significantly, too, on the same night of the storm at which Ginny recalls this incident, Rose tells her about the sexual abuse that she does not yet remember.

Rose's princess costume in this sequence indicates that the daughters can be seen as fairy-tale princesses that are locked up in the house. Otto Rank has found that the father who jealously guards his daughter's virginity from other men is a frequent theme in folktales and sagas of father-daughter incest (1992: 313-315). Fictional father-daughter narratives often use material places such as houses in order to show the tension between retention and separation, to expose how the daughter is literally held in place by the father (Boose 1989: 32-33). Lynda E. Boose has astutely observed:

The daughter's struggle with her father is one of separation, not displacement. Its psychological dynamics thus locates the conflict inside inner family space. Father-daughter stories are full of literal houses, castles, or gardens in which fathers such as Danae's or Rapunzel's, or Brabantio or Shylock, lock up their daughters in the futile attempt to prevent some rival male from stealing them. The motif also occurs through riddles of enclosure such as the casket riddles in *The Merchant of Venice* or those in the Apollonius of Tyre story (in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, reused in Shakespeare's *Pericles*), which enclose the daughter in the father's verbal labyrinth and lure her suitors to compete with and lose to the preemptive paternal bond." (1989: 33)

The fathers in these stories shut their daughters up in order to protect their chastity from outsiders. There is no riddle in *A Thousand Acres*, but a cruel irony in that it was Larry who guarded his daughters' virginity most vigilantly before he himself expressed his sexual designs on them. In Smiley's novel, the physical location of the farm is used in order to reveal how the daughters are trapped by their father's rule; the farm is where Larry sexually abuses and tries his best to destroy all rivalry through isolating his girls: the father sits in his big house,

which was “built to show off” (Smiley 2004a: 329), like a king sitting in his castle, ruling his kingdom of a thousand acres, controlling his daughters’ after-school activities. Ginny says, “slumber parties weren’t allowed for Rose and me” (2004a: 87) because “Daddy’s proclaimed view [was] that home was best” (2004a: 64). “You ought to stay home,” her father used to say (2004a: 87).

Rose, however, “went out anyway”; she absconded, like her nubile fairy-tale sisters Cinderella and Thousandfurs who fled to the ball, and “climbed into the car with whoever was picking her up,” in fact, “her repeated escapes [were] part of her legend” (Smiley 2004a: 87). However, when she got back and their father “confronted her,” as Ginny relates, “there were some terrific battles” (2004a: 87). He was jealous because his daughter had violated his unspoken law that he would be her only lover. This situation in the novel can be said to correspond to Propp’s interdiction and its violation (1988: 26-27), and functions as an inverted incest taboo and its transgression. After their mother died and Ginny and Rose acted *in loco matris*, taking care of their younger sister Caroline, they decided that, unlike themselves, she “was going to have a normal high school life, with dates and dances and activities after school” and that “[s]he was going to have friends” and “be allowed to sleep over” and not “be chained to the school bus” like they had been. Her older sisters became her “allies” that “covered for her and talked Daddy out of his angers.” (Smiley 2004a: 64) Still Larry wanted his daughters to marry men who would later take over his thousand acres, while at the same time he wished to retain them as nurturers. Therefore, he extended his rule even beyond their marriages; he wanted his “girls” to continue to cook and clean for him even after they have moved out. Thinking of Rose and herself as being trapped on the farm, Ginny believes that Caroline would have seen Larry’s plan to split the thousand acres between his three daughters “as a trapdoor plunging her into a chute that would deposit her right back on the farm” (2004a: 21).

What emerges now is a picture of the nuclear family of fairyland as an especially perilous place for these protagonists. As Maria Tatar points out, particularly the unedited tales in the Grimms’ corpus deal primarily with sex and violence, and since “the nuclear family furnishes the fairy tale’s main cast of characters just as the family constitutes its most common subject,” these themes “frequently take the perverse form of incest and child abuse” (1987: 10). The connection between sexual abuse and the patriarchal nuclear family in fairy tales is consistent with feminist analyses of father-daughter incest in real life. Judith Herman has found that incest was more prevalent in families with a strong patriarchal structure in which sexual division of labor predominates (Herman with Hirschman 1981, 2000: 62): “father-daughter incest is not an aberration,” Herman propounds, “but rather a common and predictable abuse of patriarchal power” (2000: 219). Draw-

ing on Herman's writing on father-daughter incest and trauma, cultural historian Mary Hamer suggests that it is not a close relation between parents and children that is damaging to the child but the traumatic experience of the "overwhelming of one person's authority by another's" (2002: 11). (Re)turning to the work by the early British psychoanalyst Ian Suttie, Hamer in her recent book *Incest: A New Perspective* (2002), suggests that the separation in our society between parents and children on the one hand, and the sexual segregation in order to uphold "a preferential value to men" on the other, in fact "lays a foundation for [abusive] acts" (Hamer 2002: 19, 17). In other words, Hamer sees incest as a consequence of a social order that separates parents from children and males from females "in the name of ideal manhood," as she puts it (2002: 53). Rather than blaming individual men, she points to the societal responsibility for this kind of abuse, saying that incest seems to be an outgrowth of a social organization in which there is a ban on tenderness both in the social and the familial arenas, or as Suttie terms it, a "taboo on tenderness" (2002: 17-21). This separatism is clearly visible in the folk-tale of Oedipus, which, as she argues, "point[s] to a world in which there is a cut-off to closeness between parents and children which undermines later attempts at intimacy" (2002: 26).

Concerned to indicate the dangers of a separatist patriarchal social structure, Smiley explores in *A Thousand Acres* the destructive realities of incest that are so often examined in fairy tales. She clearly agrees with contemporary feminist analyses of sexual abuse; far from suggesting that trauma and sexual violence are gendered in themselves, she emphasizes instead that it is socially established. The tyrannical father, who employs his familial power to control the household, the submissive mother and daughters, and the sexual division of labor typical of the patriarchal nuclear set are clearly visible in the Cook family of Ginny's childhood, which is a household more oppressive than Cinderella's. Ginny tells us that their mother "fit in," "kept the house clean and raised us the same way the neighbors were raising their children, which meant that she promoted my father's authority and was not especially affectionate or curious about our feelings" (Smiley 2004a: 223), meaning that also the ban on tenderness is clearly visible in the Cook family. Ginny remembers that "[t]here was no melding with the child into symbiotic fleshy warmth" and she is "sure" their mother bottle-fed her and Rose as she did with Caroline (2004a: 93). In the Cook family the father imposes on his daughters his own principles by way of violence; whenever his daughters disobey him he verbally and/or physically abuses them, and after their mother has died he begins to sexually abuse the oldest daughters Ginny and Rose as well. He assumes it is his daughters' duty to cook and clean for him and to serve and wait upon him at home after his wife's service has ended.

Also Sally Patterson Tubach's debut novel *Memoirs of a Terrorist* (1996) indicts traditional patriarchal gender role stereotypes and underscores a link between this kind of sexual separatism and male violence. Tubach's narrative relates the story of Megan Lloyd, who was once violently raped by her father at the age of fifteen but whose memory of it remains repressed throughout her life. Instead she repeats it in various ways up until the point where she ends her life by hanging herself at thirty-four in a mental hospital room in Germany, ironically suspected of terrorism and awaiting trial for murder of her Italian bondage lover. The novel consists among other things of diary entries, stories, essays, and letters Megan has written, which often refer to legendary figures such as Cinderella,¹¹⁶ and depict traumatic reenactments through apparently motiveless and random adventures by seemingly different personas or multiples that poignantly indicate her dissociation from the unclaimed moment and from her identity. Alongside Megan's narration are her father's letters in which he probes and analyzes her writings,¹¹⁷ and by which he vows to exculpate his daughter's life, which as he puts it, "*was ultimately the result of male sexuality and violence*" (1996: 161, italics in original). Megan's childhood diary entries show that she was critical of traditional gender roles and the forced sexual division of labor. At nine she realized the different spheres of male and female when she could not join the Boy Scouts like her brothers. She felt "[b]etrayed"; "But by whom? The men or the women?" (1996: 12). When she instead joined the Girl Scouts she had to learn the tasks of Cinderella: "various household arts and crafts, activities for which I exhibited no talent" (1996: 11). Her Italian-American mother spent her days with other women "making homemade pasta and tomato sauces, speaking Italian, listening to operas on the radio, rounding us up for meals, and washing clothes and dishes" (1996: 9). As she entered university in revolutionary Berkeley, Megan encountered the word "sexual politics" and came to believe that political decisions "should be made with the goal of producing and raising children in a safe, nurturing environment" and that her mother and grandmother "would have had better lives if ideas like this had been operative in their days" (1996: 26).

¹¹⁶ For her friend Shelley Burney, Megan rewrites or inverts the traditional "Cinderella" story: "I wrote her a fairy tale about her marriage and her stepchildren, but I turned everything upside down so that the kids were evil and exploitative and the stepmother was oppressed and as good as Cinderella" (Tubach 1996: 54), apparently unconsciously acting out a revenge on her father in her mind, where she was an evil child acting out against the parent.

¹¹⁷ Although Megan's father claims to rehabilitate his daughter, as Judith P. Saunders accurately notes, his constant investigations into her life instead "function like an eerie continuance of his incestuous, exploitative relationship with her" (1998: 195).

Smiley links in her novel the familiar and prevalent absent mother from fairy tales to the maternal absence in incestuous families. Ginny's mother passed away when Ginny was fourteen, and so the shoe-incident passage from *A Thousand Acres* cited above also links her mother Ann Rose to Thousandfurs's, who dies at the beginning of the story. "My mother died before I knew her, before I liked her, before I was old enough for her to be herself with me," Ginny says (Smiley 2004a: 93). Maternal absence is consistent with findings made by Judith Herman and Lisa Hirschman in their *Father-Daughter Incest*; survivors of incest tend to lack "any internal representation of an adequate, satisfactory mother" (1981, 2000: 107). As in the "Thousandfurs" tale, Ginny's mother is materially absent from the novel, albeit conspicuous by her non-appearance. Herman has found that "maternal absence, literal or psychological, does seem to be a reality in many families where incest develops," and that "[t]he lack of a strong, competent, and protective mother does seem to render girls more vulnerable to sexual abuse" (1981, 2000: 49).

Ginny's mother's material absence from the novel also signifies the loss that Ginny experiences after her mother's death: "If there is anything more difficult or more real than the death of one's mother, I don't know what it is," she says (Smiley 2004a: 54). She grieves for her mother, like Cinderella, whose name and existence in the ashes by the hearth symbolize her mourning. As Bettelheim notes, her German, French, and Italian names, Aschenputtel, Cendrillon, and Cenerentola, respectively – translated incorrectly into English as Cinderella – clearly emphasize the connection between ashes and mourning and her existence among the ashes, not the cinders. As opposed to cinders, ashes are pure, and denote purification and mourning in many cultures, and basing the heroine's name on cinders evokes dirtiness instead (1988: 253-255). The home and especially the kitchen are in many cases places associated with the mother, due to the traditional sexual division of labor. Bettelheim says that the "hearth" symbolizes the mother in "Cinderella" and he reads the fact that the heroine stays so close to it as a symbol of how she does not want to let go of her "and what she represents" (1988: 248). The connection between what is seen as Cinderella's dirty and low position and the sexual division of labor can be explained by the patriarchal demotion of the hearth in the Christian period. Bettelheim draws attention to the Vestal Virgins of ancient Rome who were the guardians of the hearth, and how their position at the time was considered "one of the most prestigious ranks, if not the most exalted, available to a female" (1988: 254):

It is possible that with the rejection of paganism, what had been a highly desirable role became devalued in the Christian era to be the meanest. The Vestal Virgins served the sacred hearth and Hera, the mother goddess. With the change to a father god, the old maternal deities were degraded and de-

valued, as was a place close to the hearth. In this sense, Cinderella might also be viewed as the degraded mother goddess who at the end of the story is reborn out of the ashes. (1988: 254-255)

In the lost-shoe-incident passage cited above, Ginny takes refuge from her father's violent rage by placing herself "between the range and the window" (2004a: 182), which strategically situates her on the one hand between the mother, symbolized by the range, and to whom she looks for an ally against her father, and on the other hand, a longing for freedom, symbolized by the window, which represents an escape from the oppression of the farm kitchen and her life. However, flight is not a possibility at this point, and the all-powerful mother goddess that Ginny is seeking is dethroned. Her mother is a helpless victim under the father god represented by her husband's autocratic rule and evident in her inability to protect her daughter from him and in her reinforcement of his power over his daughters.

Despite her absence, however, one way in which Ginny's mother is present in the novel is in the form of nature. Chapter 5 will discuss the intertextual bonds between nature and the absent mother in *A Thousand Acres* and *Lear* in more detail. Suffice it to say here that, like her fairy-tale siblings, Ginny often finds the natural elements such as water to be a source of support and strength. Tatar has commented on the fairy-tale hero(ine) who "may be in danger at home" but "invariably finds shelter and sustenance in nature" (1987: 73).¹¹⁸ As this study has previously documented, after escaping her father's transgressive demands the daughter in various variants of the "Thousandfurs" tale usually takes refuge in the natural

¹¹⁸ The hero(ine) in fairy tales is "a natural child" not merely because s/he is associated with nature: s/he is also "a natural child" because of his/her enigmatic origins, a child "of a union that is, if not illicit, at least mysterious or problematical" (Tatar 1987: 73). Here one is also reminded of Lear's words to Regan in the second act when he plans to stay with her after he has left Goneril's and Albany's house, the only direct reference to Queen Lear in the play: "If thou shouldst not be glad / I would divorce me from thy mother's shrine, / Sepulchring an adulteress" (2.2.302-304). According to Lear's reasoning, if the daughter belongs to the father, the mother is the adulteress in the triangle. Ginny's and Rose's origins in the novel are partly puzzling or obscure: even after Ginny remembers her father's nightly visits to her room, "the past still remains largely mysterious" (Farrell 2000: 59). Referring to the absent baby present in the black and white photo that hangs on the wall of the father's room that neither Ginny, Rose, or Caroline can identify, Ginny says, it "might as well be anyone" (Smiley 2004a: 361). It is "a measure of my distance from my father that I had never admitted to him that I didn't know who it was," she concedes immediately before she experiences an abreaction of her childhood sexual trauma (2004a: 226-227). The child in the photo symbolizes both the father's propulsive desire and the child that was killed in the displacement of the mother by the daughter. It can be argued that Smiley here also signifies on the theme of changelings which is of course important in folktales as interventions by the spirit world.

world,¹¹⁹ apparently because it reminds them, like Ginny, of their mother. One such element is water. Once Ginny is in the water in a swimming pool in Pike, she feels the presence of her mother (Smiley 2004a: 94) and seems to imagine a lost maternal merging with her: floating imagery usually entails Imaginary Order fantasies of merging.

In an effort at compensatory restoration, Ginny finds what she thinks is an alternative mother figure in her sister Rose. To Ginny, her mother is a mystery and it is futile to try to remember her. Therefore Ginny “toyed with a magic solution – that Rose, in herself, in her reincarnation of our mother, would speak, or act out, the answers” (2004a: 94). Rose reminds Ginny of their mother: “Rose was quite like my mother in many ways – her manner, her looks, even, in part, the name (Ann Rose Amundson)” (2004a: 93-94), and she seems to believe that being together with Rose, as a “[u]nited front” (2004a: 153), they will be empowered to enact an Oedipal fantasy of standing up to their abusive father, that they will be able to “set rules” and not “let him get away with a lot of stuff” (2004a: 152). But Ginny is betrayed again: Rose tells her that she has been seeing Jess, Ginny’s lover. Ginny then realizes that Rose is jealous and wants everything for herself, like their father. Her efforts have been unsuccessful, her fantasies shattered, and she enters into a dissociative state in which she decides to kill her sister in a “semi-melodramatic” (Sanders 2001: 211) fairy-tale manner by canning poisoned sausages. Rose never eats the concoction, however, but later dies from breast cancer after the two sisters have reconciled. The reconciliation is important because it challenges the rivalry between women in many traditional fairy tales as well as in Shakespeare’s *Lear*.

Mary Paniccia Carden has commented on the absent mother in *A Thousand Acres*, and argues that Ginny is seeking “a kind of mother-under-the-mother,” i.e. “the mother covered over by the mother who acted as a representative of paternal power, reinforcing Larry’s possession of his daughters” (1997: 194, 194-195). According to Carden, Ginny herself comes to act as this mother-under-the-mother after she has regained not only her memory but also a new self. Like Cinderella’s mother, who can be termed a helper after her death, Ann Rose is a form of *aide-de-camp* for her daughter in that Ginny’s search for her dead mother helps trigger the lost memory of the abuse. In looking for her mother, she finds the past. When she lies down on her old childhood bed she is flooded by memories: “Lying here,

¹¹⁹ The heroine often flees to the woods (see Cox 1893: 130-131, 161-162, 211-212, 217-219), or to sea (see 1893: 184, 424), or she turns directly to her mother’s grave (see 1893: 130, 149-150, 392-394).

I knew that he had been in there to me, that my father had lain with me on that bed, that I had looked at the top of his head, at his balding spot in the brown grizzled hair, while feeling him suck my breasts” (Smiley 2004a: 228).

Ginny’s many miscarriages make her a mother without children, and her continuous efforts to become pregnant can be seen as an attempt to recreate the mother-child bond. After her fifth and secret miscarriage she buries her nightgown and some underwear with the stains outside the house the day after Thanksgiving “under the dirt floor of the old dairy barn, where the ground was not frozen yet” (Smiley 2004a: 26). In this way Smiley makes use in her novel of the fairy-tale princess’s hiding of her clothes during the flight in various variants of 510B. The disguised heroine hides her clothes somewhere in nature, such as in a tree, or in one variant, in the ground, and later sneaks out and wears her beautiful dresses to a ball or to church where she meets the prince (see Cox 1893: 274-275, 304-305). In Smiley, after the third miscarriage, Ty did not want them to try any more and so Ginny has a secret fourth and fifth miscarriage. It is her own “private project” (Smiley 2004a: 26); she believes it is untouched by her father and the male-dominated world in which she lives. At first, for her too, as for her fairy-tale alter ego, her project provides a counterpoint to her oppressive life: the bundle symbolizes potentiality; for Ginny it represents her “secret, passionate wishes” of becoming pregnant again: “I let myself think, maybe this is it, maybe this is what turns the tide” (2004a: 27). However, after she remembers the abuse and the absence of stains of marital “defloration” on her wedding night, the bundle instead comes to symbolize the incapsulated memory of her “midnight experiences with Daddy” (2004a: 279).

Incestuously abusing his daughters does not stop the father in *A Thousand Acres* from participating in what Gayle Rubin calls the “traffic in women,” however.¹²⁰ Larry’s daughters were never taught anything about farming; they have been expected merely to do domestic work, marry men who would then take over the farm, and have children. Ginny’s mother Ann Rose was devoid of social and economic power as she did not work outside the home, and like the other women in the county she was subservient to her husband. In Smiley’s fictional society of Zebulon County, Iowa, where the Cooks’ reside, the family “patriarch” holds the power while the women are merely, in Neil Nakadate’s words, “a means to maintain, consolidate, and legate property, objects to be used rather than subjects ca-

¹²⁰ The author of the present study here refers to the cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin’s 1975 treatise “The Traffic in Women,” which is a theoretical exploration of the historical and social mechanisms of a “sex/gender system” that consigns women to a secondary position in human society.

pable of volition and will” and with “no identity and status of [their] own” (1999: 168-169, 168). As Jeannette Batz Cooperman points out, “Ginny and Rose both learned domestic skills (and obligations) from their mother” (1999: 125), who had confined her life to domestic chores such as canning and making peanut brittle with the neighbor Mrs. Ericson while Ginny and her friend Ruthie, one of the Ericson’s daughters, “sat on the floor sewing doll clothes” (Smiley 2004a: 46). After her death, Ginny and Rose assumed all of their mother’s tasks and also take care of their baby sister, but “did not make the tacit assumption, as their mother had of them, that Caroline would inherit their domestic obligations” (Cooperman 1999: 125.) Trained as a lawyer, she is the only Cook daughter to have left the farm. Ginny and Rose were “proud” of what Caroline, their “doll,” had become, and “the reward was the knowledge that she would live a life that each of us had thought about with some longing,” Ginny says (2004a: 318). When Caroline doubts Larry’s Lear-like decision to hand over his land to his three daughters, Rose accurately states: “She doesn’t have to be careful. She’s got an income” (2004a: 60).

Ginny trusts that her fairy-tale antecedent Thousandfurs’s tactics of fleeing her father will save her, and sees marriage as her quickest route of escape from him. The heroine’s flight in the “Thousandfurs” tale corresponds to Propp’s function of absention, when the hero leaves or embarks upon a journey (1988: 26). Herman reports in *Father-Daughter Incest* that “[f]or many of the daughters, marriage appeared to be the passport to freedom” (1981, 2000: 94). Ginny was fifteen years old, the magic age, at the onset of the sexual abuse. Her father started molesting her a year after her mother died, which represents the “villainy” committed according to Propp’s scheme (1988: 30). The daughter in the various variants of “Thousandfurs” is frequently a nubile teenager. Cox tabulates three variants of the “lecherous father” motif where it is explicitly stated that the daughter is fifteen (see 1893: 197-198, 350-352, 353),¹²¹ like Saint Dymphna. Bettelheim links the significance in fairy tales of this precise age to sexual maturation: “In times past, fifteen was often the age at which menstruation began” signalling that the girl would soon be “ready for sexual union” (1988: 232).¹²² Despite Ginny’s flight from her father and the drudgery at home by marrying Ty at nineteen – her longing for a prince being a wish to escape her father – her life does not change much.

¹²¹ These are the Italian variants “U padre e a figlia” (“Father and Daughter”), “Pilusedda” (“Little Hairy”), and “La Cerva” (“The Deer”).

¹²² According to Diana Russell’s study, the average age of father-daughter incest victims is 11.7 years (see 1986: 228). In Janet Liebman Jacobs’s study of incest-abused daughters, forty of the survivors or eighty percent were sexually abused before the age of twelve, and thirty of these before the age of eight (1994: 4).

As in the fairy-tale world where, “[t]he evil forces at home habitually reappear” in magnified form “in the enchanted realm” (Tatar 1987: 72), Ginny’s hard life continues. The looping nature of the heroine’s flight resonates with repetition compulsion in trauma; the return of “the evil forces” in the traditional pattern of fairy tales means that it moves on trauma time. Smiley’s narrative shows that relying on Prince Charming to carry her over to another castle may be a trap. Even after moving out of their father’s house, Ginny, Rose, and Caroline cook for him; he wants breakfast “slap on the table at six” (Smiley 2004a: 112), and Ginny and Rose clean and do the laundry for him as well. Moreover, Ginny and Rose are shackled to their own families’ housework of cooking and cleaning for their husbands.

Unlike the male heroes in fairy tales who “must routinely submit to character tests,” the heroines are tested in their housework skills (Tatar 1987: 116). Cinderella has to work hard in the kitchen, get up before daybreak and cook, wash and clean all day. Ginny’s and Rose’s chores were precisely those of Cinderella. After Rose had a mastectomy and subsequent treatment Ginny cooked for three households, her own, her father’s and Rose’s: “My morning at the stove started before five and didn’t end until eight-thirty,” she says (Smiley 2004a: 7). Her being dressed as a hobo at the school Halloween party in the extract above is a reminder of Cinderella’s rags in her hard-working life in the ashes by the hearth, and it also brings to mind Thousandfurs’s disguise. Smiley shows that the toil is connected to “all-encompassing thrift” (2004: 45) in Larry’s world view and in the patriarchal community in which Ginny grew up, but that in reality it can be a form of female degradation and oppression; Larry treats his daughters as slaves, as his own minions or servile dependants. Ginny says that she and Rose were “so well trained” they “never missed a corner, never left a cleaning job undone” (2004a: 227).¹²³ Her folkloric sibling Thousandfurs, too, after escaping her amorous parent, works in the prince’s kitchen. The motif of female heroines’ travail in fairy tales proposes a connection between power and the male world and subservience and the female world. Smiley has preserved this link in her novel, indicating by this that father-daughter incest is a potential effect of the gendered division of labor in the traditional patriarchal nuclear family.

In addition to re-experiencing the toil of her old life after her escape, Rose, as Thousandfurs sometimes does, also experiences violent behavior in the new

¹²³ No doubt the compulsive cleaning also has something to do with the sexual violation to which they have been subjected; as Susan Elizabeth Farrell points out: “the obsessive housecleaning represents the sisters’ attempts to wash away and purify their own past experiences” (2001: 34).

realm. The prince in 510B mistreats the heroine when she works as a kitchen maid in the castle. In one version of the tale, Maria Intaulata [Maria Wood], the prince hits the princess – who in this particular variant works as a waiting-maid – respectively with a whip, a bridle, and spurs on three consecutive nights because she forgets to give him these items as he is going to three different feasts, and in yet another version of Maria Wood, the prince respectively whips, strikes her with his boot, and finally slaps the heroine and also verbally abuses her when three nights in a row she asks to accompany him to a carnival (see Cox 1893: 135, 181-182). Also in the 1812 version of Grimms’ “Thousandfurs” the prince is physically abusive: he takes off his boots to throw at the eponymous heroine’s head after she has been ordered to take them off him (see Dollerup, Reventlow, and Rosenberg Hansen 1986: 24). The resourceful and disguised princess, however, rebukes the prince by saying she was only good for having boots thrown at her when he asks her about her identity. After fleeing Larry’s cruel behavior at home, Rose, too, was subject to physical violence in her new home, in her relationship with her husband Pete, and like her folktale sister, she chided the offending male: when Pete broke Rose’s arm “by knocking or pushing her down in the bathroom” and “she fell on her wrist on the tile floor” she made a sleeve for the cast that read “PETE DID THIS” (Smiley 2004a: 141). Nakadate suggests that it is Pete’s physical abuse that awakens Rose to the suffering her father has put her through: Rose’s cast “marks a crucial stage of her struggle for selfhood” (1999: 172). It can be added that it also marks the end to the helpless state in which Rose was found each time her husband beat her. No more would she be either Pete’s or Larry’s powerless victim. When Rose has attained a sense of self, she is no longer the victim. Her relationship with Jess proves it, too; Jess never abuses her either physically or sexually.

Thousandfurs’s and Rose’s experiences of interpersonal violence in their new lives resonate with the results in studies of survivors’ real experiences of revictimization. According to Diana Russell, survivors who have experienced child sexual abuse are more often revictimized in adult life than are women who have no history of molestation (see 1986: 200-203). The new relationship thus replays the incestuous one in which the survivor is the helpless victim. “[W]hen confronted with a similar abusive context,” Janet Liebman Jacobs explains, the survivor of father-daughter incest “once again becomes the terrified and overpowered victim of her father’s transgression” (1994: 112). In general, in order to somehow counteract anxiety triggered by stressful situations, trauma victims have a tendency to return to previous and familiar behavior patterns, even if these patterns, for those individuals who have been traumatized in the past “cause pain” (van der Kolk 1989: 15). However, the compulsion to repeat the trauma, i.e., to re-expose oneself to similar situations, is gendered. Research indicates that while women

survivors tend to be drawn to abusive men who further victimize them, there is a tendency for male survivors to instead identify with the predator and go on to victimize others in order to displace the powerlessness they themselves feel (cited by van der Kolk 1989: 4). As readers we actually do not know whether Larry's father, grandpa Cook, molested anyone, but Ginny tells us, "Grandpa Cook used to prowl around looking at everybody. It was like checking the hogs or something." (2004a: 188)

Contemporary incest narratives abound with depictions of re-victimization. This study has already mentioned how in Sally Patterson Tubach's novel *Memoirs of a Terrorist* Megan Lloyd's life after her father's violent incestuous attack was one of repeated victimization. Kathy Acker's tale *Blood and Guts in High School* (1978), too, powerfully demonstrates traumatic revictimization as the young protagonist Janey in her search for some love and tenderness reprises her relationship with her father in relation to other men and virtually epitomizes Jacobs's claim that "revictimization emerges out of a desire for connection that becomes contextualized by eroticized submission and violence" (1994: 118). "GIRLS WILL DO ANYTHING FOR LOVE," reads the wording to Acker's illustration of a vagina (1984: 62); this, as Jennifer Mitchell and Kathryn Parker observe, is "a caption that suggests an ultimate self-sacrifice in search of a fairy-tale destiny" (2005: 78). *Blood and Guts in High School* tells the story of a ten-year old girl, Janey Smith, who has a sexual affair with her father in Mérida, México. Her mother has died and her father sexually abuses her from infancy on. At the novel's beginning he spurns her as he has a new lover, Sally, and sends her to high school in New York. In New York she joins a gang, has a couple of abortions, and then all the gang members except for Janey and another die in a car crash. After the accident Janey lives in the New York slums where two thieves break into her apartment and kidnap her. They sell her, and a Persian slave trader tries to turn her into a prostitute. Before he releases her as a prostitute he discovers that she has cancer, whereupon he lets her go. She illegally arrives in Tangier, Morocco, where she meets the French avant-garde writer Jean Genet and they start a relationship. He, too, is abusive and leaves her and she ends up in prison for stealing his property. After rebellion strikes in the country they are thrown out of Alexandria; they split company and she dies at fourteen. Acker's novel, which like Tubach's consists of diary entries and different writings, also displays a fairy-tale fable accompanied by a child-like map of her dreams (see Acker 1984: 44-56), and as Kathy Hughes rightly observes, "Acker's text, and its fragmentation and blurring of genres and voices, is a physical and linguistic manifestation of the childhood incest, and the aftermath" (2006: 127), including revictimization.

Finally, the fairy-tale hero(ine) is usually recognized and in *A Thousand Acres* also the scenes of recognition occur in relation to trauma. In the “Thousandfurs” tale’s it is the prince/king who recognizes the heroine as the mistreated furry creature that was hired as their kitchen maid. Propp’s *Morphology* pairs the function of the hero being marked, branded, or wounded with the function of recognition by that acquired mark or wound, sometimes by a gift (1988: 62). In trauma theoretical terms, these functions can be seen to correspond to the recognition of psychological wounds by honoring the trauma survivor (male or female) and his or her suffering; since trauma is characterized by *misrecognition*, acknowledgement in the form of recognition is crucial, as trauma experts such as Judith Herman (1994: 133-154) and Dori Laub (1992: 68) have emphasized. Recognition in trauma literature can also refer to the perpetrator’s realization of his or her role as the guilty party. This is beautifully expressed by Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata* in Tancredi’s shock of recognition in having wounded his beloved Clorinda the second time, which renders him both mute and immobile: “La vide, la conobbe, e restò senza / e voce e moto. Ahi vista! ahi conoscenza!” (1982: XII, 67),¹²⁴ he laments. It is thus not before he sees his beloved as a ghost that he gains the shocking insight into his earlier deed.

Larry never acknowledges what he has put his daughters through. Rose realizes that her father will never do it, especially after he has apparently gone mad. “Now there isn’t even a chance that I’ll look him in the eye, and see that he knows what he did and what it means” (Smiley 2004a: 235), she says. Ginny’s father never said anything like “This didn’t happen”, but he did not explicitly say it did either, except once before he goes out into the storm and says to Ginny, “You barren whore! I know all about you, you slut” (2004a: 173). At the time she does not know why he calls her that: “Of course I wondered why Daddy had chosen just those terms for me, whore, slut,” as she has not yet any conscious awareness of the abuse, but construes the verbal abuse as evidence of the supernatural powers of her father’s knowledge of her affair with Jess Clark: “Certainly a child raised with an understanding of her father’s power like mine could not be surprised that even without any apparent source of information he would know her dearest secret” (2004a: 181).¹²⁵ This is the only time he ever mentions it. At the annual church potluck after the night of the storm Ginny tries to confront her father, but “[h]e turned away at once” (2004a: 216).

¹²⁴ “And lost therewith his speech and moving quite; / O woful knowledge! ah unhappy sight!” (1968: XII: LXVII, Trans. Fairfax).

¹²⁵ Herman has observed that “[m]any [victimized children] develop the belief that their abusers have absolute or even supernatural powers (1994: 100).

Ginny's lover Jess Clark, however, recognizes the sisters' trauma (in this he corresponds to the prince/suitor in "Thousandfurs"), and he is the first Ginny person tells. In him she thinks she has found a trustworthy person to talk to; initially he does appear as a Christ-like figure¹²⁶ in her life, and she tells him what Rose has told her about the abuse although she does not yet remember the abuse herself at the time. But is Jess heroized or demonized, a rescuer or a villain? Sheldon rightly argues that later, when he moves into Larry's house, he partly "repeats the father's role of exploiter of women" (1997: 55). In this way, Smiley also refuses the triangle of perpetrator-victim-rescuer triangle. First he sleeps with Ginny, then he moves on to Rose with whom he has an affair but abandons her after four months when she falls ill again.

The climax of *A Thousand Acres* occurs in the penultimate part of the book as Smiley's contemporary Thousandfurs recovers her memory, leaves her husband, and departs the farm. Her home situation has *de novo* become intolerable and she absents herself once more, the repetitive nature of her escape resonating powerfully with the compulsion to repeat itself in trauma, but this time repetition, or the return to the moment of trauma, signifies an awakening which brings with it a release from the dream of the past, a freedom to choose departure, and hence a repossession of time. In fairy tales, "[c]onquering the forces of evil [...] implies at once liberation from domestic oppression and elevation to a higher social rank" (Tatar 1987: 72). Thus, Ginny, like Cinderella, is reborn out of the ashes as she leaves her husband Ty, her father, and the farm while making dinner one day to live in a two-bedroom "garden apartment" in St. Paul, Minnesota and start working as a waitress at a Perkins restaurant in St. Paul, Minnesota (Smiley 2004a: 335). Now she is no longer her father's slave but is paid for her work. This change in Ginny corresponds to the hero's new appearance in Propp's schema (1988: 62). When her husband later comes to see Ginny to ask for a divorce he discovers she is no longer the same, "I didn't remember you like this," "[y]ou were pretty and funny, and you looked at the good side of things," he says (2004a: 343).

However, Smiley disrupts generic expectations in *A Thousand Acres* by having the disintegration of the nuclear group being followed by the creation of a new alternative constellation when Ginny becomes the *de facto* only caretaker of Rose's daughters Linda and Pam after Pete's drowning and Rose's subsequent

¹²⁶ Sheldon, too, has pointed out the connection between Jess Clark and Jesus Christ: "[t]he initials relate him to Jesus Christ," and "'Jess' also sounds like an abbreviation of 'Jes[us]'" (1997: 52, n. 1).

death from breast cancer; although “they don’t have a great deal of faith in my guardianship,” Ginny says, her nieces like her *in loco parentis* and they all “get along” (Smiley 2004a: 369). The creation of a new family toward the end is characteristic of the fairy tale but in fairyland the new family is similar to the initial one in the beginning of the tale: “Fairy tales habitually trace a trajectory [...] from the dissolution of one nuclear family to the formation of a new one” (Tatar 1987: 71). Most variants of tale type 510B end with a marriage between the heroine and the suitor which indicates a return for the hero(ine) to a family like the one s/he escaped from in the first place, or, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter, to the very same family. At the end of Smiley’s novel, however, Ginny’s life looks more like the one Rose as a child envisioned for their mother, “a waitress at the restaurant of a nice hotel,” living with Ginny and Rose “in a Hollywood-style apartment” (Smiley 2004a: 187) rather than the romantic happily-ever-after ending of traditional fairy tales, and it shows how Ginny struggles to escape the limitations set on the fairy-tale heroine in typical tales of incest. *A Thousand Acres* finally ends the way it began, with Ginny reminiscing and again she recalls her now “dead young self” but this time she also has “the ability [...] of remembering what you can’t imagine” (Smiley 2004a: 370). Smiley’s psychologically credible novel reinstates the folktale-heroine’s story, which has been repressed in the fairy-tale tradition, by symbolically recalling and bearing witness to the incest-abused daughter’s plight urging also the reader to remember.

2.4 Tales to Remember

A Thousand Acres explores the tension between history and memory in the context of incest trauma. Smiley’s novel, and other works that draw on fairy-tale intertexts, evoke for their readers not only familiar plots, characters, and traditions (and in some cases draw the reader’s attention to less known versions of the storyline), and the notion of being trapped or of existing within a previous narrative and a familiar and pre-existing pattern of underlying assumptions of Western cultural plots, but also the sense of being caught in trauma’s time, a captive of history. Rather than magically disenthraling these figures from the structural patterns of past stories, however, a fairy-tale intertext emphasizes the repetitive structure of both trauma and traditional morphologies as well as the limits of established and conventional morphological precepts when trauma demolishes traditional past-present-future notions of temporality. The protagonist’s future depends not merely upon the recovery of her folktale sisters’ repressed narratives but also on repeated retelling as an effort at remembering and countering forgetting.

Exploding the cultural and permeable barrier between reality and fantasy in trauma so as to collectively bear witness, contemporary incest narratives like *A Thousand Acres*, which recover and draw on fairy tales as intertexts or retell old tales, also recover the old tradition of female storytelling and the daughter's incest story in particular as cultural or folk memory. Cultural memory is not automatically untrue but, liberated from questions of true and false and bordering between fiction and real life, challenges notions of truth and falsehood and instead bespeaks the instability and reconstructed nature of all memory and how it is integrated with fantasy. Even the last verses of Perrault's "Peau d'Âne," while noting that "The tale of Donkeyskin is hard to believe," also emphasize the need of retelling for the purpose of remembering and passing on: "as long as there are children, mothers and grandmothers in the world the memory of it will not die" (qtd. in Warner 1995: 346). Like modern-day Arachnes,¹²⁷ contemporary authors weave tales of what can be termed "unspeakable" transgressions against women in our cultural past and present. For women, as Marina Warner astutely points out, it is "[t]he story itself" which "becomes the weapon of the weaponless" (1995: 412). Through the depiction of suppressed figures and their stories, including means of survival, these retellings are recalcitrant in their transformation of cultural memory, enacting resistance against forgetting and repression. By their very repetitive nature, retellings create a collective, plural or "stereophonic" conception of testimony, producing a collective memory that works against forgetting and repression and toward working through and the repossession of time.

As the recovery and repeated telling of incest tales is resistant as cultural memory and as testimony against forgetting, so also is the demand on the reader to remember. Readers are enlisted in fighting against oblivion by helping to re-integrate the narratives into collective memory. Fairy-tale tellers, contemporary and in times past, have always asked readers/auditors to identify and sympathize with the protagonists and to share in their pain and joy. In a context of trauma, however, reader response takes on a meaning as reader responsibility; the story not only demands *a response* from the reader, but also *a responsibility to remember*. In other words, these stories need to be repeated to be remembered by tellers and addressees alike so that they will not *de novo* sink below the horizon of consciousness and remembrance. This signals the political dimension of cultural memory. Geoffrey Hartman's comparison of trauma literature's power to produce secondary trauma in readers and hearers with magic resonates with the enchanted world of fairy tales: "A mysteriously triggered verbal catharsis – that may be

¹²⁷ For the story of the Greco-Roman mythical figure of Arachne, see Ovid (1984 vi, 5-145: 288-299).

chronic [...] hypnotize listeners by their contagious magic, by a secondary traumatism” (2003: 268-269). As if by magic, the stories enchant readers, turning tellers into magi. Narratives of personal trauma, fictional or otherwise, inform the conscious and unconscious integration of collective memory and vice versa, and these stories remain with the reader because cultural memory belongs not to individuals but to us all.

Summa summarum, with specific reference to Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres*, and its intertextual relations to the “Thousandfurs” tale, this chapter has sought to explore the intertextual return of repressed fairy tales as a specific mode of representing trauma as the recovery of repressed or forgotten memories of sexual abuse; not only within the novel itself but also in our storytelling and literary tradition and our culture. Intertextual relations to the fairy-tale genre represent a key stylistic strategy for writing sexual trauma in contemporary incest fiction, and this chapter has emphasized the significance of intertextually recovering and repeating old tales of father-daughter incest for the purpose of remembering as a buffer against forgetting and as testimony. The next chapter will scrutinize Smiley’s intertextual ties to another literary predecessor, Shakespeare and his *Lear* in a context of traumatic re-vision to demonstrate not only the importance of remembering but also the need to rework or recreate the past in the present, or to try to turn the past in a different direction.

3 *KING LEAR AND A THOUSAND ACRES AS SIMULTANEOUSLY PRESENT: REWRITING LEAR, REWRITING INCEST*

Tremble, thou wretch
That hast within thee undivulgèd crimes
Unwhipped of justice; hide thee, thou bloody hand,
Thou perjured and thou simular of virtue
That art incestuous; caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Has practised on man's life; close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents and cry
These dreadful summoners grace.

—William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (3.2.51-59)¹²⁸

Whereas the previous chapter has demonstrated the importance of intertextual repetition in connection to the recovery and remembering of previously repressed stories of trauma as a form of cultural memory and as a bulwark against forgetting, this chapter seeks to explore intertextuality in relation to trauma's time in terms of belated attempts at mastering on a metatextual level an unclaimed moment in a prior text through a literary return to it. Cathy Caruth (1995a: 8) cues on the Freudian concept of *Nachträglichkeit* – a revolutionary reconsideration of the temporality of remembering which alludes to the potential of asserting mastery over earlier traumatic situations by re-interpreting these to match subsequent events – for her definition of trauma (“it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time”). Her emphasis on the belatedness of trauma powerfully implicates intertextual trauma fiction; an author's intertextual return to a precedent text may constitute an attempt at achieving control over an instant of literary trauma through the act of re-perceiving or rewriting it from a present perspective. As Anne Whitehead puts it, “[t]he intertextual novelist can enact through a return to the source text an attempt to grasp what was not fully known or realised in the first instance, and thereby to depart from it or pass beyond it,” and continues: “[t]he intertextual novel constructs itself around the gap between the source text and its rewriting, and depends on the reader to assemble the pieces and complete the story” (2004: 90, 93). In other words, in intertextual literature,

¹²⁸ This quotation is from *The Tragedy of King Lear* printed in the 1623 Folio, in *The Complete Works*, 2nd ed, eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

the reader is left to determine the outcome of the story, to decide whether the dénouement signifies that the protagonist is still trapped in repetition compulsion or if there is a possible alternative to the seemingly predetermined trajectory of the precedent text.

This present chapter will discuss the literary return to an unclaimed moment of trauma in a precedent œuvre as an effort at mastery with specific reference to Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, arguing that the novel, in the simultaneity of trauma's eternal present, enacts an attempt to review and control from a new critical point of view a traumatic situation which was overt in the folk narratives but covert and not fully known or acknowledged in Shakespeare's *King Lear*: father-daughter incest. As this study suggests, the novel contributes significantly to intertextual trauma fiction: Smiley not only returns to the trauma in the folk material behind Shakespeare's mythical *Lear*, re-establishing the connectedness of the stories, but also to the unclaimed moment in the play itself, reviewing it from a fresh perspective in an effort to understand, re-interpret, and perhaps change the past in the present. Whereas a father-daughter incest theme in *Lear* may not have had the same cultural meaning for an audience and author in Renaissance England as for today's readers, as a modern writer informed by contemporary theories of trauma and feminism Smiley generates her own version of a seemingly fateful event and sheds light on, as she critiques and seeks to resist, the oppressive ideological power structures in Shakespeare's tragedy, arguing that the patriarchal logic of the drama forms and finally seals both the daughters' and the king's own tragedies.

3.1 Repetition as an Attempt at Mastery

The central Freudian text which treats mastery in repetition compulsion is "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920), exemplified by the prototypical *fort/da* game by which Freud famously theorizes how the unpreparedness for a shock generates a compulsion to repeat in the individual: a one-and-a-half-year-old boy plays a game of repeatedly throwing a wooden reel on a string over his curtained cot, holding the string and saying "o-o-o-o," interpreted by Freud as the German *fort* (gone), and pulling it in again, saying "*Da!*" (here), re-enacting his mother's departure and her subsequent return, and in this way not only symbolically countervailing the traumatic loss of his mother (see 2003b: 52-55), but also taking control of the situation by reclaiming agency and making his mother go away instead of being left by her.

For Cathy Caruth, departure and return is at the center of the *fort/da* Spiel, which illustrates how return as an attempt at mastery becomes departure. In returning in her *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) to Freud's description in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) of how someone who has been in an accident "gets away, apparently unharmed" (1967: 84) Caruth compares the return to a traumatic experience with a departure from its site. In other words, in Caruth's interpretation, Freud's words illustrate the complex process of trauma and latency in terms of leaving: "The trauma of the accident, its very unconsciousness, is borne by an act of departure" (1996a: 22). Trauma demands a return for the incorporation of the experience into the psyche, and the return to the traumatic moment signifies a release from the past and hence a repossession of time precisely because repetition encompasses a possibility of departure. In other words, trauma becomes an experience of leaving. To Caruth, the *fort/da* game signifies not only an attempt to experience mastery through a leaving of its site but also brings into prominent view the drive to preserve life in the confrontation with death inherent in the traumatic moment. Revisiting Freud's description in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" of the literal return of the scene of trauma in accident nightmares experienced by his patients, Caruth proposes that Freud's suggestion that "[t]hese dreams seek to assert control over the stimuli *retrospectively*" (2003b: 71, emphasis original) illustrate the complex relationship between repetition and trauma in terms of survival:

What is enigmatically suggested, that is, is that the trauma consists not only in having confronted death but in *having survived, precisely, without knowing it*. What one returns to in the flashback is not the incomprehensibility of one's near death, but the very incomprehensibility of one's survival. Repetition, in other words, is not simply the attempt to grasp that one has almost died but, more fundamentally and enigmatically, the very attempt *to claim one's own survival.*" (1996a: 64, emphasis original)

In Caruth's understanding, the flashback brings with it a realization of having survived in the face of death, and an attempt to possess one's own survival; to confront death and then turn away from it makes living on a possibility.

In the context of intertextual trauma fiction, a return to an earlier text can be seen as an attempt to recreate imaginatively an unclaimed event in the precedent work as an effort to symbolically take charge of and perhaps depart from it on a literary level. In this way authors of intertextual trauma fiction may attempt to communicate what they feel has been repressed in the source text and their writing conveys a need to revisit and repeat the narrative because they feel the topic has not been resolved. In other words, these works enact a desire for mastery. The intertextual return to literary classics by contemporary authors can be read as a process of deferred interpretation to make visible or bring to the surface that which was

missed or subterranean in the precedent canonical text but which yet represents culturally dominant ideologies of the time. This chapter reads *A Thousand Acres* and *King Lear* as contemporary intertexts not only in the intertextual sense that readers (re)construct a meaning of a text every time they read it (Barthes's "every text is eternally written *here and now*" (1977a: 145, original emphasis)), but also in terms of traumatic temporality in the sense that a traumatic event is experienced as simultaneously present with the *hic et nunc* instead of as something that took place in the past and is (re)worked and (re-)interpreted from a present perspective to stand in correlation to succeeding events: in a similar vein, some aspects of a literary work are recognized only in a second intertextual moment. In *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley makes available that which was not fully recognized in the play, father-daughter incest and its haunting repercussions, and also departs from the source material in that her Goneril survives and leaves the site of trauma of the precedent text to claim her own survival as a testament to her previously marginalized and silenced position in Shakespeare's drama.

3.2 "Nothing will come of nothing": Incest and *Lear*

Unlike Shakespeare's *Pericles*,¹²⁹ *King Lear* is not about incest in the sense that it is overtly enacted or explicitly recognized in the play,¹³⁰ but a number of feminist and psychoanalytic critics, some of whom are also aware of the motif in its folkloric sources (see, e.g., Boose 1982: 345, n. 21; Chedgzoy 1995: 56), have noted an incestuous subtext in the drama. These scholars insist that, although incest is not dramatized in the play, incestuous *desire* is indeed played out. Arpad Pauncz has even named the king's "reverse" Oedipus complex "the Lear Complex" (1952: 58),¹³¹ and as the previous chapter already mentioned, Lynda Boose views the first scene of the tragedy as a wedding ceremony gone awry where Shakes-

¹²⁹ There is a general consensus among critics that Shakespeare did not write *Pericles* alone, but this study uses his name as though he was the work's sole playwright.

¹³⁰ *King Lear* is absent from Lois Bueler's list of forty odd titles of dramatic works from the English Renaissance that treat the theme of incest, including John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633), Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (1623-24), and the Shakespearean dramas *Pericles* (1607), *Hamlet* (1600-1), and *The Comedy of Errors* (1594). For the whole list, see Boehrer (1992: 160-161). According to Bruce Thomas Boehrer, however, the catalog is incomplete (1992: 12), and he adds among others the Shakespearean play *Richard III* (1592-3) (1992: 161). Agreeing with Boehrer about the incompleteness of Bueler's inventory, this present study suggests that also *King Lear* may be added to the record because although the subject is not patent in the text as an explicit presence, there is an implicit presence of incest in the plot due to its intertextual origins in folklore.

¹³¹ For a list of studies published between 1952 and 1972 dealing with an incest motif in the play, see Dundes (1982a: 243, n. 14).

peare's protagonist paradoxically casts out his youngest daughter to avoid her leaving him (1982: 333).¹³² Mark Blechner concurs and believes that incestuous desire is an "unconscious motivation" for the father's behavior in the drama: "Lear is profoundly attached to Cordelia, with a love that goes far beyond society's bounds of paternal attachment. His actions in the first scene seem unconsciously designed to keep his favorite daughter from forsaking him and marrying either of her two suitors" (1988: 312, 314).¹³³

Janet Adelman and Coppélia Kahn find their meeting-point concerning the subject of incest in Shakespeare's *Lear* in theories of pre-Oedipal longing by exploring the part played by the maternal in the play. Kahn claims that "the renunciation of [Cordelia] as incestuous object" through marriage "awakens a deeper emotional need in Lear: the need for Cordelia as daughter-mother" (1986: 40), and Adelman suggests that the king is son and father "collaps[ed] into one figure," thus causing the father-daughter relationships in the play "to carry the immense fear and longing of a son's relationship with a mother" (1992: 103). In other words, for Adelman and Kahn the father-daughter relationship reveals an adult reversal of a pre-Oedipal and infantile mother-son attachment of undifferentiated merging with the maternal body; the father is now reborn in the daughter as the son.

This critical approach of focusing on repressed maternity in the Shakespearean tragedy has its origin in Freud's reading of *King Lear* in "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (1913), which he wrote at a time during which he was concerned with incest, allegedly letting go of the seduction theory and working to develop the Oedipus Complex. The ageing, and dying king, Freud argues, "yearns after the love of woman as once he had it from his mother," but "in vain" as "the third of the Fates alone, the silent goddess of Death, will take him into her arms" (Freud 1959a: 256). Kate Chedgzoy, however, has made an interesting comment on feminist critics' readings such as Kahn's, which although it opens with a discussion of hysteria, has failed to link it with father-daughter incest in the play. Chedgzoy supports her assumption on Lear's words in the following passage (1995: 56): "O, how this mother swells up toward my heart! / *Histerica passio* down, thou climbing sorrow, / Thy element's below" (2.2.231-233; Chedgzoy 1995: 56). "Lear's

¹³² Due to its incestuous content, Richard McCabe finds this opening scene "one of the most embarrassing in the Shakespearean canon" (qtd. in Quilligan 2005: 214).

¹³³ As further proof that Shakespeare aimed to depict Lear's unconscious desire for Cordelia, Blechner refers to the playwright's changing the protagonist's name Leir, pronounced to rhyme with "there," to Lear, which suggests "its homonym 'leer': "Shakespeare, masterful punster that he was, would not have made this change without realizing its implications; in his other plays he often uses the word "leer" to denote an intense, lusty, or indecent glance" (1988: 317).

self-diagnosis of hysteria,” she notes, “poses a curious irony, since it was treating hysterical daughters, rather than fathers, that gave Freud the opportunity to undertake his analyses of unhappy families and, in forcing him to confront the apparent frequency of incest in the best-regulated homes, formed the basis of his revolutionary theories” (1995: 56).

Zenón Luis-Martínez, too, in his study *In Words and Deeds: The Spectacle of Incest in English Renaissance Tragedy* (2002), elaborates on the father-daughter relationship in *King Lear* according to “a ghostly maternal presence” (2002: 218). Drawing on Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Aristotelian poetics of tragedy, and Foucauldian theories of the deployment of sexuality and alliance in his discussion of incest and Renaissance drama, Luis-Martínez reads Shakespeare’s tragedy from the point of view of private desire, viewing Cordelia as “both cause and target of the love demand,” of which the “ultimate object” is a pre-Oedipal fantasy of absolute merging with the Mother (2002: 136, 135). According to his reading, incest in such works as Shakespeare’s *Lear* is not expressed as a motif through the plot but an effect of language and “the *mise-en-scène* of desire” (2002: 169); the *mise-en-scène* in the play’s first scene reveals Lear’s attempts to conceal his desire for Cordelia, and consequently *opsis*¹³⁴ makes visible to the spectators that which should stay covert, revealing that Lear’s ire stems from being “caught in the act” rather than from Cordelia’s rejection (2002: 140-141, quotation on p. 141). In other words, “[t]he spectator discovers Lear’s incestuous attachment, even though the character’s effort aims at disowning it,” and Lear’s subsequent attempts to camouflage his desire paradoxically end up divulging it even more: “Lear holds on to ceremonial language” as he “expels Cordelia by paradoxically showing his zeal to possess her eternally (‘hold thee from this for ever’)” (2002: 141; 1.1.116). In other words, Luis-Martínez uses the concept of incest as an unspoken experience represented through words and deeds on the stage as a means of enacting the playgoer’s tragic experience, not in terms of blood ties, “tyranny, abuse, and victimization” (2002: 218).

While Jane Ford, too, views the father-daughter relationship in terms of a mother-son relationship, she also follows another critical line by contextualizing the discussion of literary father-daughter incest historically and sociologically. In her *Patriarchy and Incest from Shakespeare to Joyce* (1998), a study of the treatment of the incest theme in the work of Shakespeare and four other male artists, Ford sees the function of the father-daughter incest as a reversal of the mother-son relationship in the original Oedipal triangle, whereby the daughter in this inverted

¹³⁴ *Opsis* refers to spectacle in the Aristotelian theory of drama.

triangle replaces both her own mother and the mother of her father and her suitor consequently acts as a proxy for her father's own father explaining her father's hostility toward the suitor. Broadly defining an incest theme as including "not only overt incest, but any abnormal attachments on the part of fathers and/or daughters which permanently inhibit their ability to relate to each other appropriately and to establish viable relationships with others," Ford implies that Lear's relationship to Cordelia is what Judith Herman has defined as "covert incest," violation by words, looks, or gestures rather than consummated physical incest (Ford 1998: 18, 33).¹³⁵ Examining a work from an early, a middle, and a late period in Shakespeare's career in order to trace how psychobiographical data of the author's life as suitor, son, and father influence the literary treatment of father-daughter incest, Ford places *King Lear* as a work representing his middle period, which coincides with Shakespeare's daughter Susanna's marriage in 1607 (1998: 41), a time during which he "created many examples of the violence and destruction lying at the heart of the incest theme," as the father only reluctantly gives the daughter away (1998: 42).

Maureen Quilligan, too, contextualizes Shakespeare's play historically, and sees Cordelia's death from the perspective of Renaissance sensibilities as a punishment for incest. When Lear's youngest daughter returns to England at the head of an army "her love aims at an incestuous end": she fulfills "Lear's fantasy of rescue and communion" (2005: 235, 216) and is punished with death. Quilligan notes that, "the Renaissance did indeed assume that the sin [of incest] was shared between the couple and therefore that Cordelia's final complicity in her father's fantasy makes her also guilty" (2005: 215). Cordelia dies in response to what was perceived by the conventional Elizabethan/Jacobean culture as guilt for her transgressive desire. Death is seen as the appropriate punishment for the crime.

As a modern writer reading Shakespeare's text anew, in a second moment as it were, Jane Smiley in *A Thousand Acres* renders overtly what is covert in the play and its patriarchal nuclear (Lear) family alike, but unlike these above-mentioned critics who have detected in Shakespeare's drama a theme of incestuous desire in the father for the youngest daughter Cordelia, Smiley focuses her reading of incest in the play on Goneril and Regan, "the wicked witches, ugly sisters; the unnatural women whom fairy tales indict" (Warner 1995: 228). Although Shakespeare's play does not dramatize overt incest, the father-daughter relations in the play

¹³⁵ For Herman, overt and covert incest differ only in degree, not in kind: "overt incest represents only the furthest point on a continuum" (1981, 2000: 110). For descriptions of covert incest, see e.g., Herman with Hirschman (1981, 2000: 109-125); see also Adams (1991: 8-12).

would be intelligible to today's readers or theatergoers as covertly incestuous,¹³⁶ and *A Thousand Acres* suggests that there is more to Lear's behavior than merely an egotistical father taking great offence at his youngest daughter because she will not flatter him.¹³⁷ In other words, *Lear* is not what it appears. What Smiley does with *A Thousand Acres* is to fully disclose, make explicit and overt, that which has been "undivulgèd" (3.2.52), as it were, that is, what Shakespeare suppresses in the play. In other words, while Smiley re-imagines the *Lear* story as a fable of overt incest, covert incest is staged more or less overtly in the play.

Smiley describes her reactions to Shakespeare's *Lear* across a number of texts and interviews, which productively may be read in intertextual dialogue with the novel: her essays "Shakespeare in Iceland" (1999) and "Not a Pretty Picture" (2001), as well as interviews in *Belles Lettres* (1992), *The Mail on Sunday* (1998), *Atlantic Unbound* (1998), and "About the Book" (2004). What is perhaps the most suggestive statement about her book comes from Smiley herself:

I always felt that something else was going on in the family life of these people and that presenting the same events from a different point of view would result in a different story. I also felt that Regan and Goneril could not have been as bad as they're portrayed. I saw that the play had the organisational principles for a novel and that I could use one of the older sisters' points of view to show some things that I felt were implied in the play but not explicit. (Smiley 1998: 69)

Although Smiley does not claim that incest is dramatized in the play, her novel, as Susan Farrell puts it, "certainly points out the strangeness in Lear's relationships with his daughters and may lead readers to speculate further about the causes for conflict between them" (2001: 52).

As the preceding chapter of this study has demonstrated, Smiley's perception about an incest theme in the substructure of Shakespeare's drama is corroborated by its folkloric sources, of which she is aware (see Smiley 2001: 162; Bacon 1998), but despite her knowledge of the work's folkloric origins, she maintains

¹³⁶ One narrative of covert incest that comes to mind here is Christina Stead's autobiographical novel *The Man Who Loved Children* (1940), which can be thought of as a modern version of the folkloric tales behind *Lear*, and whose very title also indicates pedophilia: a man who *loved* his children, not wisely, but too well, if you will. This novel is also a narrative in which both the girl's incestuous opposite-sex parent and the "evil" same-sex step-mother co-appear, thus constituting an exception to most versions in the Cinderella cycle.

¹³⁷ The characters in Shakespeare's plays are, of course, constructed before the development of psychoanalysis and before today's understanding of psychic trauma. However, and as pointed out by Philip Armstrong, Shakespeare's works have from the start formed psychoanalytic as well as literary critical interpretation (2001: 225).

that she wrote the novel as a response to the play itself.¹³⁸ Reading the play from high school through graduate school, Smiley found Lear “selfish, demanding, humorless, self-pitying” and she “didn’t like Cordelia,” who “seemed ungenerous and cold” but instead empathized with Goneril and Regan, who “sounded familiar, especially in the scene where they talk between themselves about Lear’s actions” (Smiley 1999: 160-161), but it was mainly something Lear says to Goneril and Regan that made her think that the way he felt toward them was “somewhat out of line”:

There’s a line when he says to his older daughters, ‘I gave you my all.’ On the surface, the interpretation is, you know, I gave you my kingdom. But given his passionate reaction to everything they do, there’s some sense that his feelings about his daughters are inappropriately vindictive. And why would a father’s feelings be inappropriately vindictive? Because they were inappropriately passionate to start with (Smiley 2004b: 11-12)

While, as Lear points out, “[n]othing will come of nothing” (1.1.90), something will come of something, and Smiley suggests that father-daughter incest constitutes a repressed narrative in the Shakespearean tragedy.

At the hub of Smiley’s rewriting lies abuse, yet her introduction of actualized father-daughter incest is not what is most striking about her revision: as pointed out by Marina Leslie, “the most shocking and radical aspect” is instead her concentrating on the two daughters Lear abominates as victims of incest to the exclusion of his beloved Cordelia; by making this crucial literary alteration, Smiley indicates that sexual abuse perpetrated on the daughter by the father is about the employment of power, not about love (1998: 34). “I was happy to have made my case about what it means to be a father, what it means to be a daughter, about the asymmetry of power in patriarchal capitalist Western European society, about the attempt to possess other persons as objects and to call that love,” Smiley says about her reworking of *King Lear* as a story of sexual abuse (Smiley 1999: 173). By retelling the story of *King Lear* from the perspective of the oldest daughter, making her a survivor of father-daughter sexual abuse, Smiley subverts the patriarchal storyline and misogynist implications of the play, reversing the gendered power dynamics between the father and the daughters.

From the outset of Shakespeare’s play, the two oldest daughters operate within the frameworks of a misogynistic society. In the course of the play, we hear Lear

¹³⁸ For a full account of Smiley’s early and later thoughts on the relationship between *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, see her essay “Shakespeare in Iceland” (1999) and the appendix included respectively.

call Goneril and Regan “wicked” (2.2.431), “unnatural hags” (2.2.452), “pernicious daughters” (3.2.22), “unkind daughters” (3.4.67), “hard-hearts” (3.6.36), and “centaurs” (4.5.122). Goneril is further called “Degenerate bastard” (1.4. 232) and “Detested kite” (1.4.241) by her father, and she is accused of having behaved “Most serpent-like” toward him (2.2.334). Toward the play’s end, her husband Albany calls her “devil” (4.2.35) and “gilded serpent” (5.3.77). Throughout the drama, it is obvious that their status as women in the patriarchal family and society is both threatened and unsafe.

Smiley maintains that she does not believe in evil, but in anger: “I wondered what made [Goneril and Regan] so angry” (qtd. by Cooperman 1999: 88), and says about her initial reaction to Shakespeare’s treatment of the oldest daughters, “They were women, and the play seemed to be condemning them morally for the exact ways in which they expressed womanhood that I recognized. I was offended.” (Smiley 1999: 161) Echoing Kathleen McLuskie, who argues that Shakespeare’s *King Lear* works to reinforce misogyny and patriarchal values because it forces the audience to sympathize with the king (1985: 98), Smiley indicates that Shakespeare appears to plead for the king because the play suggests that he gains self-knowledge through his suffering (in Berne 1992: 36). In *A Thousand Acres*, she retells the *Lear* story offering an explanation for the vilified older daughters’ behavior toward their father: Smiley’s reply to Lear’s question “Is there any cause in nature that / makes these hard-hearts?” (3.6.35-36) is trauma. In other words, she supplies the two older daughters with a traumatic childhood where the tyrannical father rules his kingdom of a thousand acres thinking that he owns his daughters in the same way that he owns his land, suggesting that Lear’s oldest daughters were both more human(e) and more exposed than the play betokens.

Concerned to disrupt the binary logic on which patriarchal narratives like *King Lear* rely, by giving voice to Goneril (and Regan) Smiley communicates in *A Thousand Acres* the deleterious effects of “a habit of mind that perceives daughters and children as owned things” (Smiley in Berne 1992: 36). As Susan Strehle rightly argues, Smiley’s novel, like other domestic realism works such as *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992), “reflect the tenacious and damaging control exerted by patriarchal ideals on the lives of girls and women” (2000: 218).¹³⁹ Yet, Smiley insists, her aim in re-imagining *Lear* was not to indict or “try or condemn the father, but to gain an acquittal for the daughters” (1999: 173). Narrative, she thinks,

¹³⁹ “Domestic realism” refers to realistic fiction dealing with women’s situation within a domestic framework.

is the perfect medium for her plan: “Drama privileges action over point of view,” whereas “[n]arrative gives more direct access to the inner life, allows the writer to reveal the disjuncture between what is felt and what appears, and to suggest emotions so powerful that their complete expression must fail, resulting in silence” (Smiley 1999: 172, 162). As Iska Alter observes in her generic analysis of *A Thousand Acres*, choosing narrative over drama allows Smiley “to establish the necessary matrix within which ‘a habit of mind that perceives daughters and children as owned things’ [...] can be explored overtly rather than alluded to or buried in subtextual discourse” (Alter 1999: 145). This study argues that what Smiley specifically explores overtly within this matrix in her novel is father-daughter incest and how the resulting trauma can be represented in narrative form.

Smiley has been vocal in print about the fact that she not only re-perceives the playtext itself and Shakespeare’s treatment of the two oldest daughters, but also that she works in intertextual dialogue with what she feels are popular misconceptions and orthodox critical readings of *King Lear* that associate Goneril and Regan with a seemingly “motiveless malignancy” – to use S. T. Coleridge’s famous words for Iago’s machinations in *Othello* – while doling out sympathy for the king and his youngest daughter. In other words, Smiley reads not only Shakespeare but the readers of *Lear*. Most critics seem to have adopted Lear’s (and Shakespeare’s?) view of Goneril and Regan as malicious, as opposed to the youngest, emphasizing their badness (see, e.g., Bradley 1971; Hamilton 2003),¹⁴⁰ and when researching the novel, Smiley found that even feminist critics up to that time disassociated themselves from Lear’s oldest daughters: “Shakespeare and the interpretive establishment since him have painted them so bleakly that in almost every article it was *de rigueur* for the writer to set herself apart from Goneril and Regan, to characterize them as evil or label them somehow” (in Berne 1992: 37). Taking her cue from “a longstanding dissatisfaction with an interpretation of *King Lear* that privileged the father’s needs over the daughters” (in Berne 1992: 36), Smiley reverses or rethinks the trauma of the play which, if it has been brought up by critics, has usually been in connection with the king himself (see, for instance, Proudfoot 2002: 139; Hartman 2004a: 284); in *A Thousand Acres*, both the eldest daughters who have been sexually abused by their father are depicted as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

¹⁴⁰ R.A Foakes correctly observes that despite the fact that “Goneril and Regan are two of the strongest women characters Shakespeare created” they “rarely receive their critical due” (2002: 42). Stephen Reid’s study “In Defense of Goneril and Regan” (1970) constitutes an exception. However, at the heart of Reid’s analysis lies the view that the oldest daughters’ hatred of their father and youngest sister stems from his rejection of them in childhood in favor of Cordelia, and there is no mentioning of incest.

In addition to introducing overt father-daughter incest and focusing on the sidelined and much berated and maltreated daughters of the Shakespearean text as well as on what she feels are popular misconceptions in much of its criticism, Smiley subverts intertextual expectations by allowing the narrative to move beyond the close of the drama text (adding a sixth part to Shakespeare's five acts), conceiving of an "afterlife" (Smiley 2004a: 334) for the oldest daughter in which she survives. Transposed from Albion to a fictional farming community in the American heartland in the late 1970s and plotted from the Cook family farm, *A Thousand Acres* does not refer directly to the play, but stays close to and alludes explicitly to it in that the major scenes are present, and the main dramatis personae have their character counterparts in the novel (even the initials of the daughters' and the father's names are the same). Both play and novel begin in a similar manner: the ageing rich father Lear/Larry decides to distribute his land between his three daughters Goneril/Ginny, Regan/Rose, Cordelia/Caroline, and the eldest daughters' husbands, the Duke of Albany/Ty and the Duke of Cornwall/Pete, but the youngest daughter is disinherited. Cordelia/Caroline marries the King of France/Frank, Goneril/Ginny and Regan/Rose send their father out in a storm and the deposed king/farmer goes mad. He is reconciled with Cordelia/Caroline, who with the help of Albany/Ty fights in vain to restore his power and land. Deluding himself into believing his youngest daughter is dead, he dies himself in the end. The subplot, too, involving a father and two sons is preserved in the novel; the two older sisters fight over the same paramour, Jess (Edmond),¹⁴¹ brother of Loren (Edgar), and the preferred son of Larry's friend Harold Clark (the Gloucester equivalent) after Loren has fallen from grace with his father. Through the actions of Rose's husband, Harold is blinded, and Pete dies shortly after. Harold announces his plan to make Loren the sole heir to his property and Jess initially stays with Rose. Ginny tries to kill her with poison. Unlike Regan, however, Rose does not die by her sister's hand but falls ill with cancer – probably a result of toxic agricultural runoff from her father's farming practices¹⁴² – whereupon Jess leaves her and she loses the farm, which is in the end taken over by a big corporation. Despite the rivalry between the older sisters the two siblings are reconciled before Rose dies. What is perhaps most significant with Smiley's *Lear* from a trauma-theoretical perspective is that her Goneril does not kill herself but lives on, indicating a degree of mastery.

¹⁴¹ This study uses the Folio's spelling of the name.

¹⁴² This chapter will not delve deeper into the environmental focus of the novel, but such issues will be treated in depth in Chapters 5 and 6 of this study. Suffice it to say here that Smiley's Regan dies not through the acts of her sister but rather indirectly through her father's actions.

Although as a general rule reviewers and critics found Smiley's reconsideration of Shakespeare's tragedy a success (see, for instance, Carlson 1991; Duffy 1991; Fuller 1993; Lehmann-Haupt 1991; Schiff 1998), the rendition of *Lear* as a story of consummated incest has proved problematic for some.¹⁴³ As Marina Leslie observes, even some of those who have approved of the novel have in different ways often "suppressed its story of incest as an interpretation of *King Lear*" (1998: 46). "It seems too much to have made Larry Cook a sexual abuser of Ginny and Rose in their childhood," Christopher Lehmann-Haupt claims, and "to push his selfishness into pathological monstrosity insults him retroactively and robs him of majesty" (1991: 20). Jack Fuller, on the other hand, gives Smiley praise for her introduction of sexual abuse on the condition that it is divorced from feminism: Smiley's "purpose is art rather than sexual politics" and "[t]he ugliness of the truth about the father is important, but it is not what makes the book work" (qtd. in Farrell 2001: 71). However, what these reviewers fail to realize is that the abuse is not Smiley's own brainchild; rather, it is present in covert form in *Lear* and overtly in the play's folkloric pre-texts. Also, one has to bear in mind that in Western society the Bard is highly revered, and charging *Lear* with incest can be understood as iconoclastic. As Leslie astutely notes, "we cannot admit about Larry what we are unwilling to think of *Lear*": "As the bad daughter, Smiley is blamed for the sins she would attribute to the father, Shakespeare. As the good daughter, she is prized for her likeness" (1998: 34, 46).

By de-centering the father in the novel and instead highlighting his role as representative of the "typical" farmer of the community, Smiley emphasizes that the abuse is not linked solely to the individual but to the specific society within which it occurs, a society that in this case can be linked to Shakespeare's own time. Exploring incest as a literary metaphor for socio-political and legal concerns in the early modern period, Bruce Thomas Boehrer claims that the compulsive "narrativization – of telling stories about incest" that functioned as royal strategies of self-fashioning and promotion for the Tudors in part lives on in "twentieth-century Euro-American family patriarchy": for Boehrer, Henry VIII's maneuvering of the incest taboo in the Henrician Succession Acts, which alternately legitimized and bastardized his offspring and invalidated the marriages to the mothers by adjudging them guilty of incest, is "reiterated in contemporary family arrangements that privilege the male, and [...] these family arrangements, in their turn, generate and/or augment paternal incestuous desire" (1992: 5). The preoccupation with the topic of incest in Shakespeare's own time lends support to seeing

¹⁴³ Brenda Daly notes that some reviewers who precisely stress Smiley's references to *King Lear* have recoiled from commenting on the abuse in the novel (1998: 134).

it in *King Lear*, and consequently, as Marina Leslie notes, suggests that Smiley's depiction of incest is not "her peculiar agenda" (1998: 39). (This study's focus on the folk material behind the playtext of course also indicates that the incest theme is not Smiley's own invention.) In *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley re-conceives the patriarchal family of Shakespearean society depicted in *King Lear* by recreating it as an incest narrative from the daughters' perspective which accurately conforms to today's incest tellings in our culture. To Smiley, "our times have evolved out of Shakespeare's times" (Smiley 1999: 169-170), and in her novel she forges a connection between Elizabethan and twentieth century American society by placing Goneril's story in the context of Euro-American family patriarchy. It is to this interconnectivity that the present chapter will now turn when exploring how Smiley, from a contemporary perspective, rethinks the unclaimed moment of incest trauma in *King Lear*.

3.3 Incestuous Fathers and Good Girls: "I love you more than words can wield the matter"

While it is possible to read *A Thousand Acres* independently of Shakespeare's play, as some scholars have done (see, for example, Amano 2005; Carden 1997; Cooperman 1999; Gwin 2002; Holmberg 2000; McDermott 2002), this is to bereave the work and its readers of much of its quintessential traumatic dimensions. However, although the majority of reviewers and critics have dealt with the novel's *Lear* thematic (see, for instance, Duffy; 1991; Brauner 2001; Fuller 1993; Keppel 1995; Lehmann-Haupt 1991; Leslie 1998; Schiff 1998; Sheldon 1997), they have not done so in a context of trauma. This study argues that trauma is the thread that ties together the interpenetrative strands of the two texts: Smiley intertextually dramatizes what was not fully realized or recognized as part of the cultural past of a patriarchal capitalist Western European society.

Pivotal to both play and novel is the patriarch's splitting of his land between his three daughters, and for Smiley this is the point from which the ensuing tragedies originate because, as she sees it, it triggers responses to earlier childhood traumas. As early as in the first few lines of the play's initial scene the reader/viewer learns of Lear's "darker purpose" (1.1.36): "Which of you shall we say doth love us most, / That we our largest bounty may extend" (1.1.51-52), as the father's public ceremony in which he aims to distribute his "crown" (1.1.139) between his three daughters and simultaneously provide a husband for Cordelia is transformed into a love test that ignores primogenitary rules. The novel, too, begins with a public episode of a generational shift of property, and in Smiley's version, the event is a pig roast that Larry's best friend, neighbor, and fellow farmer Harold

Clark (the Gloucester figure) hosts for his son Jess, symbolically Harold's illegitimate offspring (the Edmond equivalent), a draft-dodger who has returned after a thirteen year absence. Stealing the attention, however, is Larry, who takes the opportunity to announce his plan to apportion his thousand-acre farm between his daughters Ginny, Rose, and Caroline in the form of a corporation in which all three will have shares. Ginny is surprised at her father's decision and unsure about the deal, but used as she is to her role of playing the good girl, she says "[i]t's a good idea" (2004a: 19). Like Regan, competing with Goneril for the father's affection, Rose tries to outrival her older sister, and as Goneril's profession of love for her father – "Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter" (1.1.55) – is trumped only by Regan's – "In my true heart / I find she names my very deed of love – / Only she comes too short" (1.1.70-72) – Ginny's words are superseded by Rose's "It's a *great* idea" (2004a: 19, italics added).

In her book *Shakespeare's Daughters* (2003), Sharon Hamilton suggests that fictional works, as opposed to the real world, occupy a privileged position in terms of understanding how specific lives turn out the way they do, that works of fiction and plays "afford us the luxury of hindsight": it is possible to "trace actions to their causes, see motives and circumstances with a clarity and simplicity that real life seldom allows" (2003: 10). However, Hamilton and Smiley interpret the reasons for the Shakespearean daughters' deeds and motivations differently. Hamilton says of Smiley's interpretation of sexual abuse in *Lear* that it "distort[s] the text" because "[t]here is no evidence in the play of father-daughter incest, a relationship that Shakespeare did not hesitate to make explicit, and to condemn, in *Pericles*" (2003: 118), and consequently, Hamilton focuses on Goneril and Regan as cunningly going after political power while playing the "Good Girl" role in opposition to "genuinely dutiful daughters" such as Cordelia (2003: 93). As pointed out by F.D. Hoeniger, however, *Pericles* "cuts to a minimum the story of Antiochus' incest before the Prince of Tyre's arrival" (1984: xv). Furthermore, where Shakespeare did represent incest overtly, as Susan Frye accurately points out, he made the daughter a willing participant: whereas two of the sources for the play, John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Lawrence Twine's *Apollonius*, "begin with the father's rape of Antiochus's daughter after her mother's death," "Shakespeare shows the daughter as willingly engaging in sex with her father" which "is admittedly disconcerting for us at the turn of the twenty-first century as we realize the extent of physical incest, the helplessness of children visited by their parents' sexual desires, and the ease with which children have been labeled with their parents' behavior" (2002: 45, 47). Finally, while it is true, as Hamilton suggests, that *King Lear* does not dramatize overt incest as *Pericles* does, its intertextual relations with the early folkloric narratives of incest challenge the rest of Hamilton's argument.

For Smiley, reworking the love-test scene and the rest of the playtext to match a contemporary understanding of trauma, the two oldest daughters play the good girl role as a response to earlier experienced trauma. Smiley's novel shows Ginny having learned how to please her father as an attempt to maintain peace in the family. Ginny is very sensitive to her father's frame of mind, "I was always relieved when my father got into a good mood," she says (2004a: 39) because he was "easily offended" although "he was easily mollified, too, if you spoke your prescribed part with the proper appearance of remorse," and Rose, too, "[f]or all her remarks and eye rolling [...] could perform her part, and after the fact, could even get our father to laugh about some things." For Ginny, placating her father became "a ritual that hardly bothered me, I was so used to it." (2004a: 33) This is consistent with findings made by researchers in the area; Judith Herman notes that survivors "become minutely attuned to their abusers' inner states" (1994: 99). Research into the sexual abuse of children indicates that daughters respond to both overtly and covertly incestuous fathers by developing a Good Girl persona. Herman as well as Janet Liebman Jacobs have both described how sexual abuse survivors often take responsibility for the abuse by interiorizing an inner sense of being bad (Herman 1994: 103-107; Jacobs 1994: 50-52), and "[t]his malignant sense of inner badness," Herman argues, "is often camouflaged by the abused child's persistent attempts to be good" (1994: 105). Herman has also found that covertly abused daughters become "schooled in the complicated art of pleasing a man," and that they, too, often have a conception of themselves alternately as "good girls" and "bad girls" (see Herman and Hirschman 1981, 2000: 118, 119). To Smiley, Shakespeare's scene of the redistribution of land and power shows the good girl phenomenon in action; despite an "inner clang" Ginny agrees to the deal (2004a: 19). Smiley's novel depicts both Ginny and Rose striving to be good girls to obviate feeling bad: "When we are good girls and accept our circumstances, we're glad about it" but "When we are bad girls, it drives us crazy" Rose says (2004a: 99).

Apparently the father's favorite youngest daughter Caroline (Cordelia) is the only daughter who has not been molested by their father and her relationship with Larry differs from that of her older sisters: she does not try to be a good girl and please Larry, but instead voices her doubt about the transaction: "I don't know" (2004a: 19), she says, corresponding to Cordelia's famous "Nothing, my lord" (1.1.87). "I hate that little girl stuff," she exclaims when Ginny wheedles with her trying to get her to apologize to their father for not having accepted his handing over the three million dollar farm. While Ginny and Rose had responded to their father's plan as good girls, Caroline, Ginny notes, "had simply spoken as a woman rather than as a daughter" which is something they "were pretty careful never to do" (2004a: 21). Ginny tells Jess that Caroline was never afraid of their

father, “When she wanted something from him, she just stalked right up to him and asked him for it” (2004a: 125). Ginny and Rose protected their younger sister from their father when they took care of her after their mother died. “We saved you from Daddy,” Ginny tells Caroline (2004a: 245). Rose tried to keep him interested in her instead of in Caroline; “he told me that if I went along with him, he wouldn’t get interested in her” (2004a: 190): “I was afraid he’d try something with Caroline, and she was only eight or ten” (2004a: 190).¹⁴⁴ Larry looks to her “[a]s familiar as a father should look, no more, no less” (2004a: 362), recalling Cordelia’s speech “I love your majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less” (1.1.92-93). However, as Lear’s plan to find a suitor for Cordelia can be interpreted as an effort to retain his youngest daughter, Larry’s offer, as Tim Keppel points out, “can clearly be seen as a dramatic attempt to keep [Caroline] on the farm” (1995: 107).

Joyce Carol Oates’s novella *Black Water* (1992), a rewriting of the Chappaquiddick incident of 1969 from the point of view of the young woman Mary Jo Kopechne, describes the devastating and even fatal effects of the good girl phenomenon. Although this story does not deal with a father-daughter pair critics have rightly commented on the incestuous nature of the liaison between the protagonist Kelly Kelleher and her lover, the Senator, as well as on many other affairs in Oates’s works.¹⁴⁵ The Senator is a father figure for Kelly; she is “a girl his daughter’s age” and he is “one of the powerful adults of the world, manly man, U.S. senator, a famous face and a tangled history, empowered to not merely endure history but to guide it, control it, manipulate it to his own ends” (Oates 1992: 48, 61). For fear of annoying or of not pleasing the Senator, “*If I don’t do as he asks there won’t be any later,*” Kelly had not told him she thought they were lost (1992: 115, original italics) as they leave a Fourth of July party in a hurry to reach the ferry and the speeding car veers off the road and into the water. Using Kelly to push his way out of the car, the Senator finally leaves her to experience a

¹⁴⁴ This behavior is consistent with that of survivors. Herman reports that children may sacrifice themselves in an effort to try and protect someone else, to escape becoming complicit in a crime against others (1994: 104).

¹⁴⁵ As noted by Marilyn Wesley, eight of Oates’s novels “are concerned with relations incestuous in tone, if not in fact” (qtd. in Gwin 2002: 184). Brenda Daly, noting that Oates’s fiction echoes Phyllis Chesler’s point that paternal incest serves as a model for the power imbalance of heterosexual relations (Daly 1998: 7), argues that “the erotic attraction between Kelly Kelleher (Mary Jo Kopechne) and the Senator (Ted Kennedy) is portrayed as a variation on father-daughter incest” (Daly 2007: 162-163, n. 20). According to Phyllis Chesler, “Women are encouraged to commit incest as a way of life [...] As opposed to marrying our fathers, we marry men like our fathers [...] men who are older than us, have more money than us, more power than us, are taller than us [...] our fathers” (qtd. in Herman and Hirschman 1981, 2000: 57-58).

nightmarish descent into the black water that “rushed upon her to fill her lungs” (1992: 65). Her internal monologue repeats her father’s words “*You know you’re someone’s little girl don’t you?*” as she thinks back on her life, while sinking deeper and deeper into the water: “*Am I going to die? – like this?*” (1992: 16, 3, original italics). Although Kelly finally drowns, by giving a voice to the victim, Oates’s novel bears witness to the silenced past of a “good girl” whose trust in an older man has been violated.

In *A Thousand Acres*, the father’s apportioning of his land is not in itself the cause for the daughters’ subsequent behavior, but rather sets in motion arguments of property that finally disclose long-suppressed traumas, transgressions, and betrayals, revealing the abuse that has taken place in Ginny’s and Rose’s common childhood past as the story’s real tragedy. In other words, rather than interpreting the father’s decision to retire as the point from which the impending tragic events of the play unravel henceforth, Smiley suggests that the tragedy has already occurred years prior to the novel’s present time, which merely but powerfully conveys its traumatic aftermath. Smiley’s *Lear* has no intention of relinquishing control of either his land or his daughters: the transfer of his thousand-acre farm to them is merely a way of maintaining control over them, and for both Ginny and Rose, the transaction acts as a reminder of their tyrannical father’s equation of his daughters with the land, to do with as he wants. As Tore Høgås emphasizes, “Larry’s gift was [...] an empty gift, designed to display his power. Obviously it is meaningless to give one part of one’s property (the farm) to another part of one’s property (his daughters).” (2001: 71) In retrospect, the division scene acquires the status of an ill-boding sign both intratextually and intertextually. As Marina Leslie has astutely observed:

The eventual revelation of child abuse and the necessary revaluation this entails casts a long shadow back over both the novel’s opening crisis and the play that inspires it. The knowledge of this father’s sins makes horribly concrete the inappropriate demands of love which Larry Cook places upon his adult daughters, Ginny, Rose, and Caroline, as well as offering a context for his very different treatment of the elder daughters and the favorite youngest child. Moreover, these revelations implicitly extend to a reconsideration of the private context for King Lear’s public test of love. (1998: 36)

In other words, the disclosure of sexual abuse in *A Thousand Acres* not only both illuminates and changes the way the reader interprets the earlier events in the novel itself, but also transforms Shakespeare’s text and how it may be understood.

Ginny needs the past as the means of focusing her point of view in the present, but it takes time for her to remember, unveil, face, and re-interpret her personal historicity in the novel: consequently, as initially she does not consciously recall

the abuse, she claims in the opening pages that “[t]here were no clues” (2004a: 13) to the unfolding catastrophic events to follow the exchange of land. Insignia of the abuse are present in the novel from the beginning and are rendered forceful by the divulging of the abuse. Particularly three incidents bespeak the past incest and acquire in a backward glance a telling significance: Rose’s choice to send her daughters to boarding school in “a sustained resolve in the face of even our father’s opposition” (2004a: 8); Ginny’s meeting at the swimmingpool in Pike with the townswoman and friend of her mother’s, Mary Livingstone, who reveals that their mother voiced concerns about her daughters’ lives after her death, and who almost suggests abuse thus giving Ginny an uncanny feeling that “made [her] shiver in the hot wind” (2004a: 90); and Ginny’s seeing her father in the fields and feeling forgiveness “when [she] hadn’t consciously been harboring any annoyance” (2004a: 136). It is clear that Ginny’s speech, emotions, and perceptions in the novel move on trauma’s time. Neil Nakadate puts the point precisely: “In Ginny’s case, feeling, seeing, and speaking lie on a continuum of past action, current perception, and potential discourse, a continuum both defined and short-circuited by her incest experience” (1999: 174).

On an intertextual level, Smiley’s readers have foreknowledge of what is to come but they must also determine on the basis of the evidence in the novel itself what it means. What happens shortly after the father’s abdication closely replicates the occurrences in the play in that Larry’s weird behavior, such as driving and drinking (Smiley 2004a: 142), culminates in a tempest scene, which in Smiley’s interpretation is linked to the past abuse: before drunkenly raging off into a storm he provides Ginny with his own version of what happened in the past, shouting at her:

You barren whore! I know all about you, you slut. You’ve been creeping here and there all your life, making up to this one and that one. But you’re not really a woman, are you? I don’t know what you are, just a bitch, is all, just a dried-up whore bitch (Smiley 2004a: 181).

With these words, Ginny’s father renounces culpability for the abuse that he committed after working and drinking at night. As Susan Strehle notes about this scene, Larry justifies his own behavior by blaming his daughter for the incestuous abuse (2000: 222-223); “Through double alcohol fogs of past and present, Larry’s version of the child abuse can be seen: Ginny, the eldest daughter and the first he abused, was a ‘slut’ who came creeping to him in the night. The seductive but barren ‘whore’ is therefore responsible, not Larry.” (2000: 225, n. 13) According

to Larry, Ginny's sexuality makes her a "whore," but her childlessness renders her "not really a woman" (Strehle 2000: 215).¹⁴⁶

Larry's words in the night of the storm passage could of course also be interpreted as a projection of an abomination he may feel for himself and his past prurient acts. Such a reading finds support in Shakespeare's text, where Lear, several lines after he has mentioned incest (3.2.54), exclaims:

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand.
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thy own back.
Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
For which thou whip'st her. (4.5.156-159)

Smiley emphasizes the link between Lear's feelings of culpability and his hostility toward his daughters. Only a few lines before the quotation above, Lear expresses his hatred of the female body:

Down from the waist
They are centaurs, though women all above.
But to the girdle do the gods inherit;
Beneath is all the fiend's. There's hell, there's darkness,
there is the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding, stench,
consumption (4.5.121-126)

Smiley commented in 2004, "Now you have to ask yourself, why would a man of normal sexual feeling view a woman's sexual area as a source of sin, if he didn't feel terrible guilt about what he'd been doing?" (2004b: 12). Smiley's interpretation ties in with findings in contemporary trauma studies: Judith Herman has found in her study that incestuous fathers frequently exhibit a puritanical attitude toward sex and view the bodies of women as "dirty" (1981, 2000: 110). For Smiley, Lear's hateful remarks in the passage cited above and his subsequent interjection: "Fie, fie, fie; pah, pah!" (4.5.126), apparently typifies such a negative position toward sex.

Larry's habit/tendency of cheapening filial/paternal relations by thinking of them in terms of property, reduced to and (con)fused with financial transactions, in turn also evokes notions of prostitution. Judith Herman has argued that the sexually

¹⁴⁶ Larry also refers to Rose as a "whore" in this scene as he threatens to take his land back: "I'll throw you whores off this place" (2004a: 183).

abused daughter “must develop [...] an identity out of an environment which defines her as a whore and a slave,” and that incest survivors often think of themselves as “whores” (1994: 101, 105). In addition, according to Diana Russell’s (1986) study, incest survivors are at high risk of entering prostitution. Although neither Rose nor Ginny become sex-workers Rose, in referring to the land they have been given, compares herself to their father’s own private hooker: “I want what was Daddy’s. I want it. I feel like I’ve paid for it, don’t you? You think a breast weighs a pound? That’s my pound of flesh. You think a teenaged hooker costs fifty bucks a night? There’s ten thousand bucks” (2004a: 303, original emphasis). Other contemporary father-daughter incest novels, too, link a pattern of abuse to prostitution. One of the protagonists in Ann-Marie MacDonald’s *Fall on Your Knees* (1996), Frances Piper, has forgotten that she was molested by her father at six; he masturbated while holding her in the rocking chair, and these repressed memories impel her to act out in different ways such as through prostitution. She acts as a “whore clown” (2002: 414) at a speakeasy, wearing a Girl Guide uniform and a special white glove left over from her first communion, as she strips and provides masturbatory favors in a powerful inversion of her incestuous experience: “Frances will bounce in your lap with your fly buttoned for as long as it takes for two bucks” (MacDonald 2002: 345). Kathy Acker’s *Blood and Guts in High School* (1978) too portrays an incestuous daughter who is sold to a Persian slave trader who tries to turn her into a prostitute, but who is released when he discovers that she has cancer.

The night of the storm is at the crux of both *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, but one significant difference lies in its focus or perspective: since Smiley writes from Goneril’s point of view, she relates this central episode of the play where Lear is out in the storm only second-hand and instead foregrounds the daughters’ experiences after the father has raged off into the tempestuous night. The tempest is decisive in the novel because it is the night that the readers hear the daughters’ version of what happened twenty years earlier as Rose reveals their common past of abuse to Ginny, who does not at this point remember it:

“He went into your room at night.”

“What for? I don’t remember that at all.”

“How can you not remember? You were fifteen years old!”

[...]

“What are you saying, Rose?”

“You know.”

“I promise you I don’t know.” And I didn’t. But I was afraid anyway. I was a captive of her stare, staring back.

Rose inhaled, held her breath. Then she said, “He was having sex with you.” (Smiley 2004a: 188-189)

Critics have rightly emphasized the metaphoric function of the storm in *A Thousand Acres*, suggesting that the outer tempest mirrors the inner turmoil of the daughters. Julie Sanders notes that “As in *Lear*, the inner storm proves as significant as its outer manifestations in the natural world” (2001: 193), and David Brauner submits that in Smiley’s text, too, it “has an allegorical aspect to it: it represents the external correlative to the internal, psychological tempest precipitated by Rose’s revelation” (2001: 662). As opposed to the playtext, however, where the storm reflects the king’s turbulent psyche, Smiley’s gale corresponds to the daughters’ upheaval following the disclosure of the family secret, and according to Tim Keppel, having the daughters “face their own terrible storm within” constitutes Smiley’s “most dramatic re-vision of Shakespeare” (1995: 109).

As with the storm scene, Smiley renders the majority of the important episodes of the play second-hand and instead foregrounds many of its minor events that take place off-stage or is given less importance in the play to focus on the trauma of the daughters. In this way Smiley increases the space for the reader to empathize with the daughters’ plight and cuts back space for sympathizing with Larry. This is the case with events such as the father’s reconciliation with the youngest daughter, and his death, which occurs on a shopping trip with Caroline in the cereal aisle in a supermarket in Des Moines (Smiley 2004a: 334), as opposed to the two elder sisters’ coping with the traumatic after-effects of the prior abuse visible in such things as their murderous rivalry over the same lover.

Sharon Hamilton argues about Shakespeare’s play that, “were Goneril and Regan to stop at [their] show of defiance [at the night of the storm], they might merit the largest share of the audience’s sympathy” because it is their father that has taught them well in cruelty, but she sees their “turn[ing] on one another” once they have defeated Lear as “[p]roof of their essential barbarity” (2003: 119). Similarly, Marina Leslie remarks about Smiley’s Ginny and Rose: “Those who are most sinned against are sinners in turn” (1998: 41). Julie Sanders has commented specifically on the poisoned sausages as “an uncomfortable presence” in *A Thousand Acres*, arguing that by retaining the incident of Goneril’s attempted soricide readers cannot unambiguously sympathize with Ginny (2001: 211).¹⁴⁷ Smiley, however, suggests instead that what happens after the night of the storm when the two sis-

¹⁴⁷ Smiley herself has related that she had difficulties with Ginny’s attempt at killing her sister: “it was hard to make that palatable since the story is told from Ginny’s point of view and everyone wanted her to be an attractive character” (1998: 69).

ters “turn on one another” can be seen as an effect of trauma; in her understanding, the murderous sibling rivalry is a consequence of the incest and so needs to be understood in relation to trauma. Smiley forges a connection here between the father’s betrayal, Rose’s “betrayal,” and the attempted killing of Rose. When Rose “steals” Jess from her, Ginny experiences it as traumatic, and links it to the betrayal of her father; she enters into what seems to be a trauma-induced dissociative trance state and tries to kill her sister by canning poisoned sausages.¹⁴⁸ What Smiley seems to suggest here is that Ginny’s revenge, which appears to almost transform the Cook family story into a revenger’s tragedy, is not simply a way of getting back at her sister, but a way of keeping off the anxiety of experiencing again the helplessness she suffered at the time of paternal rape. It is merely a replay of the betrayal of her father’s nocturnal visits to her childhood room at night, with Ginny now as the powerful aggressor and Rose as the father-identified daughter serving as the helpless victim.

In Smiley’s interpretation, the competition between the sisters must be interpreted in the light of the traumatic and devastating after-effects of the abuse; the discussion between Ginny and Rose after Pete’s possible suicide/death, where comments about the sexual abuse are interspersed with revelations about their affairs with Jess and other men, makes clear that the incestuous relation with their father and the two sisters’ subsequent relationships with and rivalry¹⁴⁹ over men are parallel. Brauner emphasizes that Larry promotes sibling rivalry by raising his daughters as competitors for his favor in order to maintain his authority (2001: 663). This competition extends in the novel to their relationships with Jess, too, who apparently exploits the situation where the two sisters incestuously woo the same man. Rose reveals to Ginny that she is “always jealous;” in fact, she asserts, “That was how Jess got me to sleep with him”: “He loves me, Ginny. You don’t think I would let him have anything private with my own sister, do you?” (2004a: 303). A number of informants in Herman and Hirschman’s clinical study tended to overvalue men and to devalue women, seeing them as competitive threats, often becoming entangled in relationship triangles of this kind (1981, 2000: 103). When Rose tells Ginny she has had a lover before Jess, too, Ginny automatically

¹⁴⁸ Ginny’s “surprising flush of relief” (2004a: 355) when she realizes that the cans of her poisoned concoction are still untouched in the cellar seems to confirm that in reality she hoped her sister would not eat them and that when she made them she was in a traumatized state.

¹⁴⁹ In her intertextual reading of *King Lear* against *A Thousand Acres*, Anna Lindhé has written on the important sibling relationship between the two oldest daughters. While useful in that it foregrounds its role, her analysis does not revolve specifically around trauma. Instead she understands their relation as “part of a larger network of interpersonal relationships” in the novel and their rivalry as resulting from “an inherent system of favouritism” (2005: 74, 68).

but wrongly believes it was Ty, her husband and Smiley's equivalent to the Duke of Albany (2004a: 300).

The night of the storm is also when Rose tells Ginny that her promiscuity in high school and college was a result of her belief that "one of them would have to supersede Daddy eventually"; she believed that "if there were enough of them it would sort of put him in context, or diminish him somehow," and all she wanted when she met Pete, *A Thousand Acres*'s equivalent to the Duke of Cornwall, "was something exciting enough to erase Daddy" (2004a: 299, 300, 298). As a result of the child's efforts of always trying to please the abusive parent in the incestuous family, the caregiver in question often becomes idealized (see, e.g., Herman 1994: 106; see also Jacobs 1994: 33-53). As a child, and in spite of being subjected to his violent outbursts, Ginny deified her father; in her young eyes he even defined the category of fathers (Smiley 2004a: 19). Rose, too, overvalued their father, and at the time of the abuse rationalized his sexual interest in her, interpreting it as evidence of her "specialness." On the night of the storm she tells Ginny:

I was flattered [...] I thought that he'd picked me, me, to be his favorite, not you, not [Caroline]. On the surface, I thought it was okay, that it must be okay if he said it was, since he was the rule maker. He didn't rape me, Ginny. He seduced me. He said it was okay, that it was good to please him, that he needed it, that I was special. He said he loved me." (2004a: 190)¹⁵⁰

Jane Gallop has put the point: "If the phallus is the standard of value, then the father, possessor of the phallus, must desire the daughter in order to give her value" (1989: 102).

Ginny replaces her idealization for her father with Jess just as Edmond replaces Lear in Goneril's estimation. Jess "made a bigger impression" on Ginny than Ty ever did, and her comment to Rose, "For every one thought I've had about Ty, I've had twenty about Jess" (Smiley 2004a: 351), clearly echoes Goneril's words about Albany as a "Milk-livered man" (4.2.32) compared to Edmond, "O, the difference of man and man!" (4.2.26). Ginny's relationship with Jess is secret, and in that sense it mirrors the illicit one she has had with her father. In fact, both Ginny and Rose relive the secrecy of the incestuous relation in their affairs with Jess. Although they are "[s]till fighting over a man" (Jess) (2004a: 351) before Rose dies, they become friends again, resisting their father's lifelong efforts to "divide [...] and conquer" them (2004a: 182). By having the two sisters become

¹⁵⁰ It has become increasingly widely known that seduction is an element in sexual abuse; force or violence is not used in the majority of sexual abuse cases (see, e.g., Russell 1986: 96).

reconciled in the end, Smiley also challenges the “women beware women” notion incorporated in *King Lear* and many traditional versions of the fairy tales behind it such as Cinderella.

By rewriting the story from the perspective of the oldest daughter, Smiley makes it clear that it is not simply a tragic flaw of an individual incestuous father that leads to the fated downfall in *Lear* but that the *primum mobile* is the patriarchal society of the time. As Strehle has noted, “Smiley’s decision to place Goneril/Ginny at the center of her narrative destabilizes the codes of kingship and fatherhood and suggests, even before the story unfolds, that this *other side* of the story will offer a radical critique of the culture that produced both the historical *Lear* and *King Lear*” (2000: 214). *A Thousand Acres* poignantly bears witness to Smiley’s belief that the Euro-American society is misogynistic at core, and indicates that she questions the play’s depiction of its consequences.

In *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley draws on the setting of the community to emphasize that the abuse is not linked solely to Larry as an individual but to the specific society within which he operates. Rose says about their father’s role in Zebulon County:

the thing is, he’s respected. Others of them like him and look up to him. He fits right in. However many of them have fucked their daughters or their stepdaughters or their nieces or not [...]. We have two choices when we think about that. Either they don’t know the real him and we do, or else they do know the real him and the fact that he beat us and fucked us doesn’t matter. Either they themselves are evil, or they’re stupid. That’s the thing that kills me. This person who beats and fucks his own daughters can go out into the community and get respect and power, and take it for granted that he deserves it (Smiley 2004a: 302).

Larry’s role is emblematic of his society: his behavior, including his incest, is not to be seen as “anomalous” (Nakadate 1999: 167); in Strehle’s words, his “are the eyes and ideas of his culture; not by accident is he widely respected as the leading farmer in his community.” As a representative of Western patriarchy he “thus defines the assumptions that allow and even encourage the abuse of land and daughters” (Strehle 2000: 216). Brauner hits the mark precisely, emphasizing that the patriarchal system in *A Thousand Acres*, “is not merely conservative and misogynistic” or “merely a way of keeping women in their place” but a veritable “system of mental and physical abuse” (2001: 663). Toward the end of the novel, after she has left Ty, Ginny speaks her mind about this “system”: “Do I think Daddy came up with beating and fucking us on his own? [...] No. I think he had lessons, and those lessons were part of the package” (2004a: 342-343). In Smiley’s estimation, Larry’s abusive behavior must be seen in the context of its cul-

tural embeddedness, as part of this system of abuse or “package,” as Ginny calls it.

Larry’s sons-in-law prove supporters of and are thus implicated in maintaining the system of abuse operating in Zebulon County. As Iska Alter argues, while Ty and Pete’s indispensability for Larry’s dominion attenuates his “tyrannical self-sufficiency,” it also makes the other males complicit “in the various forms of masculine exploitation and injury operating in the novel” (1999: 153). Ginny is married to “Daddy’s younger clone” (Strehle 2000: 219), and the echo of Larry’s repressive mindset is visible in Ty’s words about the sexual abuse: “people should keep private things private” (Smiley 2004a: 340). To maintain his own power in the system, Ty also sides with Larry and Caroline behind Ginny’s back in the arguments over the land. Tim Keppel even sees Ty’s “alliance with her father and his resemblance to him” as extenuating circumstances for Ginny’s indiscretion with Jess (1995: 112). Pete’s involvement in this system is manifested by his physical abuse of Rose (Smiley 2004a: 140-141) and in his jealousy of Larry.¹⁵¹ *A Thousand Acres* emphasizes that the conception of women as a commodity to be passed around among men fosters jealousy among the males; when Rose finally tells Pete about the incest-abuse, his response is to blame Larry “for everything that went wrong in [their] lives” and so when she discloses her affair with Jess he says he is going to kill her father: “He was jealous as hell,” Rose says, and reveals that it was Pete’s actions that blinded Harold in an anhydrous ammonia accident because he emptied the water in the tractor tank that could have saved his eyes (2004a: 301). The target had apparently been Larry, who stayed with Harold after the night of the storm.

Other male characters in the novel, too, display misogynistic attitudes, and this indicates that this is something which is endemic within that particular society. Harold has no daughters of his own but at the annual church potluck after the night of the storm it is obvious that he exhibits the same verbal habits as Larry as he publicly takes a stand for his friend and against his friend’s daughters, whom he calls “Pair of bitches”: “Threw a man off his own farm, on a night when you’d a let a rabid dog into the barn” (2004: 218). Again Smiley takes her cue from Shakespeare, whose *Lear* works within the parameters of a patriarchal society, supported and sustained by other male characters in the play. Gloucester refers disrespectfully to the mother of his son in calling Edmond his “whoreson” (1.1.24). Brauner, too, notes that Gloucester’s unmannerly reference to Edmond’s

¹⁵¹ As Mary Paniccia Carden suggests, “Smiley’s characterization of Pete, especially, suggests that men are not born like Daddy, but are made into him” (1997: 201, n. 32).

mother, “there was good sport at his making” (1.1.23), and his disputable allegations that Goneril and Regan “seek [Lear’s] death” (3.4.153) indicates that Harold “may share Lear’s misogynist tendencies,” and further observes that in the novel “the kinship between the two men is suggested by the resemblance of their surnames, Cook and Clark” (2001: 664). Harold’s son Jess, on the other hand, initially appears to oppose or want to change the system, but proves very much a part of it. As he moves into Larry’s old house after Larry has moved in with Harold after the storm, Jess is “in some sense usurping Daddy’s place” (2004a: 225); he uses and betrays Ginny and his deserting Rose and her daughters as she becomes ill is finally the undoing of the farm dynasty.

Neither Ginny nor Rose can win the sympathy of the townsfolk of Zebulon County. Rose says to Ginny about the community’s reception of Larry, “People pat him on the head and sympathize with him and say what bitches we are” (2004a: 303). Although she single-handedly tries to save the farm after Jess has left her, Rose tells Ginny on her deathbed, “People around town talk about how I wrecked it all” (2004a: 355). Smiley has said that she presents in her novel “through gossip and through what Ginny perceives, the normal interpretation of *King Lear* as a counterpoint to what we know is actually happening” (in Berne 1992: 37). The community, which, as James Schiff (1998) and Ron Carlson (1991) have noted, takes the place of the chorus, views Larry as a good man who has dedicated his life to serving his family and who has now been wronged by his “evil” daughters: “Those of us who have in the past sympathized with the patriarch Lear and viewed Goneril and Regan as malicious,” Schiff points out, “are not at all unlike those characters in Zebulon County who feel compassion for Larry and bitterness for his daughters Ginny and Rose” (1998: 375). Caroline herself is perceived as the good daughter who takes Larry in, and she, too, joins the townsfolk in taking Larry’s side against her sisters. She tells Ginny, “I realize that some people are just evil” (2004a: 363). Ginny first believes that Caroline is referring to their father, but soon realizes she is referring to Rose and herself.

In Smiley’s version of *King Lear*, it is instead the reader who is invited to respond to the oldest daughters’ plight with empathy. As Barbara Sheldon perceptively argues, one of the effects of transposing good and bad in *A Thousand Acres* is that the reader, whom Ginny does not directly address, listens to her (1997: 63, 64). With the help of (the) narrative Smiley attempts to exonerate Goneril: “One thing I learned from *Hamlet* is that none of us are innocent,” she says, “but one thing I learned from narrative is that all of us have something to say in our own defense” (1999: 173):

As the lawyer for Goneril and Regan, I proposed a different narrative of their motives and actions that cast doubt on the case Mr. Shakespeare was

making for his client, King Lear. I made Goneril my star witness, and she told her story with care. [...] The desired verdict was not ‘innocent,’ but rather ‘not guilty,’ or at least ‘not proven’ (1999: 172-173).

For Smiley, the oldest daughters are “more sinned against than sinning” (3.2.60), and in *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley not only reverses the dichotomous meaning and significance of good and evil incorporated in the portrayals of women in long-familiar iconic literature of the Western world such as *King Lear*, but also to a certain extent moves beyond it. While Cordelia¹⁵² is considered good in the play and her sisters bad, Smiley’s novel upsets the distinction of these roles not by having the oldest sisters in the end win the respect of the community and having the youngest ostracized by it, but in the sense that the trauma experienced by Ginny and Rose cancels this moral differentiation. *A Thousand Acres* examines the problems of judging a person’s actions in situations experienced as traumatic, and seems to suggest that in these cases ordinary systems of morality do not always apply. Survivors often attempt compulsively to repeat the trauma in some form, and in traumatic re-enactments, ethically responsible behavior is not always possible. Writers of trauma fiction personalize trauma; they “immerse us in individual experiences of terror [...] and psychic breakdown,” so that we as readers may arrive at a greater understanding of such a position (Vickroy 2002: 34). In other words, readers can better make sense of the actions of traumatized characters if supplied with their traumatic context.

In offering testimony to the after-effects of trauma, *A Thousand Acres* shows us that both men and women in the end are victimized by their limited roles in a patriarchal society. Smiley’s decision to end her tale with only women in Ginny’s chosen family stands in sharp contrast to Shakespeare’s option to end his tragedy with only men, “as if to signal a return to the rightful patriarchal order” (Keppel 1995: 113). Kathleen McLuskie has argued that “[a]n important part of the feminist project is to insist that the alternative to the patriarchal family and heterosexual love is [...] the possibility of new forms of social organisation and affective relationships” (1985: 106), and as pointed out by Tim Keppel, Smiley’s ending “with only women” “seems to champion McCluskie’s [sic] feminist alternative to patriarchy” (Keppel 1995: 113, 114). Smiley’s alternative for Ginny is similar to the escape Ginny had envisioned for herself, Rose, and her daughters from “the play we’d begun”: “we could have [...] driven to the Twin Cities and found jobs as waitresses, measured out our days together in a garden apartment, the girls in

¹⁵² By having Caroline display human faults and prejudices, Smiley challenges the anodyne figure (though she does return with an army) of Cordelia in Shakespeare’s *Lear*.

one bedroom, Rose and I in the other” (2004a: 219, 220). By taking care of her nieces, the childless Ginny becomes in profoundly evocative terms a mother *in presentia*, if you will, among the many well-known “absent mothers” of Shakespeare’s plays, and thereby Smiley also affords the family a future, a dénouement denied in *Lear*. Absent mothers, of course, are also a feature of folk narratives, especially in the tales favored by Grimm.

In a context of literary trauma, Smiley’s decision to let the eldest daughter live¹⁵³ instead of having her commit suicide¹⁵⁴ acquires in and of itself a significant meaning. Not only does it mean that Ginny has survived her past but also that she has moved beyond it, left it, which in turn indicates that she has achieved a degree of mastery; she has faced the death that inheres in the traumatic moment and then departed to make moving on a possibility. Looking newly at her past has brought with it a realization of having survived in the face of death, and an attempt to possess her own survival: “What was transformed now was the past, not the future,” Ginny says (2004a: 308). The past has become a vista of possibilities that can be transformed in the present. In a similar vein, Smiley’s return to the traumatic moment in Shakespeare’s drama signifies a degree of intertextual mastery of the playtext precisely because repetition encompasses a possibility of departure from the source text. As Caroline Cakebread suggests, “*A Thousand Acres* itself stands as an act of survival” within the Western literary canon (1999: 99).

In *A Thousand Acres*, different dimensions of intertextuality or the overlapping of texts, come together to powerful traumatic effect; in diverging thus from Shakespeare’s play, where Goneril is silenced, and instead following the folktale variants behind the play where the heroine survives and bears witness to her persecu-

¹⁵³ Goneril’s death has not received much critical attention. M. D. Faber wrote in 1967 an essay on her suicide where he argues that it is a result of thwarted longings, longings which in turn stem from a psychological disruption, but he makes no connections to incest.

¹⁵⁴ Suicide attempts are not a rare occurrence among victims of incest. In Herman and Hirschman’s study on survivors, thirty-eight percent of the respondents reported they had one time or other tried to kill themselves (1981, 2000: 99). However, as pointed out by Kalí Tal, “[w]e will never know how many children and young adults have taken their own lives to *escape* sexual abuse” (1996: 20, emphasis added). Suicide can be a means of escape but it can also be, as Jay Lifton puts it, “a literalization instead of a symbolization of the confrontation with death” in trauma (in Caruth 1995c: 141). Contemporary incest fiction frequently portrays protagonists who attempt to or actually do take their lives. Patricia Chao’s debut novel *Monkey King* (1997) opens with father-daughter incest survivor Sally ending up in a mental institution after a suicide attempt, and the protagonist in Sally Patterson Tubach’s *Memoirs of a Terrorist* (1996) commits suicide in a mental hospital awaiting trial for killing her bondage lover. Although she never actually attempts to kill herself, the main character in Elizabeth Dewberry Vaughn’s *Break the Heart of Me* (1994), who was sexually abused by her grandfather at eight, says “I always think about suicide when I’m depressed” (1994: 231).

tion¹⁵⁵ (see chapter 2 of this study), Smiley's narrative is suspended between remembering and forgetting, past, present, and future inherent in trauma, and moves toward a repossession of time and an understanding of the dynamic network of mastery and repetition. Smiley's alternative resolution in proposing an alteration of the course, points to the tension inherent in trauma between trauma and repetition/departure and mastery.

In *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley uses inversion to critique a patriarchal capitalist Western society, laying bare the violence committed under Euro-American patriarchalism. In Smiley's interpretation, Lear's heroic status comes with a high price for his daughters: he wounds his family, causes rivalry between his children, and even drives them to death. With *A Thousand Acres* Smiley transforms Lear's coronet into a weapon of rape and child abuse by subverting the sexuality of the play, in which Lear raves against lustful women, and has the father and absolute "monarch" in her novel emerge as a sexual predator instead, thereby divesting Lear's kingly renown of heroic connotations and turning the "evil" daughters into traumatized "heroines" who bear witness to their own painful experiences. Rather than blaming individual characters, however, *A Thousand Acres* bears witness to Smiley's belief that, like early modern English society, present-day Euro-American society is intrinsically misogynistic. Instead of wholly condemning or viewing the canonical literature of Euro-American culture as flawed, however, Smiley's ingenious recreation contributes to it by showcasing aspects of it that have often been left out or forgotten: her story gestures toward the historical and cultural expulsion of formerly marginalized voices from official versions of history.

While the tension between past and present that characterizes trauma is not wholly resolved in *A Thousand Acres* – there is no complete performance of the longed-for or hoped-for "da" or working through – a certain degree of mastery to (re)claim the painful past is achieved as Smiley offers her readers the voices of victims of sexual trauma that testify to their own hitherto-excluded experiences in Shakespeare's canonical version of the *Lear* story. Without conscious awareness of abuse, patterns repeat and repeat in the sense that what is not known returns to

¹⁵⁵ In some versions of the tale type where the father wants to marry his daughter, the heroine does actually commit suicide or at least attempts to do so to escape her father's designs on her. In the Serbian folktale "How an Emperor's Daughter Was Turned into a Lamb," the heroine "stabs herself through the heart," is resuscitated at the behest of her emperor father, and is finally transformed into a lamb that faithfully stays with her father, dying at his death, and in another version the heroine "goes to drown herself" but instead receives the help of an old woman to outwit the father (see Cox 1893: 270, 284).

haunts us. In changing the trajectory of Shakespeare's plot by having Ginny/Goneril survive, Smiley emphasizes the role of readers in interpreting its meaning, providing them with a chance to decide whether it is possible to escape the seemingly predestined and imposed patterns of repetition to trauma and to offer a transformation by subverting literary and cultural plots. As Marina Leslie argues, "When Smiley literalizes Lear's metaphoric confusion about his ability to command love in a tale of sexual abuse, she also makes abuse a metaphor for the imposition of master narratives at the expense of rival versions of the story" (1998: 46). The reader's knowledge that the alternative outcome in *A Thousand Acres* in its departure from Shakespeare's ending also ties in with the folktales behind the playtext renders it highly forceful: informed by twentieth-century insights into sexual abuse and trauma, Smiley's text moves on to fill in the gaps and explore the implications of Shakespeare's material while also harking back to its folkloric sources where the fairy-tale heroine survives in the end. Smiley's intertextuality thus evokes recognition in the readers' mind not only between her novel and *Lear* but also in relation to the folktales behind it in order to decipher the history of Euro-American patriarchal misogyny which underlies and suffuses the different narrative threads.

In conclusion, with specific reference to the intertextual relations between Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the preceding sections have explored intertextuality in relation to trauma's time in terms of reviewing an unclaimed moment in a previous text from a present perspective as an attempt at mastering on a metatextual level the trauma of that earlier work. This chapter has emphasized Smiley's efforts to make father-daughter incest an explicit presence in her version of *Lear* and her re-conception of its part in the spectators'/readers' understanding of the characters' behavior. In *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley re-reads *Lear* by writing from the eldest daughter's perspective, refiguring Goneril's past in a new light and thereby rejecting the supposition implicit in *Lear*'s story that the blame for the king's tragic fate lies with his daughters. With her novel Smiley suggests that there is more to the story than what playgoers and readers have learnt to anticipate: a selfish father taking great umbrage at his youngest daughter because she will not flatter him. What is transformed when she takes back the storyline from Shakespeare in her revised *Lear* is the past, the way in which *Lear* can be read; whereas "[t]he oldest hath borne most" according to Shakespeare's play, those "that are young" are the ones that have "borne most" in *A Thousand Acres* (5.3.301).

While a single work like Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, can refer extensively to earlier works intertextually to produce a sense of repetition compulsion to an unclaimed trauma in precedent texts, intertextuality can also operate across several

contemporary texts written by different authors, who return to the same source of references, as it were, and which then also act in intertextual dialogue with other contemporary works. A number of different writers' return to the same textual precedent can indicate something in the source text which has not been mastered, and may thus constitute an attempt at working through it. In other words, there appears to be a need to revisit a narrative because some issue has remained unresolved. Such is the case with the *Lear* story, where, in the foreclosure of a complete Freudian "da," the repeated performance or the "fort" continues.¹⁵⁶ The following chapter will contextualize *A Thousand Acres* in relation to other contemporary female-authored *Lears*.

¹⁵⁶ As Zenón Luis-Martínez contends, "The tendency to a diminution of pain – the tragicomic, romantic end of the *fort/da* game – does not take place in the repetition of the painful experience by itself," that is in the re-enactment of the "fort" in isolation (2002: 48).

4 EX-CENTRIC NARRATIVES: OTHER CONTEMPORARY FEMALE-AUTHORED *LEAR*S

An ending. A beginning.¹⁵⁷

While repetition may indicate an effort to move on and master past traumas – as was demonstrated in the previous chapter – it can also, as Freud and contemporary theorists have noted, bespeak a notion of psychological immobility or temporal stasis, of being stuck in, or as Cathy Caruth suggests, of being “possessed by” (1995a: 5) the past in terms of acting out rather than remembering and working through. In a literary context, the frequent intertextual return to the site of a trauma in a previous text bespeaks something which was not completely recognized and so has not been sufficiently dealt with. These intertextual returns comment on a metafictional level on the unavailable experience in a possible attempt to work through it, thus confirming the belatedness of trauma’s time in the sense that what was not understood at the time demands a belated “acting out” in a second moment. Dominick LaCapra perceptively notes, “Something of the past always remains, if only as a haunting presence or symptomatic revenant” (2001: 49). Smiley is far from alone in representing *Lear* anew: the last decades of the twentieth century have witnessed a repeated literary return to Shakespeare’s tragedy, especially among women writers. The play has inspired and generated a substantial number of novelistic responses in particular – and this can be interpreted as a belated reaction and a return in literary form to the missed site of trauma of the earlier work.¹⁵⁸ What these texts demonstrate through intertextuality is that that which was not fully known or that which was repressed in earlier texts continues to haunt future generations of writers.

A re-enactive literary return to what has previously been a silenced or veiled trauma in literature and culture can also signal the psychological process of trying to come to terms in writing with the topic. In other words, texts like these unwitting-

¹⁵⁷ The Women’s Theatre Group & Elaine Feinstein (1987), *Lear’s Daughters*, in *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, eds. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (London: Routledge, 2000), 217-232.

¹⁵⁸ In contrast to the many versions written by men before and after Shakespeare’s play such as Monmouth’s *King Leir*, Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, Nahum Tate’s *The History of King Lear*, Edward Bond’s *Lear*, Gordon Bottomley’s *King Lear’s Wife*, and Akira Kurosawa’s film *Ran*, women have now returned to telling the *Lear* story as they did in the folk tradition. As chapter 2 of this thesis has emphasized, historically storytelling has been particularly favored by women (see Warner 1995).

tingly become attempts at working through the trauma through narrative. Repetition may thus potentially signify a more positive perspective, advancing toward catharsis in the LaCaprian sense,¹⁵⁹ as the literary repetition of the fateful experience may offer writers and readers as well as protagonists a means of working through the trauma by speaking for victims who themselves have been unable to do so. Even while it may not always be possible for characters in a work of fiction to work through particular experiences as these figures may be psychologically immured by their past, the text may enact a working through process for the writer and for readers, who may recognize the implications of the trauma.

Writers returning to an incest text may, like Jane Smiley in *A Thousand Acres*, deal directly with the theme, or they may suppress, ignore, displace, or rewrite the trajectory for the main character(s). If Shakespeare's drama *King Lear* serves as the principal base, then the overtly incestuous plot of the folktale behind it has already been partly repressed, and some writers may choose to dramatize other themes. This means that even as its intertextual links bespeak it, that is, the intertexts raise the spectre of the possibility of incest, the plot of the novel excludes it. In other words, while there may be evidence in the intertext for incest, text works against intertext in these cases and so reverses or undercuts the trauma of the source text(s). However, the intertext may complicate assuasive texts; possible scenarios of incest are simultaneously affirmed intertextually and negated intratextually. Even texts which evoke trauma in no other way than by their return to a previous source and which do not overtly or directly address the unclaimed experience of the earlier work may allow for some degree of textual working through if read intertextually: as trauma in itself represents acting out, and an incapacity to work through, so texts that represent this psychological process through intertextuality may not only obliquely critique the conception of narration as restorative or healing but may also offer resistance to forgetting.

This study concludes the first Part with a discussion of seven contemporary *Lears* by women writers to explore what can be seen as the obsessive intertextual return to an unclaimed or missed literary moment in a previous work. It will soon become obvious that this is not an exhaustive survey of all the late twentieth-century female-authored publications of *Lears* as this is beyond the scope and ambit of this study. The discussion will instead be limited to selected illustrative examples that will give an idea of the extent of women's intertextual returns to this particu-

¹⁵⁹ Dominick LaCapra (2001) describes the process of literary works conveying traumatic experiences with the concept of "working through." Working through in relation to literary texts will be discussed more fully in connection with Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* in chapter 7 of Part II of the present thesis.

lar play in order to contextualize Smiley's novel. Only one of the examples is a play: *Lear's Daughters* (1987) by Elaine Feinstein and The Women's Theatre Group (WTG); all the others are novels: Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* (1988), Lucy Ellmann's *Sweet Desserts* (1988), Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate* [*Like Water for Chocolate*] (1989/1992), Mairi MacInnes's *The Quondam Wives* (1993), Valerie Miner's *A Walking Fire* (1994), and Anne Tyler's *Ladder of Years* (1995). This ratio may be consistent with the fact that more women novelists than women playwrights have reworked *Lear* (Novy 1999: 7). The examples chosen are from the late 1980s through mid-1990s and hence created during the same time as Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*. Intertextual references to *King Lear* in these texts range from multiple allusions on the levels of plot and narrative structure such as in Miner's *A Walking Fire* and MacInnes's *The Quondam Wives*, to more scattered and diffuse relations such as in Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, where some of the names are "out of Shakespeare" and the *Lear* story is displaced (Atwood 2004: 73). Although some of these texts have a strong incestuous flavor, unlike Smiley's novel and apart from *Lear's Daughters*, none of the others deals directly with overt father-daughter incest although some treat man-on-woman rape (Atwood and Esquivel) or covert incest (MacInnes). However, this chapter's interest lies in exploring the representation of trauma by reading these novels in intertextual dialogue with, and viewing them as different responses to, an incest theme in *Lear* as well as the folk material behind the play.

4.1 Acting "out of Shakespeare"

In her reformulation of Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, Cathy Caruth emphasizes the latency at the core of trauma, and therefore the re-enactive return to the traumatic moment; the traumatic experience is not fully registered upon occurrence but only experienced as trauma belatedly and somewhere else when it re-emerges in traumatic flashbacks and dreams and compulsive re-enactments. Rather than being recollected as something that happened in the past, then, the trauma is compulsively enacted in the present, or, in Freud's terms, acted out (see Freud 2003a: 36). According to Caruth, who talks about trauma as a "*possession by the past*," trauma is especially remarkable in "that its insistent reenactments of the past do not simply serve as testimony to an event, but may also, paradoxically enough, bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred" (1995a: 151). Trauma, in other words, "does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned" (1995a: 151).

Freud's essay "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through" (1914), which maps out the development in psychoanalytic practice from hypnosis to working through resistances in the patient, distinguishes between traumatic re-enactments or acting out (*Agieren*) and working through (*Durcharbeiten*): for Freud, the latter entails remembering whereas the former constitutes unconscious repetition in action of that which is not remembered or recalled as a memory: "the patient does not *remember* anything at all of what he has forgotten and repressed, but rather *acts it out*. He reproduces it not as a memory, but as an action; he *repeats* it, without of course being aware of the fact that he is repeating it" (2003a: 36, original italics). In his essay "Mourning and Melancholia," written in 1917, he similarly works out the difference between the two processes of melancholia (*Melancholie*) and mourning (*Trauerarbeit*): the former he sees as a pathological reaction to loss and the latter as a healthy condition of coming to terms with it (1959b: 52-70). While the trauma happened somewhere in the past, its force in acting out (repetition) belongs to the present and must be traced back to the past. In other words, for Freud, acting out/melancholia is *toto coelo* different from working through, which he sees as a healthy state of mourning. Dominick LaCapra on the other hand also recognizes the creative potential of acting out and sees it as a necessary part of working through (see 2001: 70, 144). In addition, acting out allows a continuous engagement with the past that also precludes forgetting.

In a literary context, the return to a moment of trauma in an earlier work corresponds to the Freudian concepts of acting out or melancholia on an intertextual level, and Shakespeare's *œuvres*, especially his tragedies, forms a body of texts that have generated many rewritings or appropriations. Marianne Novy has noted that, while Shakespearean comedies "have often been celebrated as an area of relative visibility and power for women," it is his tragedies that "have the most cultural force" both for male and female writers (1999: 4, 5). Today's authors possess effective tools in the form of specific theoretical and political standpoints to question and challenge not only the various oppressive social contexts present in his works but also the cultural centrality of his texts in the Western literary canon; since Shakespeare looms so large in our culture and his plays both embody in themselves and also have served to offer opportunities for others to present colonialist, imperialist,¹⁶⁰ and patriarchal positions, many contemporary writers

¹⁶⁰ While colonialism and imperialism are not main concerns of this study, it is in order to mention that at least two of the works considered in this chapter, Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, and to some extent also Ellmann's *Sweet Desserts*, are haunted not only by their traumatic literary past in the form of the *Lear* narrative but also by a colonial and imperialist history. Suzanne Raitt, who examines *Cat's Eye* as a critique of the Canadian nationalist imagination, correctly argues that Atwood's novel draws connections between and sometimes (con)fuses colonial and

who wish to criticize his plays, his cultural authority or the received criticism of his plays, intertextually allude to or subvert his texts. As Richard Proudfoot puts it; “apparent derivative fictions can also offer historical commentary on the text from which they derive” (2002: 152). Since writers are also readers, there is necessarily a connection between works of fiction and criticism, and intertextual fiction constitutes a particular critical form. The study of adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays for the stage is an established critical genre (see, e.g., Fischlin and Fortier 2000), albeit “a relatively marginalized and under-theorized activity” (Fischlin and Fortier 2000: 4), but as many writers such as Jane Smiley and the authors of the other *Lears* in this chapter return to Shakespeare, the late twentieth century has also witnessed the publishing of critical analyses and the anthologization of literary appropriations of his plays (see, for instance, Chedgzoy 1995; Novy 1999; Desmet and Sawyer 1999; Sanders 2001; Proudfoot 2002). Yet these works do not address the frequent return to Shakespeare in terms of trauma.

King Lear has played an important role here: as this present chapter argues, the frequent return of writers to Shakespeare’s drama constitutes not only a struggle to map out their relationship to the playwright but can also be seen as a return to a literary event of trauma that was not fully known in the first moment and which therefore continues to haunt some of today’s authors. Modern writers informed by feminism have invariably wished to question, examine, and appropriate the power dynamics of the patriarchal nuclear family in his plays, often working in alliance with feminist Shakespearean criticism, a relatively recent category. Women novelists in particular have frequently revisited *King Lear* and its obvious theme of a father’s control of his daughters. Marianne Novy believes this is “[p]erhaps partly because the relation of women writers to the past has often been thematized as a daughter-father issue” (1999: 5), even as an incestuous one (see Froula 1989). Over and above Novy’s commentary, however, this chapter suggests that the last few decades’ manifold revisions of *King Lear* point to a need to return to a traumatic moment in his drama.

Intertextuality can also distance both writers and readers from the reality of trauma. Writers who revisit earlier traumatic texts may avoid dealing directly with the issue by focusing on and dramatizing other conflicts. Avoidance comes at a price, however: eluding or displacing the traumatic moment itself rather than rep-

sexist oppression in the figure of Cordelia whereupon “Lear in *Cat’s Eye* [...] becomes an image of colonial, as well as patriarchal, power” (1999: 184). In Ellmann’s novel the protagonist and narrator Suzy, who moves from the US to Britain is at school “denied decent parts in Shakespeare on account of [her American] accent,” which she had “decided to hold on to [...] through thick and thin” (1988: 46, 41).

resenting it literally problematizes the reader's role in that it disrupts the potential for working through. Yet, textual acting out without actually dealing with the topic may, if read intertextually, function as resistance to forgetting. Of the *Lears* discussed in this study, only Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, and to some extent also Elaine Feinstein and the WTG's *Lear's Daughters*, explicitly explain the two eldest daughters' psychotic behavior in the play with actual incest, and although *The Quondam Wives* hints at covert incest and we are sometimes confronted with tales that "feel" incestuous or that have an incestuous tinct such as *Sweet Desserts* and *Ladder of Years*, there are no incest-abused or sexually traumatized daughters in *Como agua para chocolate*, *A Walking Fire*, *Ladder of Years*, *Sweet Desserts*, or *Cat's Eye*. On the contrary, these novels exhibit several marked discrepancies from, and lack what is traditionally considered an incest tale, primarily regarding the principal criterion: there is no incest. The only way all of these novels may be considered in a context of trauma narratives of father-daughter incest is in the sense that they all share a return to an incestuous pre-text.

What unites these diverse texts discussed in this chapter between themselves and also with Smiley's novel are their intertextual relations, or returns, to *Lear* and in some cases also to the folktales behind it. In addition, these works all attempt to answer questions that the *Lear* story provokes and to offer different motives or formulate various explanations for the daughters' behavior. What is more, all of these authors present their narratives from a marginalized position and a female perspective, either from the daughters' point-of-view or the wives', thereby de-centering *Lear* and re-centering or restoring what was marginal in Shakespeare's play but central in the play's folkloric analogs, the female storyteller. Taken together, these texts also question Shakespeare's cultural centrality in various ways, authorship as well as ownership. What will become obvious is also how certain themes such as maternal absence and a complicated father-daughter relationship which in *A Thousand Acres*, *Lear*, and the folktales behind it are linked to incest, reverberate through these seven texts as well.

4.2 On Stage: *Lear's Daughters*

Like Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, *Lear's Daughters*, a refashioning for the stage of the Shakespearean drama from the point of view of the three daughters staged in London in 1987, interprets the father-daughter relationship in *Lear* as incestuous. This adaptation of *Lear* is written by English novelist, poet, and translator Elaine Feinstein in cooperation with the Women's Theatre Group – one of the most influential early feminist groups emerging in the early 1970s and today called The Sphinx – and is not a very well known play. It is a prequel to Shake-

spere's tragedy, as it were, and it ends where his drama is about to begin, with the splitting of the crown/land. In other words, it fills in the gap of what happened before *Lear* begins and deals with the childhood and adolescence of the three daughters. The role of incest in the play is ambiguous: some critics have commented on the father-daughter relationship in *Lear's Daughters* as incestuous at least in relation to Cordelia, while some do not mention it at all; Suzanne Raitt indicates that the play "represent[s] Lear's relationship with his daughters as actively incestuous" (1999: 196, n. 19), while Kate Chedgzoy, who discusses incest in both *A Thousand Acres* and *Lear* and also mentions the folktale behind the play, does not comment on the incest theme in *Lear's Daughters* (1995: 56-58).

In the first scene of the play a spotlight isolates the androgynous Fool, whose initial words before she introduces and calls forth Cordelia, Regan, and Goneril invoke a fairy-tale sentiment and render manifest the familial power dynamics in the Lear family: "There was an old man called Lear / whose daughters, da da da da, fear" (WTG and Feinstein 2000: 217). Despite the fact that the king himself is offstage for the whole action and the duration of the play, he is present in the sense that his devastating power extends onto the stage. As Chedgzoy observes, works like *Lear's Daughters* (and *A Thousand Acres*) "record the pain inflicted on daughters by the Shakespearean family at its most patriarchal" (1995: 49). The daughters in the play typically act the good girl role and are seen as objects of exchange or property. The Queen is absent from the stage, unless impersonated by the Fool: she died after the third miscarriage in her efforts to provide the king with a son. She lives on, however, in fairy tales of the daughters' births and other events told by the Nurse (and by themselves). In addition, motherhood is trebled in the play (in the form of three mother figures) with a focus on the legitimacy of the maternal bloodline. The last scene of the play reveals the Nurse to be Cordelia's mother; she "swapped her at birth" for the Queen's son (2000: 231). When Lear arranges for Goneril and Regan to marry, Regan, too, is pregnant (it is not clear who the father is, only that it is not the groom-to-be). "Get rid of it," Goneril orders (2000: 230). While for Regan marriage holds out a promise of escape from Lear's reign, Goneril looks at it differently: "It's our job. It's what we're here for. To marry and breed," "Like dogs," "Valuable merchandise," as she puts it (2000: 229). The poison Goneril administers to Regan to kill her in Shakespeare's play is in *Lear's Daughters* translated into the poison that Regan receives against a painful abortion performed by the Nurse.

Vague allusions to sexual abuse abound in the play and are often made manifest in terms of colors, touch or feeling, and words, features with which Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia are respectively identified. Goneril recalls how her father took her downstairs and pushed her into a room that "was full of gold," whisper-

ing “This will be our secret – just you and me – and you mustn’t tell” (2000: 228). Regan remembers how she felt “scared” after she had gone downstairs seeing her father holding her mother’s breast: “Not tender” (2000: 220). Cordelia remembers her father’s words to her when he took her down the cellars and lifted her onto a table, “my pretty chick,” “dance for Daddy,” “Spin for Daddy” (2000: 227). The Fool, too, obliquely refers to incest, asking on the day of the Queen’s funeral, “who will take her place at the King’s right hand?” (2000: 224).

The play climaxes in the penultimate scene in a double wedding for Goneril and Regan that is structurally mixed in with a stereophonic echo of the father’s words to his three daughters, making the marriage ceremony symbolically one between Lear and his offspring rather than between Goneril and Regan and their respective bridegrooms Albany and Cornwall. The Dukes remain offstage, and the spectators’ attention is riveted instead to the daughters and to Lear, who is played or acted by the Fool. The phrases uttered by the Fool, “Who gives this woman?” “To love, honour and obey,” “Just cause or impediment,” “Kiss the bride,” and Goneril’s and Regan’s “To love and cherish” and their repeated proclamations “I promise, I do, I will” in the marriage ceremony are heard together with Cordelia’s and the Nanny’s voices parroting Lear’s earlier words to his daughters: “Daddy’s girl,” “Spin for Daddy,” “Just the two of us,” “And you mustn’t tell” (2000: 230). In the final moment of the scene, Goneril, in an instance of traumatic acting out, attempts to throw herself out the window. She is rescued by the Nanny, but her attempt to kill herself foreshadows her subsequent suicide in Shakespeare’s text.

The play’s last scene shows the daughters reconstructing their reactions to their past. Again they talk of color, touch, and words. Goneril sees “red” evoking Lady Macbeth with her “Red on my hands”: “My father’s daughter, and still he gives me stop and start. Controlling by my hatred, the order of my life” (2000: 232). Regan recalls the abortion and Goneril’s words “Get rid of it,” exculpating her elder sister: “I could see what he had done to her, had done to me” (2000: 232). She also remembers how a she used to carve with her knife, “create beauty from distortion” and that this will still be with her “till the end, my end, carved out at her hands” (2000: 232). Cordelia says she has two voices, which may indicate splitting: “Ever since going downstairs and Daddy lifting me onto the table, I’ve talked like a child, used the words of a child. No-one likes it but him. But I do have another voice” (2000: 232) The daughters’ identification with the various distinct features of words, touch, and color in the play apparently signals their attempt to reconstruct the past both verbally and emotionally, as well as with full sensory experiences. Judith Herman explains that trauma is first recounted “as a series of still snapshots or a silent movie; the role of therapy is to provide the music and words” and emphasizes the role of “bodily sensations in reconstructing a

complete memory,” including feelings and different sensory experiences (1994: 175, 177). Brenda Daly, scholar and survivor of paternal sexual abuse, offers that after a few months of therapy she “experienced the return of words and music, along with, in my case, color” (1998: 14).

The play ends where it begins; again the light is up on the Fool, whose final words – as she throws the “crown” (1.1.139) between Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia and they collectively reach for it – foregrounds the cyclical structure of the play’s action which powerfully ties in with trauma’s time: “An ending. A beginning [...] Time’s up” (2000: 232). There is no dénouement. The final scene of the play connects with the opening in that the three daughters are back where they started, trapped in their traumatic past; the play has come “full circle” (5.3.165), as it were. Chedgzoy argues that the cyclical nature of the action shows how the women are trapped under their father’s power: “Lear’s dutiful daughters are left on-stage in a tableau which forms a visual and structural rhyme with the start of the play and underscores the circularity of the action, the hopelessness of their attempts to escape their father’s power, as each of them stretches out to grasp the crown which seems to them to offer their only hope of agency or autonomy” (1995: 63). This present study suggests, too, that this cyclicity also bespeaks the temporality of trauma’s time, of being stuck in the past; the completed circuit here denotes the trauma that has come back to haunt the protagonists. In this, it not only points to the trauma experienced within *Lear’s Daughters* itself but also to an unclaimed moment in the previous text to which the play has returned.

However, while the looping action of the play offers temporal stasis, it also allows for a continuous re-imagining of the past, making it possible to conceive of a different trajectory for the future, and thus hints at a possibility for change which is indicated by the three daughters collectively reaching for the diadem. It is thus the collectivity of the play that offers a possibility of hope for the future. Not only does this collectivity challenge a historically privileged perspective of Shakespeare as father in relation to literary daughters, allowing the daughters to tell their own story, but, as this present study argues, it also signals that our memories are not our own in trauma. *Lear’s Daughters* emphasizes that traumatic memories need to be reconstructed in collaboration as a shared and common reality. The collaborative authorship of *Lear’s Daughters* and the sisters’ attempts in the play to reconstruct their memories of the past not only remind the reader of how Shakespeare’s plays and also fairy tales were born,¹⁶¹ but also signal the impor-

¹⁶¹ Fischlin and Fortier has observed about *Lear’s Daughters*, that “[b]y virtue of its communal genesis the play puts the very idea of authorship to the question and challenges long-

tance of (re)constructing the history of their traumatic past collectively. Their attempts at reconstructing history can be viewed as efforts to move beyond privileging individual experience and personal memory in representing (sexual) trauma. Instead, and as traumatic experience forecloses subjectivity, the women's efforts in the play to reconstruct the past can be seen as a step in the direction toward a more collective approach to represent trauma.

4.3 Novel *Lears*

In contrast to the small number of women playwrights such as Feinstein and WTG who have reworked Shakespeare for the stage, women authors have novelized his works time and again (Novy 1999: 7). The last few decades of the twentieth century saw the publication of women novelists' versions of *Lear* prosper, but unlike *A Thousand Acres* none of the novels explored in this section – Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, Lucy Ellmann's *Sweet Desserts*, Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate*, Mairi MacInnes's *The Quondam Wives*, Valerie Miner's *A Walking Fire*, and Anne Tyler's *Ladder of Years* – represent a narrative of overt father-daughter incest. To choose to discuss novels that are not about incest in a project on the trauma of sexual abuse might appear remarkable. However, it would be a mistake to read the novels only on this level, of what is said or explicitly expressed, as sometimes trauma falls outside the plot or reaches beyond its limits in the sense that the tension between narrative structure and representation has not been resolved, as it were. If one looks at the six texts individually, strictly defined, these novels are not about incest. Yet, in answer to the question why propose trauma where there is none? this study argues that incest simultaneously is and is not there. *Intertextually* all of these texts are about incest as they engage with other texts about incest. A closer look discloses a connection to *Lear*, and hence also to its folkloric analogs, that allows for an unveiling of trauma, encouraging a reading between works. These novels “become” incest narratives in their belated engagement with the source texts while simultaneously challenging straightforward notions of incest fiction by raising issues about how trauma can be represented through intertextuality in reference to time. In other words, the belated re-enactment or return to the previous work is itself part of the representation. Sometimes the topic of incest is obscured, displaced, or avoided altogether,

entrenched notions circulating around the individuality of the author” (Fischlin and Fortier 2000: 215). It does so by not having one individual author responsible for it. In other words, it is a joint effort, like Shakespeare's texts themselves in all probability were created.

unstated and unarticulated, a silent presence. Often it is that which is not said in a text, or the deafening silence, that speaks the loudest.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning, established American novelist and short story writer Anne Tyler, who, like Smiley, often examines American white middle-class family life and its perils, rewrites *King Lear* in her thirteenth novel *Ladder of Years* not as a trauma narrative of active father-daughter sexual abuse but as a Shakespearean comedy of displaced father-daughter incest. As Paul Bail, who does not mention *Lear* in his otherwise suggestive analysis of her book and her literary influences, correctly states, Tyler's "novel is a comedy whose main plot and subplots involve complications between couples that are resolved at the end, much like the Shakespearean comedies" where "all the couples are paired off" (1998: 173-174, 175). The novel is narrated from the perspective of the youngest of three daughters with a Shakespearean moniker, Cordelia (Delia) Grinstead, a dissatisfied mother of three, who seemingly on an impulse walks away from her family one day during a vacation at the beach, hitching a ride to the town Bay Borough only to return about a year and a half later for her daughter's marriage.

Tyler explicitly evokes the fairy tale¹⁶² opening of *King Lear* in the early part of the book in a scene which recalls the play's love test and the subsequent dispersion of the kingdom: Delia remembers how years earlier her father had invited her now husband Sam Grinstead to choose between herself and her sisters Eliza and Linda (the Goneril and Regan counterparts respectively):

Sam claimed that when he first walked in, all three girls had been seated on the couch. Like the king's three daughters in a fairy tale, he said, they'd been lined up according to age, the oldest farthest left, and like the woodcutter's honest son, he had chosen the youngest and prettiest, the shy little one on the right who didn't think she stood a chance. (1997: 30)

Like Goneril and Regan and their alter egos in Smiley's novel *Ginny and Rose*, who compete for their father's favor when he has decided to split the land between his daughters, Delia and her sisters struggle among themselves to win the favor of Sam. This scene of course powerfully shows how, in the words of Paul

¹⁶² Tyler makes a number of references to folk and fairy. As Bail points out; "allusions to fairy tales [...] are scattered throughout the novel", and Delia "relates her experiences either to fairy tales or to romantic novels [...], which structurally are quite similar to fairy tales" (1998: 179, 180). Bail even finds references to Cinderella in that when Delia's cat Vernon has disappeared at the beach a workman named Vernon appears instead, with whom she hitches a ride: "Like the magical coachman in Cinderella Vernon fulfills Delia's wishes by driving her away to a fantasylike adventure in Bay Borough," which in itself seems like an enchanted place (1998: 180).

Christian Jones, “the men in the novel do not view Delia as individual but see her as a commodity to be passed among themselves” (2003: 279).

Tyler here displaces Lear’s choice between his three daughters in Shakespeare’s version with the choice of a suitor, thus sidestepping the incest threat by dividing the father figure in two. In other words, she somewhat circumvents the incest theme, but not completely: Sam is fifteen years Delia’s senior and a father figure to her which brings to mind Phyllis Chesler’s argument that women marry men like their fathers (see Herman and Hirschman 1981, 2000: 57-58). Delia marries her husband when she is still a teenager, fresh out of high school, and he moves in with the family, her father and two sisters Linda and Eliza, and takes over her father’s medical practice so that her life continues much in the same way as before her marriage; she is now working as “free labor” in the form of receptionist and secretary for her husband instead of her father, who dies shortly before the novel begins, and Sam “assum[es] patriarchal privilege on the father’s death” (Jones 2003: 279). In order to become independent, she needs to refuse the romantic notion of suffocating incestuous love in terms of perpetual daughterhood. The heroine’s flight is in Delia’s case an escape from her husband, who has become an ageing man, more and more like her father, especially after a recent illness, while, as Bail aptly puts it, “she allows herself to remain in many ways a young maiden” (1998: 176).

Like the heroine in the folktales behind *Lear* who flees her incestuous father, Delia’s escape from her husband can be seen as a flight from a relationship that is incestuous in tone, as a virtual time trip which reworks the past so that the possibilities for the future may be different. The time trip begins and ends at home: like *Lear’s Daughters*, *Ladder of Years* has a cyclical structure in that the heroine is at the novel’s end back where she started. Before Delia leaves her family she first re-lives high school through her fling with Adrian Bly-Brice, a young version of her husband whom she meets at the supermarket. Then one day on a family vacation she escapes and ends up in Bay Borough – a place connected with her dead mother’s family – where for the first time in her life she makes an independent life for herself, and soon enough, as in the fairy-tale realm, the heroine’s life becomes more and more like the one she left behind; she becomes the nanny of Noah Miller and re-experiences her children the way they were when they were younger. She also meets Noel’s maternal grandfather, Nat Moffat, who marries Binky, a young woman, and becomes a father again, and as Bail notes, “Nat and Binky’s relationship dramatizes by proxy Delia’s attraction to a father figure” (1998: 178). Finally, however, through Nat she also reworks her relationship to her father; after returning home again for her daughter’s wedding Nat comes to take her back to Bay Borough but experiences a disease attack and has to stay the

night in Delia's father's room, which for her replays the time before her father's death when she took care of him during his illness (Tyler 1997: 402). In a skewed temporality, Delia's time trip has been one "that worked" (1997: 406); it has made possible for Delia a new relationship to her husband where she no longer plays the role of the daughter. The novel itself, too, has enacted time travel to a previous text, but *Ladder of Years* does not evoke trauma in the novel itself; at the book's end it is back where it began, acting out the source text. In displacing the father-daughter relationship of the earlier work, and in refusing to deal with the incestuous topic of the intertextual sources, it fails to provide a working through.

Like Tyler's novel, *Sweet Desserts* (1988) by the Anglo-American novelist Lucy Ellmann sidesteps the traumatic moment of the source text, but centres more directly on a daughter's conflicted love for her father from the daughter's perspective. Despite the fact that Ellmann's tragic-comic and provocative first book – a thinly veiled autobiographical or semi-autobiographical text – was highly acclaimed, winning the *Guardian* Fiction Prize for a first novel, the author is not very well known, and critique on *Sweet Desserts* is far from ample even in connection with *Lear*. The novel does not stay as close to the play as Smiley's or even as Tyler's *Lears*, but is more experimental and relies heavily on collage. The American-born author wittily and sometimes sarcastically portrays Suzy Schwartz (the narrator) and her sister Fran, American art critics, who as young girls move with their father – an eminent art historian reputable for his violent attacks on Rubens' women – from Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, to Oxford, England. As in Tyler's narrative (and Smiley's), there is an absent mother, she died of a cerebral hemorrhage while they were still in the US. The father dies in the end from a neurological illness, and this, too, is a novel which, in part like Tyler's text, posits a similar situation in that it deals with a daughter's grief for her dying father. However, Ellmann's narrative also treats desire on the part of the daughter for her father and her need to be loved by him.

The title, *Sweet Desserts*, alludes to the woman-as-dessert metaphor in the English language, of equating women as sex-objects with desserts, e.g. eye-candy, and also with good (sweet) girls (see Hines 1999). Fran and Suzy are obsessed with food and sex; the former is anorexic/bulimic, the latter is addicted to food, bingeing/overeating, and she recycles Fran's exes whom she hands on to her and puts herself into risky sexual encounters with unknown men. She marries one of Fran's ex-lovers, Jeremy, and has a child, Lily, by him but later leaves him. As Caitlin Hines notes, "desserts are made to be shared. Thus not only are women grammatically objectified, reduced to mere syntactic objects, but also they are depersonalized, robbed of their uniqueness." (1999: 154) That Fran and Suzy are shared by the same men underlines this point. It is possible to read Fran's and

Suzy's sexual obsessions as a link to the traditional view of Goneril and Regan as sexually perverted lusty women. As Tim Keppel puts it, "[t]he women of *King Lear* are tainted rather than empowered, as men are, by their sexual capacities. They are often described with bestial imagery" and "presented as monstrously lustful." (1995: 112) Ellmann in fact reassesses their sexuality. In *Sweet Desserts*, as Michiko Kakutani (1989) notes, food and sex substitute for the father's love.¹⁶³ Thus the eating disorders can be read as incidental to the sibling rivalry between the two sisters, competing for male favor and their father's love and affection. Fran keeps herself thin so that her father will love her, and probably developed bulimia as a result. Suzie, on the other hand, becomes overweight to get back at him: "It was all a great revenge on Daddy, fascinated as he was by his own repugnance towards Rubens' women" (1988: 42).

Collage work frequently irrupts into the action and in the narrator's unchronological reminiscences functioning as a protective shield against the incestuous tensions between father and daughter in the narrative itself as well as against the trauma in the source texts. Like Tyler's *Ladder of Years* and the play *Lear's Daughters*, Ellmann's experimental novel is anti-linear. Suzy, who has remained in Britain, lives in London and is supposed to complete her Ph. D. on collage with the title "The Withdrawal Method: The Absence of the Artist's Touch in Collages and Ready-Mades," which deals with artists' use of this technique to conceal their own role in the creative process, which thereby enables a defensive emotional distance, creating an air of aloofness toward their work. Passages from her doctoral thesis in preparation are interspersed with various inserted text fragments in the novel: jokes, diary entries, letters, excerpts from textbooks and self-help books, passages from women's magazines and newspapers, personal ads, radio talk shows, diet books, recipes from one of last century's most influential cookbooks, Irma Rombauer's *The Joy of Cooking*, handbooks, questionnaires, John Donne, technical texts, opera (Figaro). *Sweet Desserts* also has an index. But more than "driving home just how disjointed Suzy's life is," as David Finkle (1989) argues, the present study suggests that these collage fragments function as a protective device or a shield against the topic of incest both on intratextual and intertextual levels. While Kakutani (1989) rightly claims that these divergent pieces of text point to "a defensive method [...] enabling Suzy (and her creator) to hide their vulnerability behind a posture of detachment," the collage work also functions for both narrator and writer as well as for readers as a defense against the father-daughter relationship of the novel and (the topic of) incest in *Lear* and

¹⁶³ Freud, too, has observed a link between sweet objects and affection: "In dreams sweet things and sweetmeats stand regularly for caress or sexual gratifications" (2001: 107).

its folkloric sources. The ironic tone of the novel, too, signifies an emotional shield against conflicted feelings.

The collage material is not random, nor is it randomly applied in Ellmann's novel: although her book does not deal with incest directly, the collage work sometimes references incest and abuse, Lear's relations to his daughters, and the folktale behind the play, thus obliquely functioning as the return of these issues from the novel's intertextual sources. Julie Sanders has suggested that Ellmann's intertextual agenda "is more piecemeal, more allusive, than the sustained template the play provides for Smiley and Miner" and that "[t]his is in keeping with the innovative narrative style of Ellmann's novel" (2001: 222). Admittedly Ellmann invokes Shakespeare in a more fragmented form, but more specifically she invokes *Lear* in terms of incest. Cordelia's "Why have my sisters husbands if they say / They love you all?" and "Love, and be silent" (1.1.99-100, 62; Ellmann 1988: 123), repeated at the end of the novel as Suzy, the chief caretaker of her father, has sex with her lover, clearly links Ellmann's text to incestuous desire. Intertextual references extend also to the folktales behind *Lear*: Suzy's American boyfriend Chris writes to her comparing his love for her to meat as in the folktale "Love like Salt": "*I love you like dogs like parks, like meat likes salt*" (1988: 34, italics in original). Additional references to the confusing relation between daughter and father include a text fragment that reads: "A girl has to avoid her father between the age of puberty and the time of her marriage. If they meet in the road, she hides while he passes, and she may never go and sit near him." (1988: 54) The index, too, which sometimes features entries without references or at other times leads into circular or misleading references, features the heading "Abuse, clear case of" (1988: 143). Thus the incest of the source text is never confronted directly in the narrative itself but in the collage work, which distances or dissociates as it enacts the unspeakable material from narrator, writer, and reader.

Notwithstanding the sometime levity of the novel, it ends on a tragic, somber tone after the father has died and the two daughters struggle to get along with their loss and with each other, leaving the reader, too, struggling with the legacy of the father-daughter relationship of earlier texts.

Nor does the Mexican screen writer and first-time novelist Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate* (1989) in any direct way deal with father-daughter incest. Unlike *Sweet Desserts*, however, the novel feminizes or gender-reverses the parent of the *Lear* tale, but as in Ellmann's novel (and in *A Thousand*

Acres),¹⁶⁴ food is a central sign for power struggles. The title refers to an expression with a double meaning used in some parts of the Spanish-speaking Latin-American world such as Mexico that literally describes water simmering just below boiling point for the preparation of hot chocolate, but which is also used to denote extreme or intense feelings, such as passion, sexuality, and anger. Its subtitle, *Novela de entregas mensuales con recetas, amores y remedios caseros* [*A Novel in Monthly Installments, with Recipes, Romances, and Home Remedies*], simultaneously signals a cookbook, a romance novel, and serial fiction. The title, the subtitle, and a recipe from each month of the year preface each of the twelve chapters of Esquivel's acclaimed and bestselling novel, translated into English in 1992 concurrently with the release of a filmic adaptation with an award-winning screenplay. Food is linked to Esquivel's extensive use of the genre of "Lo maravilloso real," or magical realism,¹⁶⁵ and is employed in a sustained manner to explore the twenty-four-year-old protagonist Josefita (Tita) De La Garza's emotions and resistance; others who partake of her food get to experience the same emotional states as her and all these emotions get a physical manifestation in the tragicomic novel's supernatural and mystical world. *Como agua para chocolate* is also a family saga or a fictional biography as it is narrated from the perspective of Tita's grandniece, Esperanza Muzquiz, moving from first person to third-person omniscient narration.

Como agua para chocolate is set during the rebellious years of late nineteenth century Mexico at a land-owning middle-class family's ranch in a town close to San Antonio, Texas, at the Mexican-American border, and links familial insurrection to the Mexican socialist revolution (1910-1917) of Emiliano Zapata. Tita, the youngest daughter (the Cordelia counterpart), starts challenging the cultural injustice that her bad-tempered mother enforces as she falls in love with Pedro Muzquiz: according to traditional marriage customs, Tita, as the youngest, must remain unmarried as long as her mother lives and take care of her. Pedro marries her sister Rosaura (Regan) instead and Tita's tears "poison" the cake so that all at

¹⁶⁴ Along with Steven G. Kellman (1995), who sees the importance given to food in *A Thousand Acres* as Smiley's greatest departure from the play – tracing how the characters communicate between themselves and how secrets of theme, plot, and character are revealed through the language of food – Catherine Cowen Olson (1998) belongs to the less than a handful of critics who have commented upon the telling position the twin themes of food and cooking occupy in *A Thousand Acres*. Olson chronicles a trajectory of instances in the novel where food and serving first signify oppression for Ginny (and Rose) only to become a source of power.

¹⁶⁵ The term "magical realism" was invented to describe the work of certain Latin American writers such as that of Gabriel García Márquez. The amplitude of the real in Latin America is connected to "the oral tradition and the hybrid creation of extreme variability" (de Valdes 1995: 5, n. 5).

the wedding except Tita herself, who never eats it, begin to suffer heartache and vomiting. This is the first time that Tita, albeit unconsciously, enacts resistance by means of food. Rosaura never challenges her mother's rule, but the third sister Gertrudis/Goneril, a half-breed – the result of Mamá Elena's passionate affair with an African-American man – runs off to work in a brothel and then with Juan Alejandrez, captain in the socialist revolutionary army of Emiliano Zapata, only to first become a *soldadera* and then a *general* with the rebels in Zapata's army.

The narrative depicts an absent father whose presence manifests indirectly through traditional and restrictive oppressive rules for the daughters, which is typical of Mexican-American novels of the time Esquivel wrote her novel (see Paredes 1989: 152): like the father in *Lear's Daughters* who from offstage greatly influences what happens to the Lear family on stage, Tita's father – who has died of a heart attack before the plot begins – dominates and rules the De La Garza family from beyond the grave through Mamá Elena, who embodies his patriarchal legacy of sexism, physical abuse, and of confining women to the domestic sphere. Tita's rebellion against what appears to be matriarchy is really against patriarchy, which is projected onto a mother-daughter struggle. Tita performs Cinderella-like chores: “Tenía que levantarse, vestirse, prender el fuego en la estufa, preparar el desayuno, alimentar a los animales, lavar los trastes, hacer las camas, preparar la comida, lavar los trastes, planchar la ropa, preparar la cena, lavar los trastes, día tras día, año tras año” (Esquivel 1994: 114),¹⁶⁶ and sometimes when she disobeys her mother, she is physically punished. Her resistance takes the form of escape through creative cooking, and once she copes temporarily by losing her mind. Mamá Elena then orders Tita to be sent to an insane asylum – which obliquely links the daughter to the legend of Saint Dymphna – but the American Dr. John Brown rescues her and takes her in.

In keeping with the tradition of contemporary Latina women writers who do not address the sexual tension between fathers and daughters directly, the incestuous father-daughter relationship of the *Lear* story is not overtly portrayed in Esquivel's novel. Although Latina women writers have now sought to eradicate the archaic patriarchy of Mexican-American culture, father-daughter incest has seldom figured in their works. Due to a strong patriarchal societal and family structure, which gave Mexican men in nineteenth-century Greater Mexico absolute hegemony over their daughters and wives, literature by women remained mar-

¹⁶⁶ “She had to get up, get dressed, get the fire going in the stove, fix breakfast, feed the animals, wash the dishes, make the beds, fix lunch, wash the dishes, iron the clothes, fix dinner, wash the dishes, day after day, year after year” (1992: 105, Trans. Christensen and Christensen).

ginal until well into the twentieth century (Paredes 1989: 146), and even at the time of Esquivel's novel, sexuality in the father-daughter relationship, as Raymund Paredes notes, "is not usually treated explicitly by Mexican-American women writers, many of whom are restrained by traditional standards of politeness" (1989: 153). Although, as Paredes argues, "the tradition of suppressing female sexuality and the persistence of conventional machismo make for a high degree of sexual tension between fictional Mexican-American daughters and fathers," the Mexican-American father is still seen by his daughters as "a remote, aloof, and ever shadowy figure" (1989: 152).

While incest is not treated in Esquivel's novel, sexual trauma is present. Removed from familial relations it is represented instead in connection with the figure of a minor character, Chenchá, the family maid. Chenchá is brutally attacked and raped one night by a group of bandits. Mamá Elena, in her effort to defend Chenchá's honor receives a blow to her spine which leaves her paraplegic. Chenchá is torn and she has to be sewn up by Dr. John Brown. Tita returns from Dr. Brown to the De La Garza ranch to take care of her mother, who is now paralyzed from the waist down, and of Chenchá. She tries to cure her mother with healing food that she prepares but for fear of being poisoned Mamá Elena does not eat it and soon dies from an overdose of ipecac, a purgative/an emetic. Tita takes great care of Chenchá: "Tita la abrazó y la consoló como lo había hecho todas las noches desde su regreso" (Esquivel 1994: 140).¹⁶⁷ The attack by the bandits signifies in the novel an aggressive male invasion from the outside of a predominantly female realm, the ranch, and intertextually ties in with male aggression in the *Lear* story.

After Mamá Elena's death, Tita discovers that also her mother has been a victim of the system that she has so vehemently upheld. When dressing Mamá Elena's body for the funeral Tita finds old love letters that tell of Mamá Elena's affair with Gertrudis's father José, a mulatto whom she wanted to marry. Her parents, however, objected to their marriage and forced Mamá Elena to marry De La Garza instead. Mamá Elena continued her relationship with José, became pregnant and planned to escape with him and the baby, but he was murdered. This knowledge fills Tita with respect for Mamá Elena and she is now able to understand and sympathize with her mother's victimization, which is similar to her own: "Durante el entierro Tita realmente lloró por su madre. Pero no por la mujer cas-

¹⁶⁷ "Tita held her and comforted her as she had every night since her return" (1992: 131, Trans. Christensen and Christensen).

trante [...] sino por ese ser que había vivido un amor frustrado” (Esquivel 1994: 143).¹⁶⁸

Mexican literary father-daughter relationships must be read in the context of cultural myths and legends. So also does *Como agua para chocolate*, which refers to such legendary figures as “La Delgadina,”¹⁶⁹ or what Raymund Paredes calls “the most significant treatment of a daughter-father relationship in traditional Spanish culture” (1989: 138): “La Delgadina,” a version of the AaThU510B tale where a father wants his daughter, is a seventeenth century romance in which the daughter refuses to be her father’s mistress, whereupon he imprisons her, tells his servants not to give her “comida fina” (“any fine food”) and only “agua salada” (“salty water”) if she asks for something to eat or drink (1989: 139, 140). Delgadina asks her sister to give her some water but she dares not for fear of their father. While Delgadina’s surrender to her father’s command is only suggested in some versions of the three-hundred-year-old ballad, in others the daughter “quite unambiguously” decides to obey her father’s order but dies before the incest can be consummated. The story’s dilemma is this: Delgadina “is pressed on one side by the cultural obligation to honor her father’s demands, regardless of their fairness, and on the other by the equally compelling imperative to maintain her virginity until marriage.” (1989: 141) The ballad epitomizes the traditionally patriarchal Spanish/Mexican father’s power over his daughter and dramatizes this dynamic in terms of incest and food/drink. Father-daughter incest is seen as the embodiment of patriarchal power and food/drink the central sign for the power struggle between the pair in “La Delgadina” which also links the ballad to Esquivel’s narrative: in *Como agua para chocolate*, while constantly preparing food for others, Tita is hardly ever seen as eating herself. As Maite Zubiaurre has suggested, Tita is “[p]robably even an anorexic” (2006: 41). Whereas *Como agua para chocolate*, unlike “La Delgadina,” does not dramatize father-daughter incest, the power struggle occurs instead as a mother-daughter conflict in terms of food between Tita and Mamá Elena, who strictly upholds and embodies the father’s rigid rules, dramatized for instance in Tita’s “poisoned” food for Rosaura and Pedro’s wedding and Mamá Elena’s refusal to eat the food Tita prepares for her.

“La Delgadina” is the apotheosis of female submissiveness, a symbol of the good woman, evident by her reverent replies to her father – “Papacito de mi vida” (“my

¹⁶⁸ “During the funeral Tita really wept for her mother. Not for the castrating mother [...], but for the person who had lived a frustrated love” (Esquivel 1992: 135, Trans. Christensen and Christensen).

¹⁶⁹ For a Mexican version and an English translation of “La Delgadina” set in Morelia in the state of Michoacán and collected along the Texas-Mexican border, see Paredes (1989: 139-140).

beloved father”) which she persists in calling him throughout (Paredes 1989: 139, 140). In that she finds freedom in heaven after her death, she can be subsumed under one of the two legendary Mexican emblematic figures of “the extremes of women’s behavior”: the Virgin of Guadalupe,¹⁷⁰ patron saint of Mexico and the other extreme, Malinche (or Marina),¹⁷¹ who today remains the dominant symbol of “damned femininity” (1989: 141, 142): “The modern Malinche frequently appears in films, television, and paperback novels as *la mala mujer*, ‘the bad woman,’ who rejects conventional roles and resists male authority” (1989: 144). According to the merging of prescriptive rules of behavior for Mexican women from indigenous and Spanish modes of patriarchy, Guadalupe and Malinche represent the polar opposites (1989: 141). In Esquivel’s novel the figure of Malinche comes to stand for opposition and resistance to patriarchal rules and is seen in the character of Gertrudis, and to some extent but more obliquely so in Tita. Zubiaurre notes about Esquivel’s protagonist that she “opens all these doors, even if she does not dare to walk through them herself: foundational texts, however traditional and conforming, can put the seed of rebellion in their own daughter narratives” (2006: 47).

Rosaura never challenges the old patriarchal tradition; when her and Pedro’s daughter Esperanza wants to marry the son of Doctor John Brown, Alex, she objects which results in violent arguments between herself, Pedro, and Tita. Rosaura dies shortly after of the strange digestive disease from which she suffered. Her death symbolizes a relaxation of the patriarchal hold on the De La Garza family as Esperanza and Alex are married. At the novel’s end, Tita, too, is free to be with the love of her life, but as Pedro and she make love Pedro dies and Tita is left alone. In an attempt to rekindle the flame of their passion in an artificial way she lights candles that finally set the whole ranch on fire. Thus the heat of the novel’s lovers is coupled with death by fire, which ultimately symbolizes the end of the patriarchal repressive reign in the De La Garza family. Tita’s recipe book, which was her only means of resistance, survives and is found by Esperanza and Alex (the parents of the narrator of Esquivel’s novel) as they return from their honeymoon. While Esquivel’s novel does not treat father-daughter incest, the reader is provided with the opportunity to work through to a certain extent the emotional trauma suffered by Tita which was brought about by the patriarchal legacy of her father, and indirectly also the sexual trauma suffered by Chenchá.

¹⁷⁰ For a brief account of the saint Guadalupe, see Paredes (1989: 143-144).

¹⁷¹ For a brief account of the legend of Malinche, see Paredes (1989: 141-143).

Turning now to the American academic and novelist Valerie Miner's *A Walking Fire* (1994), which unlike Esquivel's novel does not gender-transpose the father but the two eldest daughters, this study argues that the incestuous father of the *Lear* story emerges here primarily as the abuser and oppressor of his two sons, the gender-reversed Goneril and Regan. Incest is not explicitly present, but this revised *Lear* raises domestic patriarchy and violence to the level of national and international world politics (see Sanders 2001: 217-221). Like *Sweet Desserts*, Miner's novel is non-linear with an unchronological narrative, and is divided into twelve parts and between three different time periods; each part starts in the novel's present time, the 1980s, and then looks back to the mid- and late-1960s of the protagonist Cora Casey's college years, radical anti-war activities, and subsequent banishment from home, and the 1950s of her tragic childhood where the themes of madness, absent mother, and abusive father merge: the implacable and violent father drank and beat his sons, and the mother suffered a mental breakdown and hanged herself at a mental institution when Cora was eight, after which her aunt Min moved in with and took care of the family, and so unlike Ginny and Rose in *A Thousand Acres*, she was not left alone with the abusive father after her mother's death. Miner here changes the fateful trajectory of the youngest sibling of the source text.

The novel begins with the return of Cora – a politically conscious woman and freelance journalist – to Oregon, USA, from Canada after a twenty-year absence to take care of her dying father, Roy Casey, who has now turned to his banished daughter for help against his sons, gender-transposed Goneril and Regan, George and Ron, who want to sell off their father's house to put him into a convalescent home. George and Ron have spent a great amount of money from their inheritance on funding a radical right-wing organization and George has also supported illegal operations. Cora's return to the US is not risk-free, however. In 1968, when she challenged her father's and brothers' patriotic support of the Vietnam War by engaging in radical anti-war politics – an action which resulted in her father evicting, disowning, and disinheriting her – her fellow revolutionary and conspirator Ralph dies (presumably committing suicide) at a Vietnam draft board office after his and Cora's draft-card burnings. She escapes possible legal repercussions for arson and murder by fleeing to Canada. After Roy dies George reports her to the military authorities and she is sent to prison on a false charge of murdering her former co-revolutionary. George is sent to the same prison himself accused of illegal activities, but he gets out on bail and it seems Cora will, too, for lack of evidence.

Miner sidesteps incest and “offers the tyranny of domestic patriarchy as a partial reason for” the “cruelties and selfishness” of the gender-reversed Goneril and

Regan (Sanders 2001: 220). Only the novel's name obliquely draws attention to incest: while the walking fire of the title "stands for a series of metaphors and literal fires" in the novel (2001: 217), it also evokes incest and *Lear's* folkloric sources of the "lecherous father" kind: the title words are derived from the fool's words to Lear where he links "an old lecher's heart" to "fire" after Lear has tried to disrobe and the fool sees Gloucester approaching, carrying a torch as he enters the dark stage/heath: "Now a little fire in a wild field were like / an old *lecher's* heart – a small spark, all the rest on's / body cold: look, here comes a walking fire" (3.4.105-107, emphasis added). The title, then, epitomizes the novel's circumvention of the issue of incest. As a result of this evasion, however, the novel by itself does not offer the reader any means of working through, but must rather be read in conjunction with other *Lears*.

The accomplished English prose and poetry writer Mairi MacInnes's *The Quondam Wives* (1993) focuses the *Lear* tale largely from the perspective of the wives and as a case of covert incest involving the father and the youngest daughter. Like Ellmann's *Sweet Desserts*, this is not a very well known novel and very little has been written on it (see, e.g., Fuller 1993). MacInnes has adapted the *Lear* tale to the English countryside in post-Thatcherite England, and the novel tells the story of the Quondam family, whose surname tellingly emphasizes the former nature of the current state of affairs. Upon the advice of his young wife Esmé, the mother of his youngest and favorite daughter Delia, the ill-tempered progenitor and octogenarian Anthony – an aristocrat distinguished as a soldier and a former member of Parliament – decides to hand over control of Quondam Hall, his ancestral manse in the village of Hartland, Yorkshire, to his progenies. His two eldest daughters Gwen Bowers (Goneril) and Reggie Smith (Regan) by his first wife Alice, a British successful businesswoman in New York, plan to turn the estate into a money-yielding tourist attraction that will destroy the ancient farmlands in the area, which can be backtracked to pre-Roman antiquity. In order to be able to finance the renovation they make plans that will affect the whole village and change the ancient pastoral countryside for good. Because Anthony has not managed it well the estate is falling into disrepair, thus mirroring the state of health of the owner himself, who is degenerating rapidly. He has already sold a part to the Gloucester figure, his friend and neighbor Peter Wilson, who has two sons, Calbert (Edgar) and Stephen (Edmund).

MacInnes's novel recreates covert incest as the reason for the division of the land and the banishment of the youngest daughter. As in *King Lear*, the father wants his daughters to profess their feelings for him before transferring the estate, claiming he gives it away in exchange "[f]or love" (1993: 33). Gwen and Reggie oblige. "Let *them* say what you want to hear," Delia says, turning down the offer,

“I don’t want any part of it” (1993: 33, 32, original italics). Because the old patriarch feels her declarations of love are insufficient, he evicts her from the hall and disinherits her, suggesting she can live in a caravan, which she ends up doing (1993: 32). Gwen and Reggie move into the hall while their father and Esmé still live there and humiliate him in various ways, and, like their Shakespearean counterparts, they compete among themselves for Stephen. As a painter/artist, Delia plans to head for London as a career move, but there is also another reason for her leaving. It is also an escape to get away from her father and his suffocating demands for love: “he expects me to fall over myself with adoration for him,” she tells her fiancé William Piercy: “I wish he’d go away and leave me alone. Nothing is enough for him.” (1993: 64)

Anthony expects his daughter to love him and when this expectation is not met he sees Delia as unloving and ungrateful. At times he confuses his youngest daughter with his young wife. Delia tells William that “Sometimes he even calls me Esmé,” to which he replies “That’s disgusting” (1993: 64). As in Tyler’s *Ladder of Years*, where incest is displaced by Delia’s marrying a much older man, Anthony in MacInnes’s novel married his young wife of eighteen at fifty-four. The novel ends with the two wives discussing the estate after the death of Anthony and Delia in a Learean stormy night, which also results in a car accident involving Gwen, Stephen, and Reggie’s husband Jeremy, who dies in the crash. Esmé is left as the sole legatee of the estate because neither the transfer, nor Anthony’s subsequent deed to reinstate his youngest daughter has ever been signed, but his young widow decides to keep only Delia’s share and controlling interest, and let Gwen and Reggie have one third each, and the three of them decide to go along with the renovations with the aim of opening the hall to the public.

Edmund Fuller ends his review (1993) of *A Thousand Acres* and *The Quondam Wives* by comparing them with Shakespeare’s play, imaging an Olympic competition between the three texts which evokes an old tale of incest. Fuller gives the gold to Shakespeare, the silver to Smiley, and the bronze to MacInnes, and “the gap between the gold and the baser metals is large” (1993: 3). As Marina Leslie points out, this metal metaphor originates in Hesiod’s myth of metals, an “ancient authority [...] where the golden age gives way to the silver, then to the bronze, and, finally, to the iron age – a story which is, of course, replete with cannibalism, murder, rape, and incest” (1998: 46). Leslie also addresses the conditions of Fuller’s comparison and draws attention to Freud’s reading of the link between women and baser metals in “The Theme of the Three Caskets,” concluding that “[t]he very cultural narrative which Smiley attempts to pry open catches her in the attempt”: as “Shakespeare’s “daughters” [...], are, by definition, supporting players,” they simply cannot win (1998: 47). However, rather than discussing these

different versions of *Lear* in terms of competition – to compare Smiley’s and MacInnes’s works to Shakespeare and his play as Fuller does, or to address the conditions of this comparison as Leslie does – this study’s interest lies in exploring the representation of trauma by viewing the two novels as two different responses to the incest theme in *Lear*, and in the case of the former also in the folk material behind the play. Unlike *A Thousand Acres*, *The Quondam Wives* fails to evoke and address trauma in the text itself to any degree and falls short of offering any effective means of textual working through.

Canadian feminist author and literary critic Margaret Atwood’s seventh novel *Cat’s Eye* (1988), however, is a trauma narrative, not of overt familial sexual abuse, which is displaced in the text as in Esquivel’s novel, but of school trauma in the form of severe childhood bullying that almost results in death. This fictional memoir or *bildungsroman*¹⁷² tells the story of an acclaimed painter Elaine Risley, who returns after a thirty-year absence to Toronto where she grew up in the 1940s and 50s for a retrospective art exhibition shown in a gallery (tellingly named) Sub-Versions. Like *Lear’s Daughters*, *Ladder of Years*, *Sweet Desserts*, and *A Walking Fire*, *Cat’s Eye* is cyclical rather than linear, and structured through the narrator’s flashbacks. Struggling to find her identity, Elaine embarks upon a quest for her childhood friend, double, and tormentor, Cordelia, who remains elusive, but the exhibition ultimately helps the narrator to come to terms with her childhood trauma. Unlike Feinstein and WTG’s, Miner’s, MacInnes’s, and Smiley’s texts, which are almost formulaic in relation to *Lear*, Atwood’s intertextual references to the play are more diffuse and subtle. Nor do critics always mention *Lear* in connection with the novel (see, e.g. Howells 2000; Howells 1995; Vickroy 2005; Vickroy 2002). Yet, Atwood’s works are nothing if not intertextual (see e.g. Howells 1995: 9), and although there is not really any character correspondence, references to both *Lear* and the folktales behind it reverberate throughout the novel. As Julie Sanders puts it, “*Cat’s Eye* is concerned with [...] using Shakespeare, among other things, to pluralise and multiply versions of the past” (2001: 226).

Lear’s demand for the proclamation of his daughters’ love for him in the love test is resituated in a context of childhood bullying in Atwood’s novel. Cordelia, the despotic leader of Elaine’s abusive playmates, asks her victim: “*What do you have to say for yourself?*” “Nothing,” Elaine replies, which is a word she “came to connect” with herself, “as if I was nothing.” (2004: 41, original emphasis) After

¹⁷² For a reading of the novel as a fictive autobiography, see Howells (2000: 143-147; 1995: 148-160).

years of a nomadic-like existence in the wilds of Canada, Elaine's father, an entomologist, takes an academic job in Toronto and the family moves to a conservative religious community in the city, where Elaine befriends Carol Campbell, Grace Smeath, and then also Cordelia, who attempt to indoctrinate her with traditional gender roles and religious practices. Elaine observes that time is divided between mothers and fathers in her friends' homes: "All fathers except mine are invisible in daytime; daytime is ruled by mothers. But fathers come out at night" (2004: 164). In their aggressive gender socialization of Elaine these girls find fault with her clothes, the way she walks, her family, and her behavior as she does not conform to the social construction of femininity familiar to Carol, Grace, and Cordelia. In the words of Sarah Appleton Aguiar, Grace, who is "the silent leader" and "the embodiment of patriarchal upbringing in both the familial sense and the religious sense," is the girl the others want to emulate; she "subscribes to the brutalization of her own sex, as does her mother, Mrs. Smeath," who defends the girls' harassment of Elaine (Aguiar 2001: 109).

Atwood suggests that Cordelia's bullying of Elaine in the novel is a question of repeating what has previously been done to her: Atwood's Cordelia identifies with her oppressive father, and repeats his misogynistic legacy in her relationship with Elaine. As Aguiar argues, "*Cat's Eye* relates the consequences of Cordelia's rejection by her father and his patriarchal legacy": mimicking her father, Cordelia "must also engage in his hatred and disdain for women; thus, she must also hate herself" (2001: 90, 91). Cordelia is "trapped in a vicious legacy of self-hatred as she is subjected to the soul-withering nature of her father's scorn, a malicious behavioral pattern that she replicates with her friends" (2001: 90). Her admonitions sound suspiciously like parental warnings and reproofs: "Wipe that smirk off your face," "Look at yourself! Just look!" (Atwood 2004: 171, 158). Elaine, too, eventually comes to see that Cordelia's behavior is "an impersonation, of someone much older" (2004: 193). Carol, too, is victimized by her father, who belts her, "buckle end, right across the bare bum" so "she can hardly sit down" (2004: 164). Elaine notes of her critical schoolfriends' homes that "Darkness brings home the fathers, with their real, unspeakable power," and that "[t]here is more to them than meets the eye" (Atwood 2004: 164). Julie Sanders correctly points out that "[t]he violent fathers of Smiley's and Miner's novels are reworked here as Carol's and Cordelia's oppressive patriarchs" (2001: 227). Cordelia, Grace, and Carol "engage in the only power they possess, that of victimizing one of their own" to avoid being the victims themselves; thus the power that Cordelia wields over Elaine "is only a substitute power," and her "vicious behavior" a "defense against the more powerful forces of Grace Smeath and, in particular, the fathers" (Aguiar 2001: 109).

Dinner-time at Cordelia's makes visible her fear of her irascible father, a fear that has made her into his mouthpiece. "Cordelia's father sits at the head of the table, with his craggy eyebrows, his wolfish look, and bends upon me the full force of his ponderous, ironic, terrifying charm. He can make you feel that what he thinks of you matters, because it will be accurate, but that what you think of him is of no importance" (Atwood 2004: 249). His blatant misogyny is evident also in his expressions such as "I'm hag-ridden," "[t]he only man in a houseful of women" (2004: 249). Elaine notes that neither Cordelia nor her two sisters, Miranda (Mirrie), and Perdita (Perdie), named "out of Shakespeare," "jokes or drawls when mentioning him. He is large, craggy, charming, but we have heard him shouting, upstairs" (2004: 73). Although "they all play up to him" Cordelia's sisters dare to do more than she does: Perdie "can get away with a little impertinence, with coltish liberties" and "Mirrie, when hard-pressed, looks reproachful," but "Cordelia is not good at either of these things" (2004: 249). This is because Cordelia "is too frightened of him": "She's frightened of not pleasing him. And yet he is not pleased. I've seen it many times, her dithering, fumble-footed efforts to appease him. But nothing she can do or say will ever be enough, because she is somehow the wrong person" (2004: 249). In a similar manner, nothing that Elaine does is ever good enough in Cordelia's eyes.

A live burial incident in the novel clearly illustrates the link between the bullying of Elaine and Cordelia's relation to her father. Cordelia tells Elaine how she used to dig holes in the garden to be "safe" from him: "When I was really little, I guess I used to get into trouble a lot, with Daddy. When he would lose his temper. You never knew when he was going to do it. 'Wipe that smirk off your face,' he would say," a phrase she repeats, as the reader will recall, to Elaine (Atwood 2004: 252). One time, Cordelia, Grace, and Carol picks up Elaine and places her in one of the holes in Cordelia's backyard and put boards over the top: "The daylight air disappears, and there's the sound of dirt hitting the boards, shovelful after shovelful" (2004: 107). This burial is emblematic of Elaine's powerlessness in relation to Cordelia at this point. In fact, this was, according to Elaine, "[t]he point at which [she] lost power": "When I was put in the hole I knew it was a game; now I know it is not one" (2004: 107).

Although the title of Atwood's novel invokes fairy tales in the Cinderella cycle where the father wants his daughter's hand in marriage,¹⁷³ nothing really indicates

¹⁷³ Cox's collection of tales includes a Polish tale, "Królewna Kocie Oczy" [Princess Cat's-eyes], which tells the story of a princess whose father wants to marry her. This princess possesses five dresses, one of which is of cat's eyes. She takes service with a king and is called Cat's-eyes because she usually wears that particular dress. When she goes to church, however, she

that Cordelia's father also sexually abuses his daughters. Yet *Cat's Eye* is a trauma narrative;¹⁷⁴ it is clear that Elaine suffers from PTSD. After the bullying has been going on for a short time she starts to engage in self-harm: "when Cordelia had such power over me, I peeled the skin off my feet" (Atwood 2004: 113). She "would go down as far as the blood" because as she puts it, "[t]he pain gave me something definite to think about, something immediate" (2004: 114).¹⁷⁵ At this time Elaine also starts keeping her blue cat's eye marble as an aegis of strength with which she believes she can wield magical powers over her punishers; "I can see the way it sees" and Cordelia "doesn't know what power this cat's eye has, to protect me" (2004: 141). As Laurie Vickroy points out, "Through her cat's eye marble, Atwood symbolizes Elaine's dissociative attempts at self-rescue through a narrow field of vision and fantasy" (2005: 132). Elaine also learns "a way out of places you want to leave, but can't" through fainting and out-of-body experiences: "Fainting is like stepping sideways, out of your own body, out of time or into another time. When you wake up it's later. Time has gone on without you" (Atwood 2004: 171).

The childhood bullying culminates in a potentially lethal incident in which Elaine is left in the ravine where Cordelia, Carol, and Grace have forced her to go. The ravine is where they believe "the bad men are" (Atwood 2004: 187) and they make Elaine go down there to retrieve her hat which Cordelia has thrown into it from the bridge, and they all abandon her there. The ice breaks as she tries to recover it and she falls into the creek. Although she manages to get out of it by hauling herself up onto the bank, she is unable to get home by herself as hypothermia sets in. Her mother finds her and takes her home but Elaine believes she has seen the Virgin Mary guiding her.¹⁷⁶ Julie Sanders links this incident to Edgar and Gloucester's Dover Cliff "imaginings" in *Lear*: "In the play Dover Cliff be-

wears her other dresses and the king's son falls in love with and marries her in the end (1893: 278). Sharon Rose Wilson observes about Atwood's fiction, "So evident are mythological and other folklore intertexts in Atwood's literary art that one might question whether any of her texts lacks such reference" (2000: 220).

¹⁷⁴ According to trauma reader and scholar Laurie Vickroy, "Atwood illustrates dimensions of trauma in a less extreme context than much trauma fiction, which often deals with situations of extreme violence [...], but importantly demonstrates how trauma is part of more normative but critical and troubling situations of human development and creative survival" (2005: 131).

¹⁷⁵ Elaine's self-mutilation intertextually links her to her folkloric sibling in "The Maiden Without Hands" where the heroine chops off her appendages to escape marriage with her father.

¹⁷⁶ Also the repeated references to the Virgin Mary, throughout the novel interlinks Elaine with her folkloric sister in "The Maiden Without Hands": in some versions of this tale the heroine's hands are restored with supernatural help in the form of the Virgin Mary (see Uther 2004: 379).

comes emblematic of whether we choose to live or die in the face of great trauma: Gloucester and Elaine choose life” (2001: 226).

After this incident Elaine forgets about her painful past, and without looking back she literally walks away from her tormentors one day on their way home from school (Atwood 2004: 193).

I’ve forgotten about fainting [...], and about falling into the creek and also about seeing the Virgin Mary. I’ve forgotten all of the bad things that happened. Although I see Cordelia and Grace and Carol everyday, I remember none of those things; only that they used to be my friends, when I was younger, before I had other friends. There’s something to do with them, something like a sentence in tiny dry print on a page, flattened out, like the dates of ancient battles. Their names are like names in a footnote, or names written in spidery brown ink in the fronts of Bibles. There is no emotion attached to these names. They’re like the names of distant cousins, people who live far away, people I hardly know. Time is missing (2004: 201).

Her amnesia appears complete, probably facilitated by the fact that it is almost never uttered: “Nobody mentions anything about this missing time, except my mother. Once in a while she says, ‘That bad time you had,’ and I’m puzzled. What is she talking about?” (2004: 201).

Upon Cordelia’s initiative, the two girls start seeing each other as friends once more as adolescents, but with a difference: this time Elaine’s amnesia for her past “ensures her dominance over Cordelia” (Vickroy 2005: 133). Now Elaine, instead of remembering the past, acts it out with Cordelia in a powerful role reversal: “The person I use my mean mouth on the most is Cordelia. She doesn’t even have to provoke me, I use her as target practice” (Atwood 2004: 235). Although she “acts suspiciously like someone who is enjoying a belated revenge,” as Aguiar points out, Elaine becomes a “bitch” as “her means of survival” (2001: 111, 107),¹⁷⁷ in the same way that becoming a “bitch” had once been a coping mechanism for Cordelia.¹⁷⁸ After some time, however, Elaine starts to avoid Cordelia;

¹⁷⁷ “Bitch” is here used to denote a female figure of strength, survival, and resistance in accordance with Sarah Appleton Aguiar’s definition of the word in her *The Bitch is Back: Wicked Women in Literature* (2001), an exploration of the re-evaluation by contemporary feminist authors and theorists of the maligned figure of the bitch from biblical texts onward. It could be argued that the legendary figure of Malinche, mentioned in the discussion of *Como agua para chocolate/Like Water for Chocolate* above, is an example of a bitch in the Spanish/Mexican tradition.

¹⁷⁸ Aguiar has this to say: “Cordelia is a bitch – albeit a junior bitch – but she is also a girl who taps into a channel of assertive strength in order to protect herself against the more lethal

she distances herself from her. The last time she sees her is in an asylum after a suicide attempt. Cordelia wants Elaine to help her escape but she refuses and Cordelia disappears from the novel. Yet, the forgotten trauma of her childhood and her relations with Cordelia continue to influence her later relations, and erupt in the form of acting out, internalized voices, dreams, and visions. At one point during a difficult time in her marriage she attempts suicide by slitting her wrists while she hears the voice of Cordelia prompting her to do it “*Do it. Come on. Do it.*” (Atwood 2004: 373). Elaine survives also this time, saved by her then husband.

Like *A Thousand Acres*, *Cat's Eye* also constitutes a case of repressed and recovered memory which in Atwood's novel gains powerful effect through doubling and intertextuality. Elaine grapples to regain her painful memories of childhood bullying which haunt her. In addition, as Ann Coral Howells has noted, she is also hounded by “her doppelganger Cordelia (‘Lie down, you're dead!’) who represents the other half of herself, her dark mad twin” (1995: 64-65). “We are like the twins in old fables, each of whom has been given half a key,” Elaine says (Atwood 2004: 411). In the novel, images of twinning between Elaine and Cordelia figure chiefly as a psychic dissociative split and symbolize Elaine's efforts to work through her trauma. Read intertextually in relation to Atwood's source material, however, Elaine's trauma becomes emblematic not only of her own personal experience of bullying but also of the incest motif in the source text(s).

Furthermore, this twinship extends in *Cat's Eye* also to a girl who is sexually violated and strangled in the ravine, an incident which becomes front-page news. The girl “troubles” Elaine and “stirs up something, like dead leaves”; “as if this girl has done something shameful, herself, by being murdered. So she goes to that place where all things go that are not mentionable.” (2004: 241) What is clear here is that, as in Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate*, the sexual trauma of the source text is removed from familial ties and touched upon more from a distance in the incidence of the molested and murdered girl. This kind of doubling or trebling splits the abuse and signals the way that the story of Elaine in Atwood's stereophonic text also moves beyond her personal experiences to the way in which individual traumas are interlinked with the trauma of others: Elaine's, Cordelia's, and the girl's stories are deeply linked to one another's. Thus in Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, the Caruthian notion that trauma implicates everybody takes the form of doubling or even trebling.

forces the girls face. Cordelia's crime against Elaine, therefore, is that she is willing to sacrifice her friend in order to save herself.” (2001: 107)

It is also possible to read *Cat's Eye* in intertextual relation to Atwood's succeeding novel, *The Robber Bride* (1993), an updated feminized version of Grimm's fairy tale "The Robber Bridegroom," which treats incestuous abuse overtly in the character Charis. In *The Robber Bride*, Atwood invokes intertextuality with reference to the figure of Cordelia in *Cat's Eye*, who uncannily occasions a return in the form of Zenia, the gender-transposed Robber Bridegroom.¹⁷⁹ In this way Atwood suggests that Cordelia was not really expelled at the end of *Cat's Eye* but returns to hound the next book's protagonists. By impersonating different identities Zenia "steals" the lovers or spouses from her former women friends and college classmates; the historian Tony specializing in battles, the businesswoman Roz, and the New Ager Charis, who can be seen as representing a Thousandfurs figure in the novel, incest-abused by her uncle as a child and who as a result develops a double identity, changing her name from Karen to Charis. This novel too is non-linear, scattered with flashbacks, and set in Toronto, and begins twenty years after the university days with the three friends attending Zenia's funeral. Five years later at their monthly lunch dates they catch sight of Zenia and realize that she is not dead at all but up to her former tricks, ingratiating herself into the women's lives to betray them again.

Zenia has several versions of her life story and these stories connect with and are filtered through the three women's fictional autobiographies precisely as Cordelia's story is implicated in and told by Elaine in *Cat's Eye*. Tony is the one who finally chronicles Zenia's life in terms of battles after Zenia at the novel's end dies for real. As Howells notes, Tony "constructs Zenia as the representative twentieth-century victim. Zenia as postwar immigrant to Canada is the Jewish persecution victim of the Second World War, as she is also the victim of sexual abuse and male violence, a drug addict, and a sufferer from cancer and AIDS. Through her multiple identities she embodies the diseases, neuroses, and traumas which are buried in the foundations of Western culture, not only in Europe but in the New World as well." (2000: 149) It is also through telling stories which "they will do, increasingly in their lives" (Atwood 1998: 519-20) that the three women friends will come to terms with their past. Through intertextual references across her own corpus, Atwood illuminates the fact that the traumas of the last century have not sufficiently been worked over but emerges to be dealt with in her main characters' lives.

¹⁷⁹ In the Grimms' fairy tale, the groom tricks and seduces three young maidens into his lair in the woods, promising them marriage, but instead devours them. For the Grimms' 1857 version of the story, see Zipes (2001: 738ff).

Elaine in *Cat's Eye* finally comes to terms with the buried trauma through her art: as she returns to Toronto for her retrospective art exhibition, her traumatic memories return, too. Atwood suggests that Elaine's paintings prove to have a therapeutic function, unlocking forgotten and painful memories of childhood trauma that would otherwise stay hidden from view. Seizing her feelings before they make their appearance in the conscious mind, her painting unveils new dimensions of her past. In other words, what Elaine has forgotten is expressed elsewhere, partially in her paintings, which bear the insignia of trauma:

I know that these things must be memories, but they do not have the quality of memories. They are not hazy around the edges but sharp and clear. They arrive detached from any context; they are simply there, in isolation, as an object glimpsed on the street is there.

I have no image of myself in relation to them. They are suffused with anxiety, but it's not my own anxiety. The anxiety is in the things themselves. (Atwood 2004: 337)

This passage shows memories in flashbacks to the trauma "in isolation," "sharp and clear," and it also demonstrates a detachment toward, or a foreignness of the images themselves. The power of art to register for the first time what happened in the past allows for a going back to the traumatic scenes and to wordlessly testify to the trauma, and so break the silence of what has been barred to the conscious mind. The word "retrospective" here acquires a dual meaning: it refers to Elaine's art exhibition which shows representative pieces of her lifework as an artist and to a direction to her traumatic past, a looking back at the previously forgotten memories that have shaped both her art and her life.

The last painting in the exhibition is called *Unified Field Theory*, and represents Elaine's attempt to merge her trauma with art and science into a new vision in terms of a unification of space and time. Influenced by her science-interested brother in her childhood, she starts to conceive of time in spatial terms or as spatialized:

I began then to think of time as having shape, something you could see, like a series of liquid transparencies, one laid on top of another. You don't look back along time but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away. (Atwood 2004: 3)

In this painting, Elaine unifies her conception of space-time with her traumatic past. The artwork depicts a snowy bridge underneath which is visible the night sky "as seen through a telescope," lower down is the creek where water flows from the cemetery – "[t]he land of the dead people" (2004: 408) – and positioned

above the bridge's top railing is the Virgin of Lost Things, dressed in a black cloak holding an oversized cat's eye marble, Elaine's talismanic plaything, which "can finally be absorbed into her painting: the need for it relinquished" (Sanders 2001: 228). Now the marble is transformed into a crystal ball or magic mirror, or as Vickroy notes, the childhood amulet "becomes the lens of insights that expands a traumatic vision through symbolization" (2005: 135): "I look into it, and see my life entire," Elaine says (Atwood 2004: 398). As Elaine's hidden childhood trauma emerges through her art, her paintings enable an assertion of what happened, and thus become for her a form of witnessing: "I can no longer control these paintings, or tell them what to mean. Whatever energy they have came out of me," she concludes, "I'm what's left over" (2004: 409).

As Elaine has her own version of her-story in her paintings and in this fictional biography, and Cordelia "will have her own version" of the past (Atwood 2004: 411), so *Cat's Eye*, as this present study suggests, constitutes Atwood's response to the *Lear* tale, producing with all other *Lears* in this chapter and with Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* a virtual stereophony of voices.

4.4 Reading Twice Told Tales

To conclude this chapter, the intertextual return by Elaine Feinstein and the WTG, Ann Tyler, Lucy Ellmann, Laura Esquivel, Valerie Miner, Mairi MacInnes, and Margaret Atwood to a previous source texts of father-daughter incest bespeaks some unfinished business, something which has not been fully known and sufficiently mourned or dealt with but which is instead acted out through repetition, thus hauntingly signalling a kind of temporal stasis. What was not known or fully recognized in the first moment and therefore haunts us through multiple obsessive rewritings may be recognized in a second moment on its return and worked through providing the unclaimed moment of trauma is not repressed in the new text. A belated and re-enactive return in literary form to what was previously a missed moment of literary trauma can point to a more positive meaning if, instead of just acting it out, it moves toward remembering and working through. These texts unwittingly become narrative attempts to come to terms with the unclaimed experience of the prior text. Also texts that merely represent the psychological process of acting out from a source text may, if read intertextually, allow for a potentially more positive signification in terms of resistance to forgetting.

In avoiding the topic of father-daughter incest altogether, some of the texts considered in this chapter can be seen as repudiating any notion of, or ties to, such a theme in *Lear*, whether for reasons of self-censorship or hegemony, that is, a case

of assimilating (and tacitly and unconsciously accepting) a cultural taboo. But the return itself to a previous source text of incest signifies the presence of ambivalent and resistant traces of trauma which both is and refuses to be forgotten. Taken as a group and read intertextually, these texts, whether treating father-daughter incest directly or avoiding or displacing the topic, are centrally defined by the absent presence of trauma by indirect invocation as it were, and can be seen as hovering between acting out and working through, or melancholia and mourning, trauma and catharsis. Along with Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, these contemporary *Lears* constitute an example of intertextual re-enactment by different artists and authors to a source text of a missed or repressed traumatic event – father-daughter incest – thus demonstrating the recurrent force of trauma.

While intertextual references to the trauma in the *Lear* story in the ex-centric works discussed in Part I of this study range from almost formulaic and direct to diffuse, displaced, or absent altogether, the texts by Smiley, Feinstein and the WTG, Tyler, Ellmann, Esquivel, Miner, MacInnes, and Atwood are inextricably linked to each other as they take their shape from the gap of a missed trauma in a previous literary moment. Allusions to the *Lear* story appear in a variety of ways to comment on the charged father-daughter relationship motif, whether it is a question of trying to avoid repeating the dénouement and imagine another outcome, or in attempting to transform the past of the earlier work. Thus a marked change from an earlier version does not automatically entail critical dissent or that one version is flawed in some ways. Instead, the intertextual connections between *Lear*, its folkloric sources, and contemporary rewritings undo assumptions about the primacy of one particular version, thus challenging the authority of Shakespeare's text and its centrality in the politics of culture. Shakespeare's version is merely one version of the *Lear* story, or a version of a version, as it were. These rewritings point to the postmodernist notion of the infinite variety of versions of each narrative and the continuous process of rewriting. No one owns the *Lear* narrative and no one owns a trauma. The stereophony that results when the interpenetrative strands of the different versions of the *Lear* fable converge bespeaks how the story of a trauma is not simply one's own but rather is always connected to someone else's, ultimately implicating all of us. The reader's role is to listen to the cadences between them. In sum, reading many times told tales, such as in the aforementioned works, sometimes means reading a missed or unclaimed moment of trauma.

* * *

Part I of the present study has emphasized that trauma cannot be told only one time but must be told, and also read, repeatedly, and in literary terms, intertextu-

ally. Exploring the tension between memory and narrative in trauma, this study reads these many times told tales as cultural or collective memory where the reader is cast in the role of witness; as trauma is representable only through belated re-enactments and repetitions, so also the reader's role of witnessing is belated and repetitive. While Part I of this volume has examined the telling of trauma in the form of temporal interconnectedness, interdependence, and relationality in terms of intertextuality as cultural memory, Part II will explore the representation of trauma in the form of spatial interconnectedness, interdependence, and relationality in terms of references to material, corporeal, and textual spaces.

PART II TRAUMA'S SPACE: LANDSCAPE, CORPOREALITY, AND TEXTUALITY

One does have space within time, for reflection, one must have. Where else is mind?

— Geoffrey Hartman, in Cathy Caruth, "Interview with Geoffrey Hartman," 1996

Perhaps the only way to overcome a traumatic severance of body and mind is to come back to mind through the body.

— Geoffrey Hartman, "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies," 1995

In the last fifteen years or so trauma studies have witnessed an increasing attention to the relationship between trauma and space. The first part of this study has explored fictional representations of traumatic memory as a missed experience in relation to intertextuality and trauma's time, proposing that trauma be represented in temporal terms not only in the form of repetition and returns within the text itself but also intertextually across different works. However, there is also a spatial side to traumatic memory, and Part II seeks to explore its representation in relation to trauma's space. In other words, as it is possible, albeit paradoxical, to talk about trauma's time, so it is feasible to conceive of the space of trauma, and trauma fiction such as Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* represents trauma through references to both. The following chapters will examine the representation of trauma through references in Smiley's novel in terms of geographical, bodily, and textual space.

The more temporal issues of traumatic experience and memory have been carefully explored by Cathy Caruth, and her work is central to contemporary trauma theory, as was demonstrated in Part I of this present study. Trauma theorist and Wordsworthian Geoffrey Hartman, on the other hand, who has often been situated on the sidelines of modern trauma theory, has focused more on its spatial dimensions in terms of the symbolic value of place in trauma.¹⁸⁰ Of special significance

¹⁸⁰ For an excellent exposition on Hartman's sidelined standing in trauma theory, see Anne Whitehead's essay "Geoffrey Hartman and the Ethics of Place: Landscape, Memory, Trauma" (2003) in which she traces the trajectory of Hartman's journey from Romantic studies to trauma theory. In it she links his marginalization to the position he occupied in Romantic studies, where he has been separated from deconstructionists such as Caruth and Paul de Man (who like Caruth went on to become a key trauma theorist).

for this study is Hartman's emphasis in his writings on trauma on the link between memory and place that he perceives in Wordsworth's poetry, especially showcased in the obsession with specific pastoral places of the English countryside. In Hartman's interpretation, Wordsworth's poetry indicates that "almost any place [...] can be revelatory or charged or have something of a traumatic effect through deferred action," but he questions the possibility of a Wordsworthian memory place in connection with Holocaust sites, which have robbed the mind of reflective moments in real and imagined pastoral places and thus ruined the symbolic function of these sites (in Caruth 1996b: 633, 645).

In particular, the spatialization of traumatic memory in contemporary trauma theory and literature overlaps in some aspects with ecocritical concerns. Trauma theory and ecocriticism¹⁸¹ – the study of the relationship between human beings and the non-human in literature and culture – appear *prima facie* an uneasy or at least unlikely combination as the former concentrates exclusively on individuals and the latter often decenters human beings and their suffering in their focus on the non-human physical environment. However, what can be termed trauma studies' recent platial focus on traumatic memory such as in Hartman's focus on giving memory a place in relation to pastoral spaces specifically ties in with ecocriticism's preoccupation with the natural world and the notion of place. For Hartman, Wordsworth foretells or previews today's environmentalist discourse of an increasing separation from the natural world. Industrialization undermined Wordsworth's belief in the healing connection between human beings and nature, and Hartman sees in his writing how modern environmental decay was foreshadowed; the French Revolution and "the slower trauma of industrialization coincided with Wordsworth's inner sense of irreparable change: they foreboded a cosmic wounding of Nature – of natural rhythms, of organic growth – which reinforced his fear of an apocalyptic rate of change and nature-loss" (Hartman 1977: xvi). To Hartman, Wordsworth feared that if we, as a result of industrialization should "invest our imagination elsewhere, then and only then is there danger of the fading of nature" (in Caruth 1996b: 638). According to the preservationist John Muir, Wordsworth's concern about nature extended also to the American continent and

¹⁸¹ The term "ecocriticism," which appeared for the first time in William Rueckert's 1978 essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (see Rueckert 1996), and is today the most extensively used term (Buell 2005: 11). "Green studies" is sometimes preferred in the UK (see, e.g., Coupe 2000). For variation, "ecocriticism" will sometimes be employed interchangeably with other terms such as "literary-environmental studies" and "green literary studies," which also are in current use, (see, e.g., Buell 2005: 11, vii), and with "literary ecology" and "environmental literary studies" (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) as well as Lawrence Buell's "literary ecotheory" and his preferred "environmental criticism" (2005: 11, viii).

“the despoiling effects of industrial revolution on the American landscape” (Pace 2003: 241),¹⁸² and this links Wordsworth’s works to American pastoral and the land destruction in the US, which of course is of great import for this present study. In Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* the alienation of human beings from their natural environment that Wordsworth feared and vaticinated seems to have taken place, at least partly: the novel portrays the ecocide that has occurred due to industrialized agricultural practice which renders the landscape a virtual wasteland in places. Yet certain spots have been transformed into sites of memory, as will be discussed in chapter 5 of this part of the thesis.

Part II of this study seeks to work out an approach to reading trauma literature by references to space which introduces and often stresses the connection between trauma theory and ecocriticism. Smiley’s novel registers and fuses the related concerns of trauma theory and ecocriticism in its focus on landscape, corporeality, and textuality. Despite their apparent differences, there are points of similarities between the two disciplines also as academic movements,¹⁸³ the very ground of each is the notion of a crisis,¹⁸⁴ a threat of annihilation. Both developed in American literary studies in the 1990s as a result of activist struggles in the late 1960s and 1970s – by Vietnam veterans and the women’s movement in the case of trauma theory (see the introduction to this study) and by environmental activists and environmental writings in the case of literary-environmental studies (Carr 2000b: 19; Glotfelty 1996: xvi-xvii).¹⁸⁵ Trauma as well as the ecological crisis

¹⁸² For a discussion of Wordsworth’s influence on America and vice versa, see, for instance, Joel Pace’s essay “Wordsworth and America” (2003).

¹⁸³ For descriptions of ecocriticism as an academic movement see, for instance, Kerridge (1998); Rigby (2002). See also Heise (2006). For more in-depth accounts, see, e.g., Garrard (2005); Buell (2005).

¹⁸⁴ Although the majority of scientists agree that we now have a yet unheard-of worldwide ecological disaster at our hands, there are some who dispute this notion and who refuse to acknowledge environmental problems. Buell attributes this position mainly to two different groups: “premillennialist religious groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses who look welcomingly to the idea of environmental apocalypse as ushering in a divine remaking of the earth, and advocates for technoeconomic growth who dismiss the existence of an environmental problem” (2005: 164, n. 2). The British ecocritic Greg Garrard also cautions ecocritics against an unquestioning attitude toward environmental threats, claiming that it is important “to recognise that there are serious arguments about the existence of the problems, their extent, the nature of the threat and the possible resolutions to them” because of the “shifting and contested” nature of ‘ecology’ itself (2005: 5, 4).

¹⁸⁵ According to Glotfelty, “individual literary and cultural scholars have been developing ecologically informed criticism and theory since the seventies” but “did not organize themselves into an identifiable group” because they were unaware of each other’s work (1996: xvi-xvii). Generally, the inauguration of modern environmentalism is attributed to Rachel Carson’s 1962 book *Silent Spring* (see, e.g., Garrard 2005: 1, 33; Reed 2002: 150), but *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (1972) by Joseph Meeker is seen to signal the beginning of American ecocriticism (Buell 2005: 16; see Meeker 1996). However, by analogy with

have been described as a disruption of the Lacanian symbolic order and as belonging to the Lacanian real, hence as being disruptive of representation. The Slovenian Lacanian scholar Slavoj Žižek diagnoses the ecological crisis as having to do with the real in the sense that it radically disrupts the very ground of our belief in nature as an ordered and balanced domain, and also in that our reactions to the crisis usually oscillate between denial and obsessive activism (1991: 34-36; see also Kerridge 1998: 2-3).¹⁸⁶ Current responses to a global ecological crisis have been ones that bespeak the notion of periodic repression and hence echo the reactions to trauma in the history of trauma studies (as was noted in the introduction of this present study). Drawing on Žižek's interpretation, Richard Kerridge presents the environmental crisis in psychoanalytical terms as an occasion of the return of the repressed: it "is elusive," "data [...] can grow in significance until they overshadow everything else; they can shrink until they are almost forgotten. Notoriously, environmental issues come and go," cast in "the role of a 'repressed', which is frequently pushed out of sight and which always returns" (1998: 1, 2, first quote on p. 1).

The inherent opening that leads to real issues in the real world in trauma studies (see Hartman 1995: 543-544) ties in with the attempts to make visible the environmental crisis and the real, "to restore significance to the world beyond the page" (Rigby 2002: 154-155), and the emphasis on a connection between academic criticism and activist discourse in ecocriticism (see, e.g., Gaard and Murphy 1998). Ecocriticism, like trauma studies, presented itself as a possibility to bypass the profession's immersion in abstract theory and poststructuralism.¹⁸⁷ This study argues that the real is experienced merely through representation, and

trauma studies, of which the roots go decidedly farther back than the 1960s and 1970s to Freud's early work in the late 1800s, ecocriticism's origins too can be found more than hundred years back. According to Buell, its beginnings can be traced to "US settler-culture literature" in the 1920s with Norman Foerster's *Nature in American Literature* from 1923, and some "Americanists" go even farther back, to Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* from 1836 (2005: 13).

¹⁸⁶ Žižek mentions a third reaction, viewing the crisis as a message, i.e., an "answer of the real," a moral punishment for a selfish utilization of the natural world (1991: 35).

¹⁸⁷ Poststructuralism is not wholly incompatible with environmental criticism, however. As Buell notes, "even designedly 'realistic' texts cannot avoid being heavily mediated refractions of the palpable world" and "[y]et it is equally clear that the subject of a text's representation of its environmental ground *matters* – matters aesthetically, conceptually, ideologically" (2005: 33, emphasis in original). In a similar vein, Garrard argues that ecocriticism needs "to balance a constructionist perspective with the privileged claims to literal truth made by ecology": its "challenge" consists in being attentive to "the ways in which 'nature' is always in some ways culturally constructed" and to "the fact that nature really exists" (2005: 10). The apparent "green" realism – "green" in the sense of naïve – of much earlier ecocriticism now combines with selected aspects of constructionism.

thus that fictional works such as Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* references issues of the real world in this way.

As in trauma studies, the opening to the real world has also resulted in interdisciplinary approaches. As trauma does not belong exclusively to any discipline or genre, so literary ecocriticism, too, is a cross-disciplinary area of study which generates multidisciplinary dialogues. In fact, one of the defining features of environmental literary studies is its tenet of interconnectedness or interrelatedness of all things; as Scott Slovic remarks, referring to Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," ecocriticism "is large and contains multitudes" (Slovic 1999: 1102).¹⁸⁸ Ecocritics engage with diverse disciplines, including, but not limited to, geography and the natural sciences such as ecology (Rigby 2002: 158), and thus, for instance, "threatened loss of landscapes," "the cruelty of farming methods," "the industrialization of countries," and health issues such as cancer and "fertility and reproductive health" belong to the field of ecocritical studies (Kerridge 1998: 5). Along with sexual violence, these are some of the core concerns in *A Thousand Acres*, and, as this study attempts to show by using Smiley's novel as a test case, it will also become important to establish a dialogue between literary ecology and trauma theory.

As traumatic experiences need to be put in a cultural, political, and social context, so ecocriticism, in its efforts to extend its concerns beyond the page, also increasingly engages with the social issues of ecological and environmental problems. Trauma theorists are not limited merely to psychoanalysis but draw attention to social issues and what can be referred to as cultural-political trauma, so also there are cultural and socio-political aspects to environmental problems. Nature is often blamed for social problems (Estok 2005: 17), but in fact a number of ecocritics today believe that social problems create many environmental threats, and that these are often inextricably intertwined (Bennett 2001: 33; Garrard 2005: 29; Rigby 2002: 155; Coupe 2000: xi; Buell 2005: 8). While deep ecology¹⁸⁹ has been

¹⁸⁸ Ecocriticism can be charged with being too inclusive; if it includes everything, nothing is included because then it no longer constitutes a ground for differentiation and so cannot be distinguished from something else. Attempts, however, have been made in the direction of codifying its practice and creating an ecocritical canon such as Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's bibliography in their *Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), and most researchers in the field regard their *Reader* as fundamental (see, e.g., Rigby's (2002: 172-174) annotated bibliography of ecocritical works and Garrard's (2005: 185-186) suggestions for further reading.

¹⁸⁹ The Norwegian Arne Naess is recognized as the philosophical father of deep ecology. Deep ecologists demand attention to nature's "intrinsic value," and advocate "a return to a monistic, primal identification of humans and the ecosphere" because they believe that today's crisis stems from the human-nature dichotomy of Western culture and philosophical thought

the central environmentalist position adhered to among ecocritics (Bennett 2001: 32), it is increasingly felt that environmental criticism needs to broaden its focus and move beyond the natural world to human-created and built environments in order to do justice to the link between human oppression and environmental destruction (see, for instance, Reed 2002; Bennett 2001).¹⁹⁰ While ecocriticism demands recognition of “literal and irreducibly material problems,” as Greg Garrard correctly points out, it no less relies upon the knowledge that “scientific problems are never separable from cultural and political ones” (2005: 168).

In trauma discourse there is also the question of “whether the traumatic event should be restricted to human infliction of trauma, which tends inevitably to raise issues of evil and moral judgment, or to include ‘natural’ events as well” (Douglass and Vogler 2003: 22). Can one compare catastrophic events such as environmental toxicity with human-induced trauma? Do we respond in like manner to survivors of natural disasters and environmental despoliation as to those of human-initiated violence? We do not, says Judith Herman, because human-induced trauma invariably raises the spectre of blame and responsibility: “when the traumatic events are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict between victim and perpetrator” (1994: 7). With increased awareness of the human responsibility for many environmental catastrophes, however, the boundaries between human inflicted suffering and “natural” events have started to blur: even “natural” calamities are sometimes the result of human intervention in the form of, for example, environmental catastrophes, which in turn may be linked to political or economic forces in which also human-produced trauma frequently has its origin. Herman puts it aptly: “To study psychological trauma is to come face to face both with human vulnerability in the natural world and with the capacity for evil in human nature” (1994: 7). Chapters 5 and 6 in this study discuss the imbrication of environmental and social concerns in relation to trauma.

Concern for the world beyond the page brings ethical implications and the responsibility of effecting change and perhaps of attempting to prevent future catastrophes. Both ecocriticism and modern trauma theory demand transformation. In literary trauma theory the positioning of the readers as witness is one which signals ethical concerns. Trauma fiction is ethical literature because it depicts tragic events that have often undergone cultural repression, urging readers, who have to situate themselves in relation to it, to acknowledge and take part in the fictional

(Garrard 2005: 21). For a discussion of the term “intrinsic value,” see Elliot (1996); see also Garrard (2005: 21-22).

¹⁹⁰ To acknowledge this shift in focus Buell distinguishes between what he terms “first-wave” and “second-wave environmental criticism” (2005: 8).

characters' experiences as an ethical commitment to try and effect change. Environmental criticism too is characterized by an ethical project, its commitment to nature,¹⁹¹ and finds common ground with contemporary trauma theory in post-colonialism and its ethical commitment to represent the past from marginalized perspectives, thereby questioning prevailing ideologies that lie behind various oppressions. As was mentioned in the first part of this study, trauma fiction novelists, like postcolonial authors, frequently have marginalized characters testifying to their own occluded history (see Whitehead 2004: 89-91). Part I of this study has argued that in *A Thousand Acres* Smiley allows formerly silenced voices of the *Lear* narrative to tell their own stories.

However, unlike trauma studies and literature that frequently bear witness for survivors – often marginalized others – “ecocriticism would seem to lack an oppressed subject,” as the Shakespearean ecocritic Gabriel Egan puts it (2006: 21). Although in ecocriticism the natural environment itself is often conceived of as active, “a player” (Legler 1998: 72; see also Rigby 2002: 158), the difference between environmental criticism and “all other critical insurgencies, purporting to speak about or for marginalized others” lies in the fact that “the other in question appears to be centered to a greater extent outside the realms of human culture and the human body” (Buell 1999: 1091; see also Buell 2005: 7). However, asserts the American ecocritic Lawrence Buell (unarguably one of the key figures within ecocriticism), since it is virtually impossible for a human being to speak “as the environment, as nature, as a nonhuman animal,” what environmental critics can hope to do is “to speak in cognizance of human being as ecologically or environmentally embedded” (Buell 2005: 7, 8). Not only are human beings ecologically embedded but the reverse can also be said to be true; the environment is of course also culturally and socially enclosed. Ecocritical literature recognizes and bespeaks the inextricable link between human beings and their environment: in *A Thousand Acres*, the thousand acres of land can be seen as yet another protagonist, the state and fate of which has bearing on the other characters in the novel and vice versa.

Parallels can here be drawn to scientist James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis of the 1960s (published in 1972) – named after the original Earth Mother the Greek goddess Gaia on the suggestion of William Golding – which metaphorizes and personifies the earth as a self-regulated superorganism,¹⁹² used by some ecocritics

¹⁹¹ For a useful discussion of environmental ethics, see Elliot (1996).

¹⁹² For a brief account of the Gaia Hypothesis, see, e.g., Lovelock's “The Living Earth” (2003). See also Rory Spowers's interview with Lovelock, “Living Planet” (2000). While the scientific-

to challenge a more technological and economic view of the earth with a more ethical one. According to Lovelock's postulations, the biosphere has a self-regulatory effect on the globe that maintains biogeochemical and climactic conditions in homeostasis. For social justice activist Lisa Rayner, who links environmental disaster to human trauma, ecological disaster "can be seen as a large scale experience of trauma leading to Complex PTSD of Gaia herself" (2005: 4). Cueing on Judith Herman's writing on trauma, Rayner has successfully compared and interlinked the effects of "ecological and civilizational collapse" with those of trauma: "The principles of trauma theory are essentially the same as the principles of permaculture design."¹⁹³ Ecological collapse, she argues, "is in fact an ecosystem-wide form of trauma" (2005: 2). In her analysis, "the healing of both psychological trauma and ecological trauma is remarkably similar" (2005: 2).

Lovelock's construct of Gaia as a self-regulating organism ties in with Freud's "principle of constancy" relating to the psychic apparatus (Freud and Breuer 2001: 197), and elaborated in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920), where Freud found a correspondence between processes occurring within the psyche and processes occurring in "*all organic life*" (2003b: 76, original italics). The key to the principle of constancy is Freud's idea of *Besetzung* or "cathexis," first mentioned in the *Studies on Hysteria* under this term (2001: 89). The notion of "cathexis" refers to the charge of energy in the mental apparatus, which indicates that for Freud, *physis* was not merely a vehicle for explaining psychic phenomena, but apparently at the time he believed in the physiological nature of memory and the mind.¹⁹⁴ The "principle of constancy" can be explained as the endeavor to keep excitation constant in an effort to maintain the charge of psychic energy in the mental apparatus in a state of equilibrium. Here Freud described the effects of trauma on the psyche in physical or spatial terms, focusing on what he terms Pcpt.-Cs, the perceptual system of consciousness, which "must lie at the border between the external and the internal; it must face out towards the external world, and simultaneously embrace the other psychic systems" (2003b: 63). For Freud, the system of consciousness receives stimuli from the outside but is also "equipped with some form of *protection* against stimulation" filtering through some stimuli and barring others; trauma is that which, due to a lack of prepared-

ic community has not widely recognized Lovelock's theory, it is generally accepted in the environmentalist community.

¹⁹³ Permaculture refers to an approach of organizing human settlements and agricultural systems so that these repeat the relationships found in natural ecologies.

¹⁹⁴ As the editor notes in the introduction to the *Studies*, "There can be no doubt that at the time of the publication of the *Studies* Freud regarded the term 'cathexis' as a purely physiological [phenomenon]" (Freud and Breuer 2001: xxiii).

ness or inadequate defenses from within, breaks through this defensive barrier that protects the interior from the exterior (2003b: 66, original italics).

Chapter 5, “Trauma and the Natural World: (Dis)location, Pastoral Place, and the Woman/Land Trope” explores the relationship between landscape, memory, and narrative in the context of trauma. Specifically, this chapter reconsiders the implications of Geoffrey Hartman’s conception of memory place for situating a traumatic past spatially in a toxic landscape that has been gendered female: drawing on contemporary trauma theory in conjunction with ecocriticism, this chapter will show that the conflation of woman and nature that has been used to justify environmental decay since early US settler history problematizes the creation and symbolic function of place in terms of sites of memory for women’s sexual traumas. This chapter reads the articulation of psychic trauma in relation to descriptions of the agriculturally poisoned farming landscape in *A Thousand Acres*, tracing a connection between the destruction of the thousand-acre farmland and the abuse of the daughters, the trauma of the one and that of the other. In Smiley’s novel, incest and land destruction symbolize one another in a powerful symbolic interconnectedness: everything is connected to and related to everything else according to the laws of nature.

The conflation of woman and nature is writ large when it comes to American pastoral, a virtual province of gender conflict. Annette Kolodny’s *The Lay of the Land* (1975), incidentally the first book of environmentally feminist literary criticism and a landmark psychohistory of North American male writers’ metaphoric gendering of the American landscape, reveals the gendered dimensions of American pastoral. Also Kolodny’s *The Land Before Her* (1984) shows how the land in the United States has been associated with the feminine by males who have treated it in terms of conquest, while the women dreamt of changing the wilderness into a small garden. Since Kolodny’s first book ecofeminist critics have focused on what they themselves have named the woman/nature analogy, pointing out that the landscape itself has for centuries been constructed as feminine, e.g. Mother Nature and the Earth Mother¹⁹⁵ (see, for example, Merchant 1989; Rose

¹⁹⁵ It is a curious fact that the Mother Earth metaphor has survived in Lovelock’s Gaia model, a name that has been subject to critique on account of what is perceived as its gendered inflections. The hypothetical construct is used not only by deep ecologists but also by some ecofeminists, although Lovelock has been criticized for “sex-typing the planet” by ecofeminist critic Patrick Murphy (qtd. in Garrard 2005: 174). However, as Louise Westling argues, Lovelock’s “basic scientific argument is a neuter concept of an organic cybernetic system” which “offers one possible metaphor for a landscape where we might both be conscious and working within a much wider living system than we can understand or pretend to control” (1996: 167).

1993; Griffin 1978).¹⁹⁶ Uniting the different and sometimes diverging positions under the rubric of ecofeminism¹⁹⁷ is the view that the dominations of both women and nature have its roots in patriarchal culture.¹⁹⁸ Ecofeminists see a link between the domination of women by men and the exploitation of the natural environment, claiming that this is made visible in the denigration of both women and nature and criticizing the androcentric values behind these.¹⁹⁹ The powerful hierarchal human/nature dichotomy of Western philosophical tradition upheld by conceptualizing the human as non-nature and part of other hierarchized and interconnected oppositional pairs such as “mind-body, reason-nature, reason-emotion, masculine-feminine,” where the second side in each pair is devalued (Plumwood 1996: 156), is seen as constituting the basis of the justification for the exploitation of both women and nature.²⁰⁰ As the Australian environmental philosopher Val Plumwood emphasizes, what is human is conceptualized in contrast and *in opposition* to “those parts of the human character identified as feminine – also identified as less than fully human – giving the masculine conception of what it is to be human” (1996: 157). According to this dualism, then, women, who are classified with animals and nature fall outside of culture and what is categorized as human. Smiley’s novel shows Ginny not only unearthing and working through a forgotten and repressed history of sexual abuse but also depicts her becoming aware of a connection between the exploitation of women and land in her community, suggesting that the repossession of hitherto silenced narratives of the past challenges the representations in officially sanctioned versions of history as well as resists marginalization by repressive ideologies so that the official memory in the archives of history may be altered.

¹⁹⁶ See also the anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner’s seminal 1978 study “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” which describes the universal conflation of woman and nature as justifying the worldwide oppression and degradation of women.

¹⁹⁷ The term “ecofeminism” was first used in 1974 by French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne in her *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, but the movement originated in the United States in the 1980s and has subsequently spread to the rest of the world to encompass also non-Western forms (Buell 2005: 153, n. 26, 139). Ecofeminism is a movement encompassing diverse positions “from anthropocentric to anti-anthropocentric, from liberal to radical” (Buell 2005: 139) so much so that it is more correct to talk about different branches or “ecofeminisms,” that is, in the plural (Estok 2005: 21), as in feminism generally.

¹⁹⁸ As Louise Westling claims, “there is ample evidence all over the earth for the ambivalence and frequent hostility of masculine culture toward both women and the natural world with which they have been identified apparently from the deepest past” (1996: 11-12).

¹⁹⁹ The fact that the interconnections between feminism and ecology were not at first readily accepted in the environmental movement also illuminated problems of sexism within the movement itself (Campbell 2008: vii).

²⁰⁰ On feminist environmental philosophy, see Plumwood (1996).

Like trauma studies that have drawn attention to socio-political issues such as gender (see, e.g., Horvitz 2000), and sometimes have been allied with, for example, postcolonialism (see, e.g. Vickroy 2002; Whitehead 2004), ecofeminists extend their concern also to the exploitation of one species, one class, one race, or one sexuality over another (Emel and Urbanik 2005: 447). This is because they believe that the same system of mastery or patriarchal ideology that lies behind the male/female pair in which the female is devalued and women and nature is conflated is also at the root of the interlinked oppressions of other dualistic pairs such as “white/black, colonizer/colonized, heterosexual/homosexual, adult/child, and human/animal” (Carr 2000b: 17). This kind of intersectional analysis not only refutes charges of essentialism²⁰¹ – by not focusing only on gender and nature – and accusations of misandry – men too are recognized as oppressed in some of these hierarchical dyads – but also links ecological feminism with environmental justice,²⁰² a movement which works and protests against environmental discrimination against disempowered others; women, economically disadvantaged people, and people of color.²⁰³ As Jia-Yi Cheng-Levine puts it, “Ecofeminism’s critique of the twin domination of women and nature as well as its attempts to bring justice back to the environment and the lives of women correspond to the environmental justice movement’s demand for the restructuring of the social order and its requirement for incorporating ecological issues into a larger social and political

²⁰¹ As in feminist thought at large, ecofeminism repeats the discussion of essentialism versus constructionism (Buell 2005: 139): radical ecofeminists have embraced the nature/culture dichotomy and inverted it, choosing a positive essentialist view where so-called feminine traits are thought of as being inherent to female biology (see, for instance, Griffin 1978), and this position has been criticized by constructionist ecofeminists, who not only believe such traits are culturally and socially contingent, but also see an essentialist view as perpetuating “existing forms of oppression” (Merchant 1989: xvi). However, as Andrea Campbell suggests, ecofeminism’s recognition of gender, race, and class issues allows for an avoidance of essentialism “and thus the inadvertent reinforcing of patriarchal constructs” as well as “gives a stronger critique of oppressive ideologies” (2008: ix).

²⁰² For a useful discussion on environmental justice, see, e.g., Buell (2005: 112-127). For “The Principles of Environmental Justice” as formulated at The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington DC October 24-27, 1991, see <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>.

²⁰³ Environmental justice differs from environmentalism in general in its focus on environmental racism and environmental classism (Reed 2002: 145; see also Bennett 2001: 38-39). Ecofeminism and the environmental justice movement complement each other in that the former has been criticized for disregarding issues of race, and the latter for disregarding gender issues (Campbell 2008: x). In addition, as Buell points out, “In contrast to mainstream environmentalism, whose traditional support base has been predominately the white educated middle class, with the leadership of major organizations until quite recent times predominately male, the public health and anti-discrimination agendas of environmental justice activism have enlisted strong leadership and support from minority groups and from women across the color line” (2005: 142).

agenda” (2002: 369-370). Moreover, the “vast majority of environmental justice workers are women” (Reed 2002: 152).

Louise Westling in her study *The Green Breast of the New World* (1996), fuses ecofeminist literary critique with postcolonial concerns about how nature and gender intersect with race in American settler history. Going back all the way to the ancient Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* and demonstrating that ever since ancient times, men’s attitudes toward landscape have been eroticized, Westling partly revises Kolodny’s work into American frontier mythology by drawing attention to how not only women but Native Americans too have been conflated with nature and effeminized, and how this in turn has had bearing for how indigenous peoples have been and are treated.

While incest may be thought of as a form of psychological colonialism, Smiley indicates that the sexual abuse in the novel is linked not only to the exploitation of land but also to the suppressed history of the United States themselves. In *A Thousand Acres*, the land destruction and the abuse symbolize one another, but the domestic violence in the novel is indirectly linked also to America’s colonialist history. The novel is therefore also a critique of industrial and technological capitalism, which is seen as connected to that past. Thus, in an effort to unmask the power relations within the Cook family, Smiley also suggests that these are imbricated with other forms of oppressions. *A Thousand Acres* acts to counter and rival the romanticized myth of rugged individualism of settler stories by revealing the cost to be paid by generations of women, including Ginny and Rose themselves, their mother, grandmother, and other women in the county, while also hinting at the “‘originating’ act of colonialism” (Sanders 2001: 205). Smiley does not refer directly to the Native population, yet textual references make clear that her story takes place precisely at a site where the pioneers settled, and, as Caruth suggests, an indirect telling of a specific historical event may provide the more truthful way of communicating that past (1996a: 27).

The private and public traumatic past is metaphorized in the environmental poisons in Smiley’s novel. References to trauma often appear in some form of repetition compulsion on a symbolic level in environmentally-focused trauma fiction. While bespeaking the effects and symptomatic responses to trauma, symbols supply spatial distance. In the words of Roland Granofsky, “The literary symbol in the trauma novel facilitates a removal from unpleasant actuality by use of distance and selection. While human memory achieves distance temporally, the symbol in fiction achieves it spatially by imposing itself between the reader and the thing symbolized.” (1995: 6). For Granofsky, “[t]he linguistic symbol, in pointing beyond itself, is an ideal vehicle to link individual and communal experiences” such

as ecological trauma because it moves beyond the specific and individual to the society at large; it “deals with trauma not by negating it directly but by initially miming its effects in order eventually to take the individual and, by extension, his or her society, beyond them” (1995: 6, 9). In Smiley’s novel, toxicity symbolizes trauma, and as the long-hidden poisonous contaminators are finally revealed, so too are the long-interred traumatic events of the past.

However, the toxins also constitute the literal ecological destruction that has damaged the land and adversely affected the women’s real material bodies in the novel, where the return of the repressed now appears not only in temporal but in spatial form. Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler note that analogous to the psychic idea of “the return of the repressed” in today’s trauma discourse is the notion of a physical return of insidious, unseen, and unrepresentable environmental- and health threats, such as chemical toxins, sun exposure, tobacco smoke, radiation, and viruses such as HIV, that for a long time have been latent in the earth and/or in human and animal bodies only to suddenly rise to the surface and wreak havoc at a later time (2003: 9). In *A Thousand Acres*, unseen toxic contaminants connected to the repressed memory of incest cause miscarriages and cancer. As in the Freudian notion of *Nachträglichkeit*, where memory is stored in the individual as a “foreign body” and is internally reactivated on a second occasion, appearing as “mnemic symbols” of the locked-away traumatic memory (Freud and Breuer 2001: 6, 90), long-buried toxic substances resurface in a second moment. On the other hand, Smiley’s protagonist Ginny images the lurking or latent memories of abuse as a time-bomb or as radioactive matter: “mysterious bulging items in a dark sack, unseen as yet, but felt. I feared them. I feared how I would have to store them in my brain, plastic explosives or radioactive wastes that would mutate or even wipe out everything else in there” (2004a 229).²⁰⁴ In other words, the poisons are psychological *and* physical as it were; Larry has both violated and poisoned his daughters’ bodies.

Much trauma fiction narratives such as *A Thousand Acres* is apparently obsessed with the notion of bodily space, and recently critical readers and theorists of trauma fiction turn to reading trauma through bodily figures (see, e.g., Di Prete 2006; Robson 2004). Douglass and Vogler assert that trauma discourse itself “is anchored in the conviction that special truths can manifest themselves in traumatized bodies”; the “body” as the “visible – or representable – site of trauma [...]

²⁰⁴ Ginny’s radiation metaphor is especially powerful here; as Richard Kerridge notes, radioactive particles such as in the Chernobyl accident of 1986 are “particularly suggestive” of the “real” as they are “invisible and largely unrepresentable” (1998: 3).

prove[s] an increasingly important signifier in all areas of the discourse of witness” (2003: 12, 13). Also the scientific discourse on trauma elaborates on a chiefly physical understanding of the phenomenon. The neurobiological scientist Bessel van der Kolk’s consequential findings on traumatic memory and dissociation reveal that trauma creates neural pathways of iconic imprints in the brain (see, e.g., van der Kolk and Lisa Fisler 1995; van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995). True to his training and early career as a neurologist and lecturer in neuropathology,²⁰⁵ Freud, too, in his time, was thinking about psychic processes along corporeal lines in his theory of the Pcpt.-Cs system of consciousness (see Freud 2003b: 63-73) and in his notion of a space in the mind in terms of a “foreign body” (see, Freud and Breuer 2001: 6).²⁰⁶

In fact, also the body in *A Thousand Acres* constitutes a vital and highly significant link between contemporary trauma theory and green studies. The women (and children) in the novel are targets for toxic exposure just as they are targets for abuse as the pesticides poison women’s reproductive organs, thus foreclosing their future. Because of its theme of environmental poisons, the novel not only links concerns of environmental justice with ecofeminist issues but may also be classified as something Terrell Dixon calls “the literature of toxicity,” which he defines as literature growing out of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) and exhibiting a “growing concern with toxicity” (Adamson, Evans, and Stein 2002: 19). Chapter 6, “Trauma and the Corporeal,” is devoted to the representation of trauma in connection to a physical or corporeal dimension of traumatic experience expounded in contemporary scientific and theoretical discourses on trauma in conjunction with contemporary formulations of the body in environmental criticism. Incest fiction such as Smiley’s novel frequently represents trauma at least in part through the written body; the past is relived in and told through the

²⁰⁵ At the time Freud attempted to combine psychoanalysis with the neuroscience of his day in order to develop a science of the psyche, and hails his “Project” as a contribution to the sciences: “The intention is to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science: that is, to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles, thus making those processes perspicuous and free from contradiction” (1981: 295). He also informed Fliess on September 22, 1898: “I am [...] not at all inclined to leave the psychology hanging in the air without an organic basis” (Masson 1985: 326).

²⁰⁶ Some of his ideas have caught the attention of today’s researchers in neuroscience. E. Ann Kaplan believes Freud “indeed had anticipated much that is being “discovered” by neuroscientists today,” in particular regarding the advances made concerning brain circuitry, and she also mentions a 2002 *Newsweek* article by Fred Guterl, “What Freud Got Right,” that relates how new research supports some of Freud’s theories on the drives (Kaplan 2005: 150, n. 2; see also Guterl 2003). In 2000 a group of prominent neuroscientists also founded the International Neuropsychoanalysis Society, which biannually publishes its own scientific and scholarly journal, *Neuropsychoanalysis* (see <http://www.neuro-psa.org.uk/npsa>).

body. In *A Thousand Acres*, the trauma is embodied rather than remembered; the protagonist Ginny's body becomes a vehicle for remembering and articulating the abuse that not only defies narrativization but that the mind has forgotten. The trauma in the novel manifests in terms of what literary critic Roberta Culbertson calls "body memories," memories preserved or remembered by the body, and progresses to what Culbertson terms "embodied memory," or memory expressed through the body (1995: 174, 185). The presence of the violated and poisoned body in the novel is not only a means for looking into the psyche, however. As the analysis of chapter 6 will make clear, the body functions in this novel also as an agency in its own right, emerging as a faithful witness to both the sexual violation and the land abuse.

Having discovered that narrative/memory is displaced and temporally disrupted in traumatic hysteria, Freud and Breuer indicate that the dislocated story that the bodily symptoms tell demand a new approach to listening, and their collective work, *Studies on Hysteria*, outlines the development of the "cathartic method" by which the dissociated affective memory can be discharged or "abreacted"²⁰⁷ once it has been made conscious through the "talking cure." Upon finding that the symptoms disappeared when their patients "*had put the affect into words*," Freud and Breuer conclude that "language serves as a substitute for action; by its help the trauma can be 'abreacted'" instead of just acted out (2001: 6, 8, emphasis in original). Today's trauma experts, too – in spite of stressing trauma's intrinsic unrepresentability and the inefficaciousness of language to contain traumatic excess – emphasize that for some form of cure or closure to take place trauma needs to be told and recognized in a social context of empathic understanding such as in the therapist-patient relationship (see, for instance, van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995: 163; Herman 1994: 175-213; Felman and Laub 1992: 57-59, 68-72).

However, while the timeless and spaceless experience finally needs to be verbalized, retemporalized and respatialized, or temporally and spatially organized, in narrative form, narrative representation has its perils. Traumatic recall is marked by an epistemological crisis; the flashback forcefully and literally conveys the past traumatic experience which paradoxically remains beyond the grasp of con-

²⁰⁷ The concept is attributed to Breuer (2001: xxii) and first saw its published appearance in "Preliminary Communication" (2001: 8, n. 1), and at the time Freud and Breuer used it together with repression to denote traumatic memory recall as in the return of the repressed material through hallucinations and repetitive symptoms (see, e.g., 2001: 8-10). The term "abreaction" in this case indicates memory recall in therapy, but today it can also refer to a process in which traumatic memories forcefully and unwittingly appear, such as in flashbacks.

scious recollection and hence narration. As Cathy Caruth emphasizes, since testimony paradoxically presupposes or is made possible by trauma's unrepresentability, in integrating traumatic memory there is the risk of understanding "too much," to lose "the event's essential incomprehensibility, the force of its *affront to understanding*" (1995a: 154, emphasis in original). The last and seventh chapter of Part II, "Trauma and Textual Space," moves on to the significance of textual space for the representation and witnessing of trauma. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how the text itself can become a memory-site, or mnemonic place if you will, for remembering and bearing witness to the past traumatic moment, providing it does not understand too much but can communicate the spatio-temporally disruptive force of trauma. After the toxic past in *A Thousand Acres* has resurfaced and been articulated through bodily signs, it is finally put into words, as Ginny has overcome her dissociative mind/body split by coming back to her mind and voice through her body. This study argues that literary fiction such as *A Thousand Acres* not only calls for an interpretation that pays attention to the cultural context in which the trauma is produced and perpetuated but also opens up a space for reading trauma belatedly that allows for a working through for both protagonist and reader. In other words, trauma fiction can replace toxic physical or geographical places as sites of memory and witnessing.

5 TRAUMA AND THE NATURAL WORLD: (DIS)LOCATION, PASTORAL PLACE, AND THE WOMAN/LAND TROPE

One of the oldest Western creation narratives, “The Creation of Vegetation by the Mother Goddess” from 3000 B.C.E., an old Sumerian myth, relates the story of the great Mother Goddess, Ninhursag, and her consort, Enki. The narrative is set in the paradisaical land of Dilmun as Ninhursag gives birth to a daughter, Ninmu. Enki is immediately attracted to his daughter and wants them to have sex, whereupon Ninmu gives birth to her father’s daughter, Ninkurra. The story repeats itself; Enki is now aroused by his daughter/grand-daughter and another daughter is born, his great-granddaughter, Uttu. Again the father desires his new daughter but her mother advises her to reject him until he gives her fruits and vegetables. He brings her the produce and they have sexual relations:

Enki took his joy of Uttu,
He embraced her, lay in her lap, . . .
With the young one he cohabited, he kissed her.
Enki poured the semen into the womb,
She took the semen into the womb, the semen of Enki (in Ruether 1985: 46)

Out of their union, however, Ninhursag collects “the semen from the thighs” and creates eight plants, and so the plant world was created. Enki then voraciously consumes and so destroys the vegetation, his offspring (1985: 46). The Mother Goddess curses Enki with illness, but is then persuaded by a fox, which intercedes for Enki, to cure him. This creation myth makes a strong showing of the long-standing association of woman and land, pervading traditional Western culture in philosophic, scientific, and religious thought and portraying it in terms of incest. Janet Liebman Jacobs observes that this ancient narrative “can be read as a timeless parable, revealing the enduring nature of the sexual exploitation of daughters in patriarchal culture” (1994: 2), but this study suggests that it can also be interpreted as an allegory that lays bare the abiding nature of the use of both daughters and land in such a culture as well as illustrating their connection.

Drawing on contemporary trauma theory in conjunction with ecocriticism, this study now turns to exploring the relationship between landscape, memory, and narrative in the context of trauma, suggesting that the conflation of woman and nature communicated and exemplified in the creation story above problematizes the representation of memory in relation to geographical space in trauma. This chapter examines this relationship with specific reference to Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres*, a title which signals that the trauma in the novel to a great extent will be

represented through the land: rather than reproducing stereotypes that sustain the woman-land trope, Smiley suggests that the denigration of the women in the novel and the exploitation of the land are linked by the same repressive system of mastery.

A Thousand Acres forges a connection between memory and landscape, linking narratives of the past to the thousand acres making them equally contested in the novel. The novel shows the narrator Ginny excavating a forgotten and repressed trauma history of sexual abuse and becoming aware of a connection between the exploitation of women and land in her community. In an effort to unmask the power relations within the Cook family, Smiley also indicates that these are linked to other forms of oppressions, even to that of her country's colonialist past. In fact, Smiley's skilfulness in establishing connections between various kinds of oppressions, sexist, environmental, and colonial, is not only one of the novel's most striking features, but the intersection of sexual violence and ecological destruction with a critique of the nation's violent colonialist past also links the personal to the public. Although the novel can be thought of as the protagonist Ginny's private history, it is also in a sense a traumatic national story. With *A Thousand Acres* Smiley suggests that the repossession of hitherto silenced narratives of the past challenges the representations in officially sanctioned versions of history as well as resists marginalization by repressive ideologies. Before diving into Smiley's novel, however, it is necessary to first map out the relation between trauma, memory, and landscape as regards Geoffrey Hartman's notion of memory place.

5.1 Trauma, Memory, and Landscape

The link between memory and place in the form of landscape in contemporary trauma theory can be traced to Geoffrey Hartman's exegeses on the father of English Romanticism William Wordsworth. In particular, Hartman's writings on trauma are grounded in his interpretation of the memory place in Wordsworth. For Hartman, specific places "affected [Wordsworth] in time past and still strongly modify his consciousness – so strongly, in fact, that they are places in his mind as well as in nature" (1977: 211-212). Hartman does not ignore trauma's time, but his notion of memory place unveils a complex spatio-temporal structure. In an interview with Steve Newman, Hartman defines the memory place as both spatial and temporal (or rather atemporal): "a highly specific locus, but also a place in

time, yet which the temporality of time could not dislodge,” and he links the spots of time²⁰⁸ in Wordsworth to Freud’s early studies on hysterical symptoms: “In *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud understands that in order for traumatic incidents, or these charged reminiscences, not to damage the individual, not to become so fixed that you cannot get away from them, they have to accrue associations,” which “help them to develop within time, to flow on and be modified” (in Newman 2004: 121). In other words, the spots of time protect the traumatized person from becoming too fixated on the traumatic experience or memory recall by providing some form of spatial distance to the recollections. In Hartman’s interpretation Wordsworth is interested in locating the memories of feelings from the past contemplated in the present, in giving them a specific place: space is fused with time and place is transformed into a demesne of memory, linked to another place and another time. In Hartman’s own words, “place becomes memory-place: spots of time, spots in and creative of a temporal consciousness. That is, the reflective moment is introduced in all its dimensions” (in Caruth 1996b: 644-645). However, according to Romantic thought, the natural world is threatened because human beings hubristically tamper with it without thinking about the cost, and Hartman questions the possibility of a Wordsworthian memory place “after entering an era of mechanical reproduction” and also in connection with Holocaust sites, which have robbed the mind of reflective moments in actual and imagined pastoral places, and thus destroyed the symbolic function of these regions (in Caruth 1996b: 645).²⁰⁹

The notion of place in relation to memory in contemporary trauma theory, and the part played by landscape in situating its viewers, together constitute the key elements of Hartman’s theorizations on trauma (Whitehead 2003: 284). The term “place” does not have a precise or fixed definition, but the distinction between place and space is of significance for European Romantic pastoral, which is generally characterized by an aesthetic and contemplative attitude toward landscape rather than the agrarian or “working” attitude toward the land that often characterizes the American pastoral (Garrard 2005: 49). The modern tendency to position oneself in relation to a territory which has been converted in accordance with the

²⁰⁸ “Spots of time” is Wordsworth’s term (Wordsworth 1979, XII, 208, 1850 version).

²⁰⁹ Hartman has focused a great deal on the Holocaust in his writings on trauma. This study, however, does not seek to compare the trauma of sexual abuse with that of the Holocaust, or to establish a connection between the two, but as Hartman himself observes, “Trauma study’s radical aspect comes to the fore less in its emphasis on acts of violence like war and genocide than when it draws attention to “familiar” violence such as rape, and the abuse of women and children. Above all, it does not neglect the explosive nature of emotion and daily hurt.” (1995: 546)

theory of the picturesque, has its roots in European Romanticism, where the Romantic subject identifies with the landscape for the purpose of reflection and self-insight and the landscape itself is depicted as a reflection and projection of the subject's personal fantasies and crises: thus "[t]he process of viewing a landscape is therefore one of careful construction, through which the indifferent or unaccommodating *space* of a site or environment is transformed into a *place*, which draws the viewer into its territory" (Whitehead 2003: 275, italics in original). In relation to trauma theory, the Romantic tendency to situate oneself vis-à-vis the landscape in order to reflect on the self is of particular significance: as Anne Whitehead accurately observes, "[t]he traumas of the recent past challenge our ability to position ourselves in relation to them, or to find our bearings" (2003: 276). In other words, the point-of-view from which trauma is remembered has ethical implications.

In fact, studies of Romanticism and its preoccupation with landscape in positioning its viewers, particularly in the writings of Wordsworth,²¹⁰ establish a common ground between contemporary trauma theory and ecocriticism. Romantic pastoral has also influenced modern environmentalism in that early ecocritics looked to Romantic writers such as Wordsworth in an effort to reconsider the relationship between human beings and the natural world. It can even be said that contemporary environmental studies took root in Romantic pastoral: Greg Garrard notes that Rachel Carson's groundbreaking *Silent Spring* "drew on the pastoral tradition" with its emphasis of a harmonious and aesthetic relationship to the natural world (2005: 33).

However, as in the way that the concept of nature is problematic because of the woman-nature analogy, there are gendered complications concerning witnessing in trauma in terms of the positioning of the viewer in relation to landscape, issues not raised by Hartman's platonic and more gender-neutral contribution to contemporary trauma theory.²¹¹ It is a commonplace in feminist geographic thought that place and space produce gender.²¹² As feminist geographer Gillian Rose has ar-

²¹⁰ Ecocriticism today has broadened its narrow focus and its body of work embraces within its boundaries a greater range of genres and more multiform texts as regards both gender- and ethnicity (Heise 2006: 290; Bennett 2001: 41) than much of its early work, which often concerned Romantic poetry and nature writing (Garrard 2005: 4).

²¹¹ Mary Jacobus (1993) has pointed out, in her reading of sexual difference in the final episode of *The Prelude*, that Wordsworth himself regularly feminizes nature.

²¹² For an excellent description of the field of feminist geography, see Lise Nelson and Joni Seager's introduction to *A Companion to Feminist Geography* (2005: 1-11). For an account of the development of feminist geography in the English-speaking world, see, e.g., Bondi and Davidson (2005).

gued, landscape does not merely concern the connection between Nature and Culture but entails also “a specific way of looking” in terms of “a gaze which itself helps to make sense of a particular relationship between society and land” (1993: 87). In other words, landscape is culturally constructed and the viewer determines its meaning. In gender terms, it is clear that the observing position from which landscape has historically been viewed within Western geographical discourse has been masculine (and white and heterosexual) (Rose 1993).

Torquato Tasso’s poetic narrative *Gerusalemme liberata*, introduced in the introduction proper to this present study for the purpose of tracking the trajectory of the new mode of reading expounded in these pages, offers a significant entry into *A Thousand Acres*, which articulates Smiley’s understanding of trauma and place through an emphasis on a landscape traditionally gendered female as a function to position the protagonist’s sexual trauma. In the introduction to her *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Cathy Caruth rereads Freud’s reference to a passage from Tasso’s narrative and links witnessing to belatedness. Freud presents in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), the idea of repetition compulsion with reference to Tasso’s description of how Tancredi accidentally kills Clorinda, who uncannily returns in the shape of a tree. To Freud’s reading of the scene as illustrating the compulsion to repeat in traumatic neurosis, Caruth adds the significance of the witnessing voice that demands a response: “Tancred’s story thus represents traumatic experience not only as the enigma of a human agent’s repeated and unknowing acts but also as the enigma of the otherness of a human voice that cries out [...], a voice that witnesses a truth that Tancred himself cannot fully know” (1996a: 3). However, in emphasizing Clorinda’s testimony to an unclaimed moment and the hero’s belated insight, Caruth ignores another crucial aspect that Tasso apparently implies has to do with trauma’s tempo-spatial structure: the symbolic value of place.

che poi distinto in voci: – Ahi! Troppo – disse
 – m’hai tu, Tancredi, offeso; or tanti basti.
 [...]
 perché il misero tronco, a cui m’affisse
 il mio duro destino, anco mi guasti?
 Dopo la morte gli aversari tuoi,
 crudel, ne’ lor sepolcri offender vuoi?
 (Tasso 1982: XIII, 42)²¹³

²¹³ Enough, enough (the voice lamenting said),
 Tancred, thou hast me hurt; [...]
 And now, within this woful cypress laid,

The plot is simple: Clorinda bewails her fate after she has been slain twice by her beloved Tancredi, who has first misrecognized and killed her in her armor and then inadvertently stricken her in the shape of a cypress. The traumatic memory is encased in the tree, emplaced in nature, as it were, and it is from the natural world that Clorinda addresses her tormentor. The magical forest, then, can be read both as a literal territory and yet also as a symbolic memory site for Clorinda's trauma.

The *Gerusalemme* narrative precisely illustrates through Clorinda's efforts to find her bearings, the problems that arise in connection with landscape as a process of positioning in trauma when the landscape itself has traditionally been gendered female. Tasso goes to great lengths to establish the pagan heroine Clorinda's connection with the natural world, gesturing toward her subsequent fate of dehumanization in the form of a tree. Although it is related already in Canto II that she prefers the outdoors – where as a young girl she chased bears, boars, and lions in the wild forests (1982: II, 40) – it is not until the twelfth canto that the reader is familiarized with her life story (also unbeknown to herself until then) and her connection to nature. The Amazon Clorinda is here told by the faithful male servant, by whom she was brought up, the story of her life, in which she has more than once been miraculously saved by forces and creatures from the natural world. The Tassian heroine is associated with the tigress emblem on her helmet (1982: II, 38) because, as we find out, she was nursed by a tigress as a baby (1982: XII, 31). In addition, she was once saved as a little child by both water and wind when on the verge of drowning as her servant escaped some thieves by leaping into the flood with her (1982: XII, 34, 35). In sequencing the narrative thus, placing the information of Clorinda's link to the natural world immediately before the Christian hero Tancredi slays the warrior of the enemy camp twice, the poem emphasizes a link between male violence against women and environmental destruction, as Tasso's poem gives expression also to environmental concerns.²¹⁴ Immediately before Tancredi slays Clorinda for the first time, the chief of the Christian expedition has given orders to cut down trees to construct new weaponry. Upon hearing the Christians' plan, Ismen, sorcerer of the King of Jerusalem, enchants the forest three times in a fairy tale-like manner so that “sepolto / trar de

My tender rind thy weapon sharp doth rive.
Cruel! is 't not enough thy foes to kill,
But in their graves wilt thou torment them still?
(1968: XIII, XLII, Trans. Fairfax)

²¹⁴ It can also be argued that Tasso's story relies on a need to curb the wild and “natural” Amazonian woman Clorinda and silence and undercut her-story (thus Tancredi's blow to the tree characterizes a symbolic castration) and instead invites readers to identify with the male protagonist.

la tomba e dargli il moto sòle” (1982: XIII, 6),²¹⁵ including Clorinda’s, to keep the Christians from chopping down the trees.²¹⁶ Through Clorinda’s voice Tancredi becomes a witness to both her loss and, through her traumatic condition, also to the suffering natural world which has been betrayed by him too.

As this study will demonstrate, the landscape in Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* plays a significant role in the gradual recovery of traumatic memories of abuse in the sense that their gradual return is worked out in relation to the symbolic figure of nature, which interposes the returning past with new understandings for the protagonist, linking her personal memory and the memory of the land. Without generating the landscape and instead inscribing the landscape with new metaphors, Smiley suggests that while trauma refuses representation in discourse, nature initially works in the novel as a powerful symbolic for traumatic memory, as a domain for its unrepresentability marked by history: what human memory cannot hold nature in a symbolical manner assuages or disburdens.

5.2 “Have you reckon’d a thousand acres much?”: Gendered Trauma and American Pastoral

Janice Doane and Devon Hodges (2001) track the roots of Smiley’s titular acres back to a passage in Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* (1891-92):

Have you reckon’d a thousand acres much? have you
 reckon’d the earth much?
 Have you practis’d so long to learn to read?
 Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the
 origin of all poems,
 You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are
 millions of suns left,)
 You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor
 look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the
 spectres in books,
 You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things
 from me,

²¹⁵ “dead bones he makes from graves to rise” (1968: XIII, VI, Trans. Fairfax).

²¹⁶ Lynn White Jr. has noted that Christian missionaries have been cutting down trees for two thousand years to counter pagan animism, in an effort to tame the wild (1996: 12).

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.
(Whitman 1982: 189-190)

Not only does the novel rewrite Shakespeare's *Lear* as an attempt to (re)claim an unclaimed literary moment of father-daughter incest, unveiling the patriarchal logic of the drama – as Chapter 3 of this study has shown – but, as Doane and Hodges explain, “[t]he novel’s acknowledged – and rebuked – literary heritage also extends to American canonical literature and American constructions of the individual and his – we use the pronoun advisedly – relationship to the land” (2001: 72). To Doane and Hodges, Smiley’s novel challenges Whitman’s “universalizing narrative,” which celebrates a form of possession that “attempts to transcend the material acquisitiveness of the possessive individual by requiring so much acquisition that the territorial boundaries reckoned [...] disappear” in an imagined American community that serves everyone: *A Thousand Acres* criticizes the project of Whitman’s “grandiose individual” – linked to the father/farmer Larry in the novel – and the poem’s “idea of the full plenitude of the present” in which “the celebration of present possibilities [...] seem to be disconnected from any sense of the past” (Doane and Hodges 2001: 73). This chapter seeks to explore the past precisely in connection with the land and possession in Smiley’s novel, arguing that these are interlinked in terms of trauma.

In Smiley’s novel, strategies such as rape in the domestic realm match the chemical destruction of topsoil in the agricultural sphere. Land and women are equated as property in Larry’s patriarchal dominion: “We were just his, to do with as he pleased, like the pond or the houses or the hogs or the crops,” Rose remarks (Smiley 2004a: 191). In other words, Larry is engaging in the long-held tradition of gendering the land as female, as such scholars as Annette Kolodny (1975; 1984) have documented. The abuse of women and land are connected in the novel in the sense that “both are justified by a patriarchal discourse of property and implicitly condoned by [the father’s] community” (McDermott 2002: 395). Smiley suggests here that there are continuities between domestic violence and environmental destruction. In this she follows ecofeminist work such as that by Carolyn Merchant (1980), who has persuasively argued that patriarchal values and attitudes exploit both women and nature.

Smiley’s protagonist Ginny, at first ignorant when it comes to politics, gradually awakens to both kinds of exploitations. The novel shows her awakening to how her and other women’s social positions in the county are influenced by their gender and how the incest-abuse can be understood against the backdrop of socio-political issues. Her sister Rose, who was herself incest-abused by their father but in contrast to Ginny had always remembered it, taught Ginny about the suffering of the women in the community, and Ginny knew it “was true before she even

finished showing” her (Smiley 2004a: 342). Similarly when her lover Jess revealed the land’s suffering to her she knew it was accurate before he finished telling her. Smiley here critiques a masculine politics based on aggression, and toward the end of the novel Ginny says to her husband that she sees Larry’s physical and sexual abuse of her and Rose as part of the same logic of mastery that underlies “the lust to run things exactly the way he wanted to no matter what, poisoning the water and destroying the topsoil and buying bigger and bigger machinery, and then feeling certain that all of it was ‘right’” (2004a: 343).

A large number of critics have commented on how Smiley in the novel forges a connection between the abuse of the thousand-acre piece of land by chemical farm poisons and the abuse of women (see, e.g., Duffy 1991; Bakerman 1992: 135; Carden 1997: 181; Farris 1998: 38; Weatherford 1998: 149; Alter 1999: 156; Mathieson 1999: 135; Nakadate 1999: 167; Strehle 2000: 216; Ozdek 2008: 71). Barbara Mathieson’s reading is most suggestive here: *A Thousand Acres* “repeatedly parallels the technological invasion of the landscape with the mastery and abuse of the female characters” in the novel, she says (1999: 135). Some scholars have taken an ecocritical or ecofeminist line toward Smiley’s book (see, for instance, Slicer 1998; Ozdek 2008), sometimes in connection to their intertextual readings of *Lear* (see, e.g., Mathieson 1999) or the Demeter-Persephone tale (see Carr 2000a). This present study, however, is the first to read the novel in conjunction with ecocriticism *and* contemporary trauma theory in relation to the text’s intertextual bonds to *Lear* as well as to its folkloric analogs.

Smiley herself has made her environmental concerns with *A Thousand Acres* known and describes her thoughts about farming and ecology in a few texts, which may usefully be read side by side with the novel, perhaps most notably her essays “Shakespeare in Iceland” (1999) and her article “So Shall We Reap” (1994) published in *Sierra*, a magazine of the Sierra Club, an environmental activist group.²¹⁷ In the former, she mentions, for instance, John H. Storer’s *The Web of Life*, which caused her to discover ecology, and as she puts it, “reinforced that sense I had of the variousness and interconnectedness of land, animals, plants, people, town and countryside, prairie and civilization” (1999: 162). This book has obviously had considerable impact on *A Thousand Acres* where “the web of life” is definitely visible in that the landscape and people are interlinked.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ For critical accounts of Smiley’s ecological agenda in her novel, see, e.g., Nakadate 1999; Sanders 2001.

²¹⁸ Neil Nakadate aptly points out that *A Thousand Acres* “should be seen as a contribution to the literature of ecological vigilance” (1999: 159)

In her *Sierra* (1994) article, Smiley gives her own description of her environmental vision as regards Midwestern farming, celebrating the original and seemingly boundless abundance of the Iowa prairies (in particular the prairie-pothole²¹⁹ region) and criticizing the effects of the farming practices brought over from Europe in the late 1880s, which had been adapted to “mountainous, forested, stony” regions “cursed with poor soil or unfavorable weather patterns” and which were poorly suitable for prairie conditions. In addition, the Europeans brought with them a hostile view of diversion, a heavy meat- and dairy based diet as well as belief systems that viewed nature as separate from and subordinate to human beings. *A Thousand Acres* refers to the abundance of the original prairies on more than one occasion, “When the pioneers got here, this was all under water,” Ginny says (Smiley 2004a: 124):

Prairie settlers always saw a sea or an ocean of grass, could never think of any other metaphor, since most of them had lately seen the Atlantic. The Davises [her great-grandparents Sam and Arabella] did find a shimmering sheet punctuated by cattails and sweet flag. The grass is gone, now, and the marshes, ‘the big wet prairie,’ but the sea is still beneath our feet, and we walk on it (2004a: 16).

Smiley relates in the *Sierra* article (1994) how the settlers’ removal of native vegetation, their draining of the wet prairie, and their introduction of the plow have resulted in topsoil erosion, decline of diversity of both plant and animal kingdoms, depletion of some of the world’s largest aquifers, chemical contamination of water supplies, and an increase in crop pests. She sees our relationship to the Great North American Prairie as “the paradigm of our relationship to Earth,” and insists that “The application of technology to agriculture on the North American prairies has not, so far, exempted our culture from the biological forces that have destroyed earlier civilizations,” instead “big machines and strong chemicals have speeded them up.”

Environmental issues do not seem as self-evident a theme in *Lear* as in Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres*, which is explicitly environmentally conscious, but just as the incest motif is not Smiley’s own original idea, so dramatizing green issues and concerns in her story is not entirely her own invention either. As pointed out by Julie Sanders: “Smiley is not embroidering land-related themes on to the play: she is recognising intrinsic elements of the drama. ‘Nature’ in *Lear* refers to both human nature and the natural world.” (2001: 208) Susan Strehle, too, has found “ecological disaster [...] present but muted in Shakespeare”: the members of

²¹⁹ A pothole refers to a small lake.

Lear's train "seize the servants and lay waste the surrounding countryside, and Lear's kingdom becomes progressively desolate" (2000: 216). For Strehle, it is "[s]imilar assumptions about the rights of ownership" that "lead Larry to poison his own well, not only in metaphor but in literal fact" (2000: 216). Smiley herself relates in the *Belle Lettres* interview how she believes that Lear's attitude toward his daughters is interlaced with his views about nature and that this is reflective of Western culture and much of its literature: "I felt, viscerally, that a habit of mind exists in our culture of seeing nature and women in much the same way. In fact, they represent one another in a lot of writing. That's a strong element of *King Lear*. Lear's always talking about nature and his daughters, conflating the two" (in Berne 1992: 36).²²⁰

Some critics have commented on the land as yet another character in *A Thousand Acres* (see, e.g. Mathieson 1999; Holmberg 2000: 117), or at least as an agent (Slicer 1998; Carr 2000a: 128; Strehle 2000). Julie Sanders notes that "People both act upon and are acted upon by the land they inhabit" in Smiley's novel, "[t]he soils, rivers, pesticide-polluted watercourses – even the farm machinery used to work the land – all prove crucial players in the particular drama of *A Thousand Acres*" (2001: 203). Others yet say that Ginny gives the land a voice (Carden 1997: 189) or that Smiley does (Ozdek 2008: 62) in an ecofeminist fashion (see, e.g. Murphy 2000), or that she is "witnessing for the land" (McDermott 2002: 398). If one agrees with Mathieson, who argues that the novel forces the reader to sympathize with the land instead of with the Lear character (1999: 128), it is possible to say that also the thousand-acre piece of land is one of the main characters of the novel, another one that bears witness to a trauma. Yet one has to bear in mind the significance of land issues also in *Lear*. As Sanders suggests, "Mathieson's distinction between the early modern concerns of the play and the twentieth-century concerns of the novel may be too limiting" because "Smiley's evocations of the ruin of Nature and Nature's potential revenge (in the form of the poisoned well-water) offer clear links to a play in which that theme has frequently been identified" (2001: 207).

Until recently, the "pro forma" scholarship dealing with Shakespeare's representations of Nature or his depictions of the relationships between the natural world and society shifted between a structuralist and a poststructuralist approach of analyzing nature and natural elements as general themes or symbols (Estok 1999: 1096; Estok 2005: 15). However, although many have written on nature and the

²²⁰ In Shakespeare's drama, the act of professing love becomes an act of staking a claim on the land because in Lear's logic the daughters and the land are equated.

environment in Shakespeare, such as John Danby in his *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (1949),²²¹ no study has, as Simon Estok puts it, been “properly ecocritical, ecologically revolutionary, or explicitly geared toward effecting change in the way we think about and produce the environment” (1999: 1096). Not until Gabriel Egan’s *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* (2006) was there a full-length book on ecocriticism and Shakespeare, while Estok’s own article “Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: An Analysis of “Home” and “Power” in *King Lear*” (2005), demonstrated that ecocriticism can be productively carried out in relation to Shakespeare studies.

In his article, Estok discusses the mutual interdependency of the domination of women and that of nature in the play, between Lear’s misogyny and his “ecophobia,” an “irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world and aspects of it” (2005: 17):

In theory, there are links between women and the land; in practice, men rape and butcher women and tear up the land. A culture that sanctions commodification of women as environmental and spatial commodities certainly does not balk at victimizing women in the manner that it does the natural world (2005: 35, n. 6).

Estok explains ecophobia to be “all about fear of a loss of agency and control to Nature” and a concept that “seeks to give to the study of nature what terms such as misogyny, racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism give to the study of the representations of women, race, sexuality, and Jewishness respectively” (2005: 17, 15).²²² While Estok does not explore the theme of incest in *Lear*, it is difficult not to see how his term is applicable also for discussing Smiley’s contemporary *Lear* and his position toward his natural surroundings. Larry “always spoke of the land his grandparents found with distaste – those gigantic gallinippers, snakes everywhere, cattails, leeches, mud puppies, malaria,” and Ginny tells Jess how her father fears uncultivated land and has to “kill kill kill” it: “Daddy’s not much

²²¹ Danby’s book constitutes the most comprehensive study of Nature in *Lear* and suggests that there are two dichotomous views of nature in the play. The first (Nature is inherently good) is represented by Lear, Gloucester, Kent, and Albany and the second (a more materialistic view of Nature as a disruptive force) by Goneril, Regan, Cornwall, and Edmond, with a third view offered by Cordelia (Nature as healing).

²²² Estok indicates that “[s]uch fear of the agency of nature plays out in many spheres”: “The personal hygiene industry relies on it [...] beauticians and barbers [...] are sustained by it; city sanitation boards display it in their demands that residents keep grass short to prevent the introduction of ‘vermin’ and ‘pests’ into urban areas; landscaped gardens, trimmed poodles – anything that amputates or seeks to amputate the agency of nature and to assert a human order on a system that follows different orders is, in essence, ecophobic” (2005: 34 n. 3).

for untamed nature. You know, he's deathly afraid of wasps and hornets. It's a real *phobia* with him. He goes all white and his face starts twitching" (Smiley 2004a: 46, 124, 123, italics added). He and his forefathers drained the fields and filled in all the watercourses they found, scarcely leaving any potholes behind. Larry's ecophobic attitude is linked to his misogyny. He fears both nature and women since, according to Ginny's husband Ty, one of Larry's secrets is that "he's afraid of his daughters" (2004a: 103).

Instead of discussing characters' attitude to the natural world, Egan's study highlights a correspondence between the world of the plays and the real world by linking new ideas about nature, such as the Gaia hypothesis, with old ones expressed in Shakespeare's plays, such as the Great Chain of Being – expounded by E. M. W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943) – but while he mentions incest in relation to *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* and explores the theme in connection to food, genetics, and hybridity in *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles*, and *Cymbeline*, he does not discuss it in *Lear*, where instead he explores the use of storms. However, as Egan points out, "going sufficiently far back, we are all related," and "Shakespeare increasingly tackled these matters of family relations in a wider context of the relatedness of all living things, the plants and animals included and incorporating a notion of the Earth itself being alive" (2006: 130, 131). The notion of interconnectivity in Shakespeare undeniably resonates with Smiley's vision in *A Thousand Acres*, where everything is interrelated according to the laws of nature.²²³

²²³ A few of the *Lear* novels explored in Chapter 4 of this present study also deal with the natural world to some extent. To a certain degree Mairi MacInnes's *Lear*, *The Quondam Wives* (1993) depicts nature as one of the characters of the novel, even as an avenging entity in the form of the storm, which as representative of the macrocosmos stands as a metaphor for a microcosmic society in classic style, seemingly taking revenge for, or at least reacting against, the plans to violate and destroy farmlands in the valley that date back to pre-Roman antiquity by turning the Quondam estate into a tourist attraction. The youngest daughter Delia speaks her mind about these matters, saying: "your idea is to destroy the landscape by gouging its surface and digging out layers and layers of underlying material, the gravel, till it all looks raw and muddy, and you'd take out this gravel by the lorryload, creating a flow of lorries that will thunder to and fro through our village day after day, and you will turn the scar afterward into a sort of exclusive country club, so that ordinary people will completely lose out? All for the sake of a quite moderate amount of money." (1993: 110) Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* (1988), too, exhibits ecological concerns, and so some extent also links it to the trauma the protagonist Elaine Risley experiences in Toronto at the hands of her female schoolfriends. As Ronald B. Hatch has observed, Atwood "uses Elaine Risley's childhood memories of her life with her parents on summer trips to the north as a measure of normality and innocence in contrast to the artificiality of life in the city – especially for women," but that she also "reminds us that behind the scenic corridors" of the northern wilderness "lies the reality of clear-cutting" (2000: 194).

One incest narrative which designates nature as a trope corresponding to the trauma of sexual abuse comes to mind here. In Toni Morrison's debut novel *The Bluest Eye*, the child narrator Claudia MacTeer speaks in seasonally framed chapters – Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer – linking events in the Breedlove family to nature's rhythmical changes. The temporary infertility of the land in Lorain, Ohio, where the marigolds planted by Claudia and her sister Frieda refuse to blossom, is linked to the main character Pecola Breedlove's predicament:

Quiet as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow. A little examination and much less melancholy would have proved to us that our seeds were not the only ones that did not sprout; nobody's did [...] But so deeply concerned were we with the health and safe delivery of Pecola's baby we could think of nothing but our own magic: if we planted the seeds, and said the right words over them, they would blossom, and everything would be all right. (Morrison 1990: 3, original italics)

The sterility of the land depicted in the fall chapter contrasts with naturalized metaphors of fertility and growth of the Spring chapter, which represents the father Cholly's abuse of his daughter, and, as Marilyn Maxwell perceptively notes, "provides an ironic context for this devastating intrusion of an incestuous assault that not only spawns a dead baby but also "breeds" the final spiritual and psychological demise of Pecola" (2000: 201). Claudia contends that there is a connection between what happens in the natural world and what happens in the real world and that they control neither. They had "dropped [their] seeds in [their] own little plot of black dirt just as Pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of black dirt" (Morrison 1990: 3). The sisters' seeds here configure what Janice Doane and Devon Hodges calls "the beliefs planted in African-Americans that inhibit the production of healthy self-images": "Through white patriarchal ideology, what is left in [Pecola] is a desire for bluest eyes that devalues as it eradicates her identity" (2001: 42). Tying white patriarchal racism to incest within the African-American family and linking it to an apocalyptic or ominous Nature, Morrison suggests that nothing good will grow out of it. Morrison, however, does not raise ecological concerns with her novel; instead, nature becomes a means for describing the plight of the human characters.

In fairy tales, too, representations of nature play a significant role, and in "Thousandfurs," the story behind *Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, it is specifically linked to incest. In the fairy-tale world, the hero(ine) experiences danger at home but, as Maria Tatar notes, "finds that enchanted forests and magical kingdoms house [...] humane helpers"; in contrast to the enemies, the "allies [...] are of a different species; diligent bees, bountiful trees": dead though the good mother may be, "she

does not abandon her child completely, for she inevitably returns in the shape of benevolent natural powers” (1987: 73). As the reader will recall, Chapter 2 relates that the title character of the “Thousandfurs” tale frequently seeks comfort in, and receives help from, nature. The coat itself of “a thousand kinds of fur” (in Zipes 2001: 47) can be said to function in the folktale as a cloak of invulnerability, something which ultimately, by forging a link to the natural world, protects the daughter from the designing father. Marina Warner puts it aptly: the “metamorphosis changes [her] problematic fleshly envelope, which has inspired such undesirable desire” and “simultaneously seals her connection with nature and splits her off from the society in which such an offence as marriage with her father was proposed and urged” (1995: 353, 354-355).

The folkloric scholar Ruth B. Bottigheimer suggests that stories such as “Thousandfurs” (“Allerleirauh”) initially affirmed matriarchal myths of female power through their relation with nature, myths that were later suppressed by Wilhelm Grimm’s editorial changes. In Bottigheimer’s interpretation, elements such as sun, moon, stars, trees, and animal fur all bespeak the heroine’s emergence as the new queen in the natural world (1980: 8). Thus, although her demand for the dresses of gold, silver, and stars is presented as an effort to stall the impending wedding, the astral clothing also identifies the Thousandfurs figure “with the firmaments” and her request “can also be viewed as a revelation of her assumption of queenship over the natural world after her mother’s death” (1980: 7). However, this matriarchal power originally expressed in the “Thousandfurs” tale became demonized and “denied” in subsequent fairy-tale variants, which as Bottigheimer relates, “relegate power held by females to the old, the ugly, and/or the wicked” (1980: 12).

Smiley’s novel has partly retained the protagonist’s special relation to the natural world inherited from the “Thousandfurs” tale. The novel conveys Ginny’s knowledge of the prairies and its plants. At the little dump at the back of the farm she tells Jess: “I know shooting stars and wild carrots, and of course, bindweed and Johnsongrass and shatter cane” (Smiley 2004a: 124). Like her fairy-tale sibling, Ginny also often finds the natural elements such as water to be a source of support and strength. Chapter 2 of this study has noted that Ginny’s mother is present in the novel in the form of nature, especially water. From childhood onward, Ginny visualizes untamed nature as a world of safety outside of the symbolic order, as a territory not encoded by the Western masculine consciousness of ownership: “[w]e had all sorts of hiding places,” she tells her nieces, usually by water such as the drainage well covers of the farm or “an ancient pothole” down toward the farmer Mel Scott’s corner where Ginny and Rose used to swim (2004a: 84, 85): “How many times had I walked this way in shorts and a T-shirt [...] heading

confidently for a swim, knowing precisely where I was going and what pleasures were to come?," she thinks to herself (2004a: 206). For Ginny, water signifies something "harmless but powerful" (2004a: 115). After Rose has revealed the incest to her, Ginny seeks out water, but "in the leafy rows of corn I did not find even the telltale dampness of an old pothole to orient myself," she says (2004a: 206). Water, too, acquires significance in Bottigheimer's reading as in some versions of the tale the heroine "appears in conjunction with water or springs" and "it is by jumping into a well or a spring that fairy tale characters often come to those figures who control natural phenomena" (1980: 8).

A number of critics have noted the female characters' attraction to the natural world, especially to the water under the land or the wet prairie. Both Maria Paniccia Carden and Barbara Sheldon draw gendered lines between the land and the water in the novel, seeing the father linked to the land and Ginny to the water. For Sheldon the land symbolizes the father while Ginny is connected to water as an opposing feminine principle which exists outside of her father's control but which he tries to suppress by draining the land and filling in potholes. However, while his land principle appears to be stronger than her water principle, he is in fact undermining his land principle which depends on the water. According to Sheldon, Ginny realizes that land and water are interconnected not hierarchical. (Sheldon 1997: 47-51) Carden speaks of the land as the fatherland, underneath which reigns the prairie, "a specifically maternal space, a forgotten, alternate landscape and discourse that undermines the foundation of the father's authority" (Carden 1997: 185). While it is subversive to link man to land which has traditionally been gendered female, by associating women with natural elements such as water, it is possible to see how Smiley can be viewed as perpetuating the woman-nature analogy that Susan Griffin (1978), for example, has been criticized for. This study suggests, however, that the women in *A Thousand Acres* are associated with nature because they are similarly oppressed; nature is not viewed as essentially female. In other words, Smiley does not equate land and women but demonstrates a link between the oppression and abuse of both.

Smiley does not suggest that the protagonist's connection to the natural world is essentially gender-based. Her vision is not a simple reversal of the traditional masculinist hierarchies of value. Refusing a biologically essentialist view, Smiley recognizes that, while the women in the novel are not directly poisoning the land and buying tools and tractors and other machinery, as the men do, as Merike Holmberg points out, they have indeed "participated in exhaustive land use and shared the prevalent view of the land as a resource" (2000: 131). The novel shows that Ginny's father's perspective has shaped her point of view from early childhood: "we lived on what was clearly the best, most capably cultivated farm. The

biggest farm farmed by the biggest farmer. That fit, or maybe formed, my own sense of the right order of things” (2004a: 19-20). Ginny and Rose are not completely innocent but initially implicated in the rape of the earth. In other words, for Smiley, women do not have the moral high ground because theirs is a history of oppression. In addition, it is a man, Ginny’s lover Jess, steeped in new age environmentalism and propagating organic farming methods, who awakens her relationship to the natural world. He lyrically tells Ginny about when he went to see an organic farmer with dairy cattle and chickens who has grown food without using chemicals since 1964: “The vegetable garden is like a museum of nonhybrid varieties. We had carrot bread and oatmeal from their own oats for breakfast, and carrot juice, too, and he had twenty different apple varieties in his orchard. I mean it was like meeting Buddha” (Smiley 2004a: 217). Smiley says that Jess with his theories about organic farming is partly her mouthpiece in the novel, indicating that she usually gives some of her own theories to such a character “who talks compulsively, and who has plenty of theories that are partially correct but are always manipulative” (Smiley 2005: 254).²²⁴ Jess’s nurturing attitude toward the land stands in stark contrast to Larry’s expansionist ideal. It is not essentially men in themselves, but as Mark Allister puts it, “Patriarchal beliefs and attitudes” which “exploit many women and men as well as exploit the land and animals” (2004: 8). One has to remember that women too may harbor these beliefs and attitudes.

This study argues that, instead of reproducing stereotypes that reinforce the dangerous woman-nature dichotomy, Smiley re-engraves nature in the novel with her own images: nature receives and encloses the memory of the past generations of live biota:

For millennia, water lay over the land. Untold generations of water plants, birds, animals, insects, lived, shed bits of themselves, and died. I used to like to imagine how it all drifted down, lazily, in the warm, soupy water – leaves, seeds, feathers, scales, flesh, bones, petals, pollen – then mixed with the saturated soil below and became, itself, soil. I used to like to imagine the millions of birds darkening the sunset, settling the sloughs for a night, or a breeding season, the riot of their cries and chirps, the rushing *hough-shhh* of

²²⁴ Jess not only exploits Ginny’s and Rose’s affections for him, as Chapters 2 and 3 of this study has documented, but as Steven Kellman (1995) astutely notes, he seeks to take control of both Harold’s and Larry’s land, too. “A big farm and the chance to run it the way you want is a reward,” he tells Ginny (Smiley 2004a: 160). By allying himself with Harold at his brother Loren’s expense after the latter has fallen from grace with his father, he attempts to lay his hands on his father’s five-hundred-acre property to turn it into an organic farm, and through his liaisons with Larry’s daughters to take charge of the thousand-acre farm. Thus, as Kellman notes, although an organic farmer, Jess sows and spreads other toxins of his own.

twice millions of wings, the swish of their twiglike legs or paddling feet in the water, sounds barely audible until amplified by millions. And the sloughs would be teeming with fish: shiners, suckers, pumpkinseeds, sunfish, minnows, nothing special, but millions or billions of them. I liked to imagine them because they were the soil, and the soil was the treasure, thicker, richer, more alive with a past and future abundance of life than any soil anywhere. (Smiley 2004a: 131-132)

In *A Thousand Acres*, the soil is alive with a past, the land remembers, nature holds its own traces of memory, documenting all life. However, as Sara Farris points out, “Only Ginny, and she only privately, ever sees the land as anything more than property, sees the richness and the lives it contained before it became farmland” (1998: 38). Ginny speaks of the land so that everything achieves significance and is received by the water under it. These elements of the land seemingly enclose within themselves memory traces and function as memory spaces for the past. The novel shows Ginny conceiving of the land before her family arrived, of a time when the history of matter mattered, the land was not “reckon’d much” but “reckon’d” *as* much.

5.3 Contested Landscapes, Contested Narratives

In 1994 Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* was banned from a reading list in a public high school in the American community Lynden, Washington (population 5700), after complaints about its content of obscene language and explicit depictions of extra-marital affairs from members of a conservative Christian coalition called the Washington Alliance of Families. The school’s principal banned the book, saying that it had “no literary value in our community right now” (qtd. in Leslie 1998: 33). At a time when women’s incest stories were the subject of an intensive debate in the US, however, it is tempting to believe that the book’s removal from the list instead had something to do with it being what Janice Doane and Devon Hodges terms a “recovery story” (2001: 1): the daughter in a middle-class family has forgotten about having been sexually abused by her father only to recall the memory of it later. Thus the attempt to suppress Smiley’s story in Lynden, Washington, can be said to echo or replicate the attempts made in the novel to suppress and cover over the survivor-protagonist Ginny’s personal narrative of her past, which is also connected to the land in the novel.

This section aims to explore narrative and memory in relation to landscape in the context of trauma. Smiley’s overt treatment of a father-daughter incest theme places her in the tradition of North American novelists such as Mary Gaitskill with her first novel *Two Girls, Fat and Thin* (1991) and Alice Walker with *The*

Color Purple (1983) but by also dramatizing her environmental concerns with a consideration of certain aspects of American national history, she forges a link between the incestuous abuse in the novel, certain polluting farming practices, and the settler colonialism of the prairies. Not only does Smiley's book explode the myth of the American white middle-class family as a place in which children are sheltered from – instead of exposed to – sexual abuse, but it also indicates that this abuse is linked to the exploitation of land and the suppressed history of the United States themselves. This study does not seek to propose that Smiley's novel establishes an equation between environmental destruction, the trauma of sexual abuse, and the suffering of US colonialism: what it does suggest, however, is that these exploitations are linked by the same repressive discourse of mastery. With *A Thousand Acres* Smiley seems to suggest that the repossession of hitherto silenced narratives of the past challenges the representations in officially sanctioned versions of history as well as resists marginalization by repressive ideologies with the intention that the official memory in the archives of history may be altered.

In *A Thousand Acres*, narrative, history, and land are inextricably linked to each other. The thousand-acre Iowan farm, which in the opening pages of the novel is supposed to be partitioned and made into a corporation incorporating Larry's three daughters Ginny, Rose, and Caroline and their spouses, has been in the family for almost four generations, and Larry, considered the most successful farmer in the county, tells his daughters how he has constantly added acres and filled in old wells and potholes and drained the fields to be able to work even more of the land. Ginny tells the reader that it took twenty-five years for her grandfather John Cook, her great-grandfather, that is, her grandmother Edith's father Sam Davis, and her own father Larry "to lay the tile lines and dig the drainage wells and cisterns" (Smiley 2004a: 15). The official version is that Larry has come to own "what was clearly the best, most capably cultivated farm" (Smiley 2004a: 19-20) in the county through hard work, discipline, and industry: "It was easily told – Sam and John and later my father had saved their money and kept their eyes open, and when their neighbors had no money, they had some, and bought what their neighbors couldn't keep" (2004a: 132). At the time of Edith's death land was purchased, first one hundred and eighty acres, and then a few months later, two hundred and twenty acres from farmer Mel Scott, a transaction of which Larry never spoke: "Less said about *that*, the better," as he put it (2004a: 133-135, quotation on p. 135, italics original). Land was also bought at the time of Ginny's mother's death, Larry's purchase of the Ericsons' three-hundred-and-seventy-acre farm (2004a: 135).

All the stories he told his daughters had a moral "lesson" such as "work hard," "respect your elders," "don't tell your neighbors your business," and "luck is

something you make for yourself” (2004a: 132). However, while Larry used to tell his daughters stories of how he and his forefathers, who came over from England in the nineteenth century, came to possess the land through such qualities of thrift and hard work, it becomes clear that this was not always the case; as it is revealed that Larry has abused his daughters it also becomes clear that many acres were added through cheating the neighbors of their land under the guise of helping them. This, along with the women in the family such as Ginny’s grandmother Edith, “were [...] not to speak about,” as Ginny puts it (Smiley 2004a: 132), just as the fact that Larry began sleeping with his daughters after their mother’s death was not to speak about but which was finally to be revealed. Ginny remembers the purchase of the Ericsons’ property at the time of her mother’s death, which was the cue for the beginning of the sexual abuse, “Nothing about the death of my mother stopped time for my father” (2004a: 136). Kyoko Amano even suggests that “The coincidence of the purchases of land following two family deaths also could imply that John and Larry Cook purchased the land with their wives’ life insurance” (2005: 32), which would mean that Larry was coldly calculating.

The reader also soon finds out that Ginny has had five miscarriages and that the women die young, often, like the mothers of Ginny and her lover Jess Clark and subsequently Rose too, from breast cancer. From Jess, Ginny learns that her sterility is probably caused by chemical poisons in agricultural runoff (Smiley 2004a: 164-165). Smiley suggests, too, that the high breast cancer rate among the women in the community may result from chemical contamination of ground water (these issues will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6 of this study). Thus it becomes clear that the history of the land and the narratives told about it are deeply associated with the past of the farm women and their suppressed stories. In the course of the novel the “moral lessons” (“work hard,” “respect your elders,” “don’t tell your neighbors your business,” “luck is something you make for yourself” (2004a: 132)) that Larry taught Ginny and Rose eventually come to be understood or translated as work hard to acquire land at any cost even through deceit and through overworking the land and poisoning the ecosystem by the overuse of farm chemicals in order to yield larger and larger profit, respect your elders even if they want to have sex with you, but do not tell anyone about it, and luck as taking advantage of others’ misfortunes.

The landscape itself emerges as an emotionally invested space, a critical point between history and the present time, and proves crucial to Smiley’s protagonist’s efforts of remembering a traumatic past. The psychological disintegration of identity inherent in individual trauma is invariably intertwined with the land(scape) in the novel. Whereas Ginny has dissociated to the extent that as an adult she does not consciously remember what she suffered as a teenager more than twenty years

earlier, the land holds the memory that she has forgotten. Thus Smiley challenges the mind-matter dichotomy of Western thought, breaking down the boundaries between the mind and the landscape by depicting the natural landscape as an almost mental space. In the novel, Ginny imaginatively transforms uncultivated areas from her childhood days such as the dump and the quarry – uninscribed with patriarchal values and abuse – into sites of memory. Sinead McDermott, too, has persuasively argued that these “marginal, unproductive spaces” in *A Thousand Acres* that are “intimately related to Ginny’s childhood” are transformed into “a set of memory-sites” invoked in “lyrical and evocative terms” where she “re-imagines[s] her forgotten childhood” in the course of the novel (2002: 398). However, as this study argues, even the “tamed” areas such as Larry’s drainage wells are turned into sites of memory that powerfully demonstrate the connection between place and Ginny’s trauma in the novel. The following passage relates one of Ginny’s earliest memories of when as a child she was playing with her friend Ruth Ericson squatting on one of Larry’s drainage well covers, “dropping pebbles and bits of sticks through the grate” (Smiley 2004a: 47), and reveals a different and unknown kind of landscape/space underneath the soil:

The sound of water trickling in the blackness must have drawn us, and even now the memory gives me an eerie feeling, and not because of danger to our infant selves. What I think of is our babyhoods perched thoughtlessly on the filmiest net of the modern world, over layers of rock, Wisconsin till, Mississippian carbonate, Devonian limestone, layers of dark epochs, and we seem not so much in danger (my father checked the grates often) as fleeting, as if our lives simply passed then, and this memory is the only photograph of some nameless and unknown children who may have lived and may have died, but at any rate have vanished into the black well of time. (Smiley 2004a: 47)

As an adult who has repressed the memory of how her father misused her, Ginny reviews the scene without the full knowledge of what happened later. Still the event of playing with her friend on a drainage-well cover is linked to the implicit memory of the sexual abuse, which happened years later and in another place, and so this early childhood memory produces “an eerie feeling.” Ginny remembers her fear of being punished “for wandering off,” but cannot on a conscious level make a connection between her fear and the onset of abuse since she does not yet remember it on this level (2004a: 47). Through Ginny’s *unheimlich* feeling and her recalling the fear of punishment, however, Smiley forges a link between the event of physical abuse that awaited the child and the unremembered or forgotten memory of sexual violation that came later.

McDermott’s analysis of this passage is especially useful to this discussion and is profoundly suggestive here. It is not until we read this passage a *second* time, she

points out, that we realize that “[the Ericsons’] departure (which coincides with [Ginny’s] mother’s death) will be the cue for the start of the abuse and, hence, that Ginny as a retrospective narrator is not just lamenting the loss of her friend Ruthie but also the lost childhood innocence that pervades this description of her and Ruthie playing” (2002: 399). As most of her childhood memories related in the course of the novel, this memory is connected to her fear of punishment; in fact, it is why Ginny remembers it so vividly, and thus “an explicit connection is made between the father’s excessive beatings of his children and the later sexual abuse” (2002: 400). For McDermott, who reads the novel through the notion of nostalgia as a strategy of resistance, Ginny’s refusal to close the gap between herself as a child and herself as an adult “creates a way out for the child Ginny from the events that subsequently occurred”: “this engagement with the difference of the past [...] sets up moments of possibility within the story, where a different future is imagined, both for the child Ginny and for the land, thus challenging the inevitability of the chain of events instigated by Larry” (2002: 404, 405). As in the transcendental Kantian conception of time and space as materially unreal, existing merely in an a priori state of mind, thus making anything possible, Ginny’s past becomes alterable, and when the past can be changed, so is the future. Rather than reading this passage as an instance of nostalgia, however, this study suggests that Ginny’s memory must be seen in terms of trauma, readable in the concept of *Nachträglichkeit*; the adult Ginny engages in a re-interpretation of an earlier moment, using the past to view the present differently, and through the window of her childhood produces a memory of the past located in space in the here and now thus imposing a retrospective trauma onto the memory.

In fact, this spatialized memory in *A Thousand Acres* ties in with Wordsworth’s “spots of time” passage of Book XII of the 1850 *Prelude*. The episode relates the poet’s anxious anticipation of his homecoming from school for the Christmas holiday while waiting for the horses that will take him and two of his brothers’ home, and prominently demonstrates Wordsworth’s use of certain places in nature to create a temporal consciousness. As he relates how the thirteen-year-old schoolboy climbed a crag from which the two highways were visible on which the horses might arrive, he unexpectedly tells the reader that his father died on that holiday less than ten days after their arrival. From that moment on, that place will always be linked in his mind to the memory of his father’s death:

And all the business of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
That on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes;

All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
 To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
 As at a fountain (Wordsworth 1979/1850, XII, 318-326)

Geoffrey Hartman's interpretation of the passage in *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (1987) emphasizes the apparent discrepancy between the father's death and the waiting on the summit; the father's death seems foreboded, as though it occurred as a result of the child's anticipation there at that particular spot, "time was *placed*," as it were (Hartman 1987: 169). The fact that the two events are not causally linked – we have one experience reviewed retrospectively through another unconnected experience – is prophetic in the sense that "a perfectly ordinary mood is seen to involve a sin against time" thus rendering the boy's joyful expectation a murderous act (1987: 170). Echoing Cathy Caruth (1995a: 8) ("the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time"), Anne Whitehead, astutely remarks about Hartman's analysis, "the structures of trauma are present in the dislocation of event and experience, so that the event is not fully experienced at the time of its occurrence, but only in a belated movement of return" (2003: 286).

In *A Thousand Acres*, the similarly unconnected experience between the childhood play and the subsequent abuse is made clear: the memory of the event of playing with Ruthie on a drainage-well cover is invested with the experience of sexual violation which happened years later and in another location. Space and time are not antinomies in trauma: time is spatialized and space is temporalized as it were. Space is fused with time and place is transformed into a realm of memories. This is a memory in space as it were. In other words, the drainage-well cover scene is in retrospect reviewed through Ginny's uncanny feelings that bespeak the implicit memory of the later sexual abuse, so that the childhood play seemingly foretells subsequent dangers. Smiley here relates a secondary or later consciousness to an earlier one. At the same time, she moves in the direction from past to future, because Ginny's implicit memory of the sexual abuse is stored and implicitly reactivated in a second time (giving her an *unheimlich* feeling) recalling this childhood memory. A second reading of course re-interprets the scene to correspond to the explicit knowledge of the abuse.

The pebbles themselves, too, and Ginny's vision of the "layers of rock, Wisconsin till, Mississippian carbonate, Devonian limestone" (Smiley 2004a: 47) have special reference to Smiley's retrospective story: "The stone," Roland Granofsky notes, "is a very old symbol of the process of individuation, particularly relevant to the interrelationship between the psyche and matter," and "normally suggest[s] a kind of permanence" (1995: 102, 90). The pebbles in the novel are a link to

Ginny's past that she will soon recall, and the link that is established between the pebbles and the layers of rock signifies on a connection between her personal memory and the memory of the land or the sedimentation of history. Smiley's emphasis on locating the trauma in the landscape and in the narration itself further questions the binary logic of a gendered discourse; by associating the subsequent molestation with the place of the drainage well which has also poisoned Ginny, the link to the subsequent abuse is rendered even more powerful.

During the course of the novel, Ginny mourns the loss of sites of memory, such as the old farm pond, an old pothole "with a tire swing hanging over the deep end" toward Mel's corner, where she and Rose used to swim as children. Shortly before their mother's death their father drained the pond and also took out the trees and stumps around it so he could farm the field more efficiently (Smiley 2004a: 85). This is a memory which coincides with the memory of her mother's death and thus with the subsequent abuse. Ginny produces this memory when she takes her nieces Linda and Pam to swim in Pike where she meets Mary Livingstone, a friend of her mother's, who divulges her mother's concerns about Ginny after her death, and who almost implies abuse. This revelation, like the memory of the play at the drainage-well cover, gives Ginny an "eerie feeling" and makes her shake as if with cold on a hot summerday (2004a: 90) because it is connected to the implicit memory of the childhood molestation that she will later remember.

After her memory of the abuse has returned and Ginny finds out that Ty had been talking to Caroline behind her back, as she and Larry try to get the farm back, Ginny heads for an old quarry that she had not been to in a decade, looking for relief, "(now it seemed only water, only total, refreshing immersion, could clear my mind)" (2004a: 246). She remembers how she used to view it, as existing "manmade but natural, too, the one place where the sea within the earth lay open to sight" and how they "had always pulled rusty objects out of the water with guileless curiosity" (2004a: 247). But when she gets there, "the water that filled it was brown and murky," and she now comes to see the old place "with a new darkened vision": "No telling what was in there" (2004a: 247). Armed with the knowledge of the abuse as well as of the destruction of the land, her new interpretation of the past changes the past thus offering a retrospective trauma onto the memory. The past is changed because the perspective, how the past is viewed has changed. And again a connection is also made between Ginny's personal memory and that of the land.

So while the land the daughters receive from their father in *A Thousand Acres* is their inheritance in a material sense, on another level it is their painful legacy of trauma and suffering.²²⁵ History is in the acres and, unknowingly, Larry is at the transfer in a sense handing over Ginny's memory which has been displaced onto the property as it were; it is only after the land has become hers and Rose's that Ginny has her first abreaction of the traumatic event, in place, in her childhood bed ("Lying here, I knew that he had been in there to me, that my father had lain with me on that bed, that I had looked at the top of his head, at his balding spot in the brown grizzled hair, while feeling him suck my breasts") (Smiley 2004a: 228). As Minrose Gwin points out, "It is a moment specifically located in her old room, in her father's house, in a landscape of prime midwestern farmland" (2002: 59).

Narrative is not only linked to landscape in Smiley's recovery novel, but it is also as contested, reflecting the integral part issues of possession play in contemporary trauma theory: the possibility of claiming and owning a traumatic experience, the history of a trauma, and of conveying it to others is something which has been debated in recent years (see, e.g., Caruth 1995a; Hartman 1995). The Western notion of memory as property (see Haaken 1998: 110) is problematic in a context of trauma. Survivors have been described as being "possessed by an image or event," and their experience as "a history that they cannot entirely possess" (Caruth 1995a: 5). Victims of different kinds of trauma seek financial compensation and insurance reimbursement in the courts for their suffering at a time when the reliability of memory does not go unchallenged. In child sexual abuse cases there is the recovered memory/false memory debate from the early 1990s that raged in both American society and the scientific community (discussed in chapter 2 of this study).

Noting that the most challenged confessions are those of white middle-class women, Elizabeth Wilson has taken an interesting perspective on this debate over so-called recovered memories, identifying "the official domestic ideology of the white middle class" as one in which a family protects its children against, rather than commits, sexual abuse, denies it if it occurs within the group and projects it elsewhere as a way of asserting moral superiority and in the service of upholding white middle class dominion. In the words of Wilson:²²⁶

²²⁵ Drawing attention to Jacques Derrida's statement that poison and gift share the same etymological origin in Latin, Greek, and Germanic languages, Tore Høgås rightly observes that "the farm is a poisoned gift on several levels" (2001: 67).

²²⁶ Wilson points to statistics from the False Memory Syndrome Foundation: "the typical profile of 'false accusers' is usually a woman, in age between 25 and 45, who comes from a middle-

“not in this house” is the official domestic ideology of the white middle class. According to this ideology, children are to be protected from early exposure to sexuality; incest does not take place in the white middle class family; it is a vice of class and racial others who lack the rationality necessary to control their impulses. Suspicions that others engage in incestuous practices have long been part of the arsenal of moral prejudice that has been used to justify the social and political hegemony of the white middle class. (1995: 38)

Studies show, however, that incest occurs across race- and class-boundary lines, and there appears to be no more incest in groups of other racial or ethnic origins or among lower classes than in white middle- to upper-middle-class families (for the statistics and their sources, see Wilson 1995).²²⁷ In fact, many feminists associate father-daughter incest with a strong patriarchal family structure (see, e.g., Herman and Hirschman 1981, 2000), “often idealized as the origin of white, middle-class values” (Doane and Hodges 2001: 47).²²⁸ According to Wilson, the debate is not so much a question of an anti-feminist backlash as it is “a fabrication of a middle class intended to ward off the threat to its moral dominance,” a threat that comes from within the white middle class itself (1995: 41). Although the white middle class ideology of keeping up appearances does not of itself produce dissociation, “[r]esearchers point out that [it] is more likely to occur in the ab-

to upper-middle-class family. Both the accuser and her parents have a higher level of education – usually a university degree but about one-fourth of the time they have post-graduate degrees. Most have good jobs.” (Wilson 1995: 38)

²²⁷ Incest and race are interlinked not merely in this white middle class domestic ideology but also in a concern with miscegenation. As Mako Yoshikawa points out: “the taboos of incest and interracial sex are in fact two sides of the same coin, with the currency in question being an anxiety about the purity of blood. A horror of miscegenation can therefore trigger a romance with incest. The expression as well as suppression of an anxiety about incest is, indeed, inextricably linked to a fear of miscegenation.” (2002: 361) Incest and miscegenation are also bound up etymologically. According to Werner Sollors, the word “miscegenation” was used “in 1863 (out of Latin *miscere*, ‘to mix,’ and *genus*, ‘race’) by George Wakeman and David Goodman Croly in a political pamphlet published as part of a Democratic dirty trick in the Lincoln reelection campaign” (qtd. in Yoshikawa 2002: 360): the concept was, “and still is, defined in opposition to racial purity, which in its most extreme form is incest” (Yoshikawa 2002: 360). Moreover, the word “incest” is in itself etymologically connected to the notion of racial purity: Sollors also indicates that “[it] derives from Latin *incestus*, ‘(in+castus), or ‘impure, unchaste,’ and specifically applied to unchastity among ‘persons related within the degrees within which marriage is prohibited’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The feminine form of Latin *castus* also became the Portuguese word *casta*, or ‘caste,’ a synonym for race and lineage” (qtd. in Yoshikawa 2002: 373, n. 7). For Yoshikawa, “the possibility of incest shadows every tale of miscegenation,” although “the corollary does not hold true: incest is not always represented in a racially fraught context” (2002: 363).

²²⁸ E. Ann Kaplan points out that trauma as a phenomenon, was “closely linked to the growth of the bourgeois family,” which “became the site for female hysteria (caused partly by that family’s patriarchal and puritanical codes)” (2005: 25).

sence of a supportive context for the verbalization of the trauma” (Wilson 1995: 49).

Physical abuse, on the other hand, has been more or less condoned as part of the white American middle class family ideology and has not generated much concern with its effects (Wilson 1995). Often, however, sexual abuse is continuous with physical abuse (1995: 49). Physical abuse at a young age may set the stage for further traumatization later on should the child be incest-abused. In chronic child abuse cases the child’s identity formation is incomplete, his or her identity remains fragmented and lacks inner representations of responsible caregivers (Herman 1994: 107), and the child is hence more easily re-traumatized. In *A Thousand Acres*, Ginny and Rose had a history of physical abuse before the sexual molestation started. According to Rose, their father beat Ginny and her “routinely”: he whipped them using a strap, slapped their faces, and “exert[ed] all [his] strength” in doing these things (Smiley 2004a: 302). In fact, Rose asserts, “He beat us more than he fucked us” and “[o]thers of them like him” in the community “all accept beating as a way of life” (2004a: 302). *A Thousand Acres*, however, is not the first work in which Smiley writes about family tyrants and domestic violence. In her novel *At Paradise Gate*, the ageing father Ike Robinson once beat his daughter Claire “into a state of absolute silence [...] that lasted for three days,” and “knocked” his daughters Helen and Susanna “across the room,” and also “slapped, pushed, and kicked” his wife Anna (Smiley 1993: 83-84). In contrast to Larry, however, Ike never sexually abuses his children.

According to eighteenth century scholar Ruth Perry, the preoccupation with incest in today’s Euro-American white middle class family originated in late 18th century England when, as she puts it, “the principle of consanguinity came to be replaced by conjugality as the primary principle of kinship” as a result of changes in the “agrarian, market, and then industrial capitalism” (2004: 4, 380). In fact, she found that the development of the middle class family in eighteenth century England coincided with “an increased incidence (or awareness) of incest” (2004: 379), and in a chapter titled “Family Feeling,” Perry elaborates on how the family group became increasingly sexualized and seen as a locus where individuals (read: male) came to expect sexual and other personal fulfillment (2004: 374). This of course resulted in a “weakening of the incest taboo” (2004: 376, n. 8) and increased the spectrum of possible sex partners to include offspring and siblings: fathers and brothers began to view their daughters and sisters not as kin but respectively as paternal and fraternal ownership, as their “sexual property” or “prey” (2004: 376). Drawing attention to Michel Foucault’s redefinitions of the family as an institution that situated sexual abuse away from the individual, Perry concludes that “[t]he ideology of love-in-marriage was sexualizing family rela-

tionships; the seeds of sexuality were planted in the privacy of family life and developed in the hothouse atmosphere of the home” (2004: 375).

This increased awareness of incest found expression in the then popular gothic novel, “a fictional genre whose *raison d’être* is to create and express forebodings of sexual violence” (Perry 2004: 380). Household stories and fear of sexual violation and imprisonment constitute central concerns of the female gothic,²²⁹ characteristic features that the gothic genre shares with fairy tales. In fact, many of the motifs and themes of the gothic derive from folklore, fairy tale, and myth, and a quality of the gothic is its generic mixture; gothic plots often rely on the repetition of old motifs, themes, patterns, plot elements, and conventions belonging to other genres. Modern female writers, such as Margaret Atwood in *The Robber Bride* (1993), often draw on gothic conventions, using them, as they also employ folkloric material and fairy tales, to consider contemporary concerns and issues such as female freedom and to reveal and criticize dominant discourses of gender. In contemporary incest narratives that draw on traditional gothic plot elements, the enclosed space symbolizes entrapment within the patriarchal power structures of the family and/or society and incest is seen as an effect of these, revealed by the gothic conventions themselves.

Laura Miller (1996) correctly perceives that contemporary American, particularly white women, writers such as Smiley draw on gothic conventions to tell incest, “starting with a present that ought to be rosy, but inexplicably isn’t, and eventually unearthing the horrid ‘dark secret’ that twisted everything at the root, all in classic gothic style.”²³⁰ Even a cursory look reveals that Smiley’s novel is con-

²²⁹ As the introduction to this study has made clear, while literary trauma criticism is concerned with literary representations of trauma, like the literary works themselves it also gestures beyond the text to traumatic events and experiences as a reality and a real problem. The metaphorical space that represents patriarchal control in many father-daughter incest stories with a gothic twist is literalized in the real-life case of Elisabeth Fritzl in Amstetten, Austria, that shocked the world in late April 2008. Elisabeth’s father Josef was sentenced to life imprisonment for having locked up his daughter in a dungeon in the cellar between August 1984 and April 2008 during which time he continually raped her and also fathered eight children by her, of which one died soon after birth due to negligence on the part of the father. This case illustrates a tripartite circumscription of the daughter by the father: in rape; in forced pregnancies; and in patrimony whereby the father took possession of the children after they had been born, even adopting three of them. For the case, see, e.g., the BBC News of March 19, 2009, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7371959.stm>.

²³⁰ The other of “America’s two favorite plots” is the rags-to-riches Horatio Alger inspirational associated with the American Dream in the American imagination followed by such writers as Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* (1983) and Sapphire in *Push* (1996): “The heroines of both books scabble up from the emotional rags of abuse to the riches of education, pious sisterhood and economic self-reliance” (Miller 1996). As Kyoko Amano’s essay, “Alger’s Shadows in Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres*” (2005), makes clear, Smiley, too, employs the rags-to-

cerned with gothic tropes; a haunted house, sexually violated women confined therein, dead mothers, people pursued by their past, captives of history as it were, everything connected to the family secret, incest.²³¹ Smiley's novel profoundly resonates with Gothic sensibility, which is characterized by abysmal situations that derive from the fear that what is repressed, hidden, or buried, may at any time return, be revealed, or come alive in a frightfully transformed shape. In this sense, gothic tropes resonate with the haunting return of the repressed in terms of the Freudian "uncanny," which paradoxically is both familiar and estranged to us. Smileyan gothic entails the use of traditional tropes which become evident in situations such as when the repressed is brought to light, but it is also a transgressive narrative, in that it deploys Gothic elements to draw attention to normative institutions in America – particularly patriarchy and capitalism placing familial and private transgressions such as incest at the public level of politics – to reveal that, despite a desire to appear progressive and socially transformed, American society is haunted by fear of incest revelations.²³²

Until recently novels depicting familial sexual abuse have seemed to confirm the white middle-class "not in this house" bias. The first father-daughter incest narratives to be written from the daughter's perspective and appearing in the late 1960s and early 1970s and 1980s were African-American such as Anne Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (1968), Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1983). Also, as Janet Doane and Devon Hodges point out, incest narratives set in economically disadvantaged contexts such as Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992) and Sapphire's *Push* (1996), seemingly "confirm the middle-class expectation that incest is primarily found among the lazy and immoral poor" (2001: 113). In the 1980s and especially 1990s, however, incest narratives in a white middle class milieu written by white middle or upper-

riches Horatio Alger myth in which "male success depends on the suppression of women" for her novel, but subverts it (Amano 2005: 34). Susan Strehle, too, has noted that Larry "takes on the mythic identity of [...] Horatio Alger" (2000: 215).

²³¹ In true gothic fashion there is also a malediction that comes true in Smiley's novel; Lear's curse of Goneril's womb has already been fulfilled when Larry calls Ginny "a dried-up whore bitch" (2004a: 181). In addition, one specific room of the house contains certain memories for Ginny (this is where she abreacts), invoking the claustrophobic tensions of the gothic genre.

²³² Ann-Marie MacDonald's Middle Eastern-Canadian epic family saga *Fall on Your Knees* (1996), too, draws on gothic tropes to tell incest. This gothic tale is structured around the father's incestuous desire and transgression and is populated with demons, curses, haunted houses, and haunted people, linking familiar abuse to gender, sexuality, and race issues such as fear of miscegenation. For an excellent reading of MacDonald's employment of Gothic conventions, see Gabriella Parro's "'Who's Your Father, Dear?'" Haunted Bloodlines and Miscegenation in Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees*" (2005).

middle-class authors started to emerge. Aside from Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, set in white middle class rural America, there are, for instance, Lee Smith's *Black Mountain Breakdown* (1980), Kathryn Harrison's debut novel *Thicker Than Water* (1991), Mary Gaitskill's *Two Girls, Fat and Thin* (1991), Heather Lewis's first novel *House Rules* (1994),²³³ and Karin Cook's debut novel *What Girls Learn* (1997),²³⁴ to mention a few.

Representing incest within a white middle-class context may be fraught with difficulties (Yoshikawa 2002: 363). Although, as a general rule, critics and reviewers initially found Jane Smiley's reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* a success (see, e.g., Carlson 1991; Just: 1991), the novel suffered from a critical "backlash" (Farrell 2001: 69) in the mid-to-late 1990s. Apart from the banning of *A Thousand Acres* mentioned at the beginning of this section, some critics have been critical of its incest theme, notably Katie Roiphe, Laura Shapiro, and Charles Baxter. As a critic of the second-wave feminist movement, Roiphe argues that incest is overly used in today's fiction as an element of plot in the name of a men-are-monsters rhetoric, calling it "a cheap trick" that "works as a kind of bargain-basement epiphany" in Smiley's novel (1995: 68). The essayist and novelist Charles Baxter argues along the same lines, seeing the novel as male-bashing, "The book is about the essential criminality of furtive male desire" (1997: 8), and like Shapiro (1994) and Roiphe (1995) Baxter believes it is also symptomatic of a general victim culture. Janet Todd, too, feels that the incest in Smiley's novel is "a touch too predictable," "[t]oo fashionable, too overworked in fiction, especially when it comes through recovered memory" (1998). For Susan Farrell, the pointed adverse criticism apparently originates in "the initial positive response the book received," and partly "from its feminist content" (2001: 68, 70). As this study has suggested, however, incest forms an integral part of Smiley's source texts and so is not simply her own special design; what is more, the critical backlash answers well to the novel's contemporary climate of contested narratives of so-called recovered memories of incest.²³⁵

The controversy over repression and the veracity of delayed remembering of incest illuminates the importance of fictional narrative in representing trauma, and

²³³ Heather Lewis's *House Rules* is a lesbian novel and thus challenges also the heteronormativity of the white middle class.

²³⁴ Smith's *Black Mountain Breakdown* (1980) and Cook's *What Girls Learn* (1997) represent uncles as abusers, not fathers.

²³⁵ The movie version of *A Thousand Acres* (1997), too, suffered similarly from adverse criticism, sparked by the recovered memory/false memory controversy surrounding incest tellings in the 1990s (Farrell 2001: 79).

raises issues of the basic qualities of memory itself as well as of testimony. Making Ginny the narrator does not exactly lend her the authority or credibility that would give her a specific hearing; not merely because questions are raised concerning bias around first-person narration but also because she has forgotten a part of her past and recalls it in a recovered memory scene. However, Smiley takes us toward the acknowledgment of the instability inherent in any memory and the fact that any reader, too, may be biased or prejudiced and so unreliable. While critics disagree over whether Smiley with her novel engages in the recovered memory/false memory debate or circumvents it – some interpret the novel as Smiley’s taking sides (see, e.g. Luckhurst 1999), and yet others believe her concerns reach beyond it (Leslie 1998; McDermott 2002) – her novel certainly refutes the white middle-class mythology of “not in this house.”

Memory as inheritance and possession are important themes in *A Thousand Acres*, not least because, as Amano puts it, “the story of the family legacy with which [Ginny] is familiar is told only from a male point of view” (2005: 31). It is obvious that history/memory is connected to possession in the novel. While still viewing the family history through Larry’s eyes, Ginny tells us, “Our ownership spread slowly over the landscape, but it spread as inevitably as ink along the threads of a linen napkin,” “[i]t was a satisfying story” (Smiley 2004a: 132). Ginny does not at first have any claim to her own memories or her own story. She views her life through Larry’s patriarchal discourse, thus losing sight of her own past. Gradually, however, she starts to wonder about the women in the family, especially her grandmother Edith, who “was reputed to be a silent woman” and around whom there were “details to mull over” (2004a: 132). Edith did not drive a car and “[p]ossibly she had no money of her own,” a “detail” that “went unrevealed by the stories” (2004a: 133). Ginny “used to wonder [...] if her reputed silence wasn’t due to temperament at all, but due to fear” (2004a: 132-133). The other women, like Edith, did not own anything, but as Farris perceptively notes about Ginny’s mother Ann Rose, “her labors contributed invisibly to the wealth of the farm” (1998: 37). Despite Ginny and Rose having to sign the incorporation papers and contribute to the running of the farm by their housework, which includes the growing and preparation of almost all the food, “they have no say in the farm operation” (1998: 37). Chapter 2 of this study has documented Ginny’s long hours of daily housework, and the novel also conveys that Ginny has staked a claim on a piece of land in the backyard where she, for instance, grows tomatoes, more or less organically,²³⁶ and cans them for the household (see, e.g.,

²³⁶ Ginny tells the reader that she has a real “knack” for growing tomatoes and has developed it “into a fairly ritualized procedure, planting deep in a mixture of peat, bonemeal, and alfalfa

2004a: 50).²³⁷ As historian John Mack Faragher has pointed out, “women’s contribution has always been critical to the success of farming, but labor alone never has conferred power” (2001: 156). History, as we know, is always written by the powerful, and Ginny gradually comes to understand that the women in the family are victims in Larry’s and his forefathers’ success story.

In tandem with Ginny’s political awakening, however, she starts to reformulate her family history from her own personal rather than her father’s perspective and attempts to assert her own point of view. When Larry is caught for driving while intoxicated (DWI), Ginny, probably for the first time ever, makes an attempt to assert her own will and to stand up against him. She warns him that she will take away the keys of his truck if he drives drunk again, and she tells him to go out and work with Ty and Pete instead of just sitting around the house:

It was exhilarating, talking to my father as if he were my child [...] This laying down the law was a marvelous way of talking. It created a whole orderly future within me, a vista of manageable days clicking past, myself in the foreground, large and purposeful. It wasn’t a way of talking that I was used to – possibly I had never talked that way before – but I knew I could get used to it in a heartbeat. (Smiley 2004a: 148)

Larry’s response is that “You girls should listen to me,” and, as she points out: “When my father asserted his point of view, mine vanished. Not even I could remember it” (2004a: 176). Rose believes that Larry’s “stories” are what made it possible for him to control his daughters. She tells Ginny:

if you probe and probe and try to understand, it just holds you back. You start seeing things from his point of view again, and you’re just paralyzed. [...] That was his goddamned hold over me, Ginny! For all those years! He talked. He made me see things from his point of view! He needed someone! He needed me! I looked so good to him! He loved me, my hair, my eyes, my spunk, even, though it made him mad, surely I understood that, too, how he had to get mad at some of the things I did! Ginny, you don’t want to understand it, or imagine it. You don’t you don’t you don’t (2004a: 212)

meal, then setting an old tin can around each plant to hold water and repel cutworms” (Smiley 2004a: 50).

²³⁷ James Schiff accurately notes that “Smiley’s novel fits neatly into Kolodny’s frontier mythology, which demonstrates that the American male traditionally has treated the land in terms of conquest, using violence and aggression if necessary, whereas the female, the American Eve so to speak, dreams of transforming the wilderness by cultivating a modest garden (precisely what the infertile Ginny has been doing in the back yard)” (1998: 378).

Ginny does not yet remember the abuse at this point but her response is that “This did sound strangely like Daddy and cast a reflective credibility backward, over everything else” (2004a: 212).

As Ginny becomes increasingly aware of the suppression of the female version from recognition and the historical erasure of women and their sufferings from Larry’s official record, she also comes to see that his version can only be one perspective, and that the reason why women’s voices were considered illegitimate and their stories excluded from public memory is that these would necessarily oppose the romanticized version of the past from the exploiter’s perspective. David Brauner perceptively points out, “It is precisely the denial of family history that enables Larry to continue to exercise tyrannical control over his children” (2001: 665). Ginny comes to recognize that her mother “had a history,” but that this history is unofficial and “was to be found in her closet” (2004a: 224), a typical symbol for the vagina, as Almila Ozdek notes (2008: 70): “she had gone to high school [...] and one year of college” (Smiley 2004a: 224). Glynis Carr, who reads the role of Ginny as a Persephone figure notes that Ginny finally “comes to believe that both her mother and grandmother were Persephones, too: raped, abused, objectified and exchanged among men” (2000a: 133). However, the novel also shows female resistance to the official version. The annual church potluck supper, where Larry’s friend Harold accuses Ginny and Rose of throwing their father out into the storm, shows how Mary Livingstone, a friend of Ginny’s and Rose’s mother, tries to silence his version of what happened in the Cook family: “Pipe down, Harold Clark. You’re talking through your hat, same as always” (Smiley 2004a: 219), echoing Ginny’s “Maybe you’d better shut up, Harold” a few pages earlier when he tries to convince Ginny that Rose and herself owe their father everything (2004a: 204). “If you’d have been sons, you’d understand that,” he says, “Women don’t understand that” (2004a: 204). Almila Ozdek’s (2008) ecofeminist analysis of *A Thousand Acres* rightly shows how the female voices are silenced in the novel but also how these voices can resist and challenge capitalism and ownership, but she does not specifically discuss the silencing in terms of trauma. Ginny’s narrative, a narrative that resists Larry’s misrepresentation of history, or the told version of his/story in which she initially believed, calls for an interpretation of her/story that pays attention to her socially inscribed identity and to the cultural context in which her trauma is produced and perpetuated. Thus her narrative bears witness not only to the trauma of its origin but also haunts and unmask the repressive ideologies that generated the abuse in the first place.

In addition to the incest theme in the folktales behind *Lear*, Smiley links sexual abuse to the isolated world of farm women in some parts of the world: “I suspected that the structure [of *A Thousand Acres*] could include incest [also] be-

cause in other parts of the world, farmlike isolation has given rise to incest and child abuse” (2001: 162). For Smiley, the father in her novel is the most isolated of all: “He is irascible and unsociable and he has lost his wife. But he has an abundance of daughters. To turn toward them for a distorted sort of intimacy is a natural, though of course not a culturally condoned, thing to do.” (2001: 161) Studies corroborate Smiley’s contention that women and children are at risk in isolated Midwestern farm communities because of their subordinated status. In the 1980s, historian Deborah Fink (1992) interviewed dozens of rural Nebraska women about their lives who told her stories of sexual violation by fathers, brothers, and hired hands, and how they continued to live with their trauma into adulthood. One woman revealed that she had been repeatedly forced to have sex with her father since she reached puberty. Another woman suspected her father-in-law of molesting her daughter and confronted him about it, but he excused himself by saying that the sexual fondling of children on the farm was so common that it was strange that she paid any attention to it. The few cases that were handled in court were probably only a small fraction of the number of real cases and seldom resulted in full prosecution. (Fink 1992: 86)

In a futile effort to regain control of the past and his daughters, Larry, with the help of the youngest daughter Caroline, sues his oldest daughters, ironically enough, for mismanagement or abuse, to get the farm back. The mock trial of Shakespeare’s play is thus rendered as a legal hearing in the novel’s penultimate part where all the daughters are present (Smiley 2004a: 317-326). The struggle for land, where Larry is teamed up with Caroline against Ginny and Rose, is also a battle for the narrative of the past. Larry has effaced his oldest daughters’ rival versions with his preferred one and denied his oldest daughters’ abusive past. For Rose, the dispute over the land is a possibility to finally get some compensation for what they have lost. She feels that because they have suffered undeservedly they are entitled to some “reward”: “We never asked for what you gave us, but maybe it was high time we got some reward for what we gave you” (2004a: 182), she tells their father at the night of the storm.

Although the daughters in *A Thousand Acres* do not go to court with incest allegations, and their father is not indicted for raping them, the hearing does take on the character of a recovered memory trial where allusions to the incest blend in with the legal talk about the corporation, making the hearing symbolically one of validating claims and counterclaims of sexual abuse rather than of abuse of property (in terms of the land) and mismanagement of its assets. Larry himself, too, seems to feel that he is on trial: “I don’t care about going to jail,” he says (Smiley 2004a: 320). In an ironic twist Larry’s version of what happened is destabilized by his memory loss, staged at the hearing itself in which he incoherently rambles about

the youngest daughter being dead, presumably killed by Ginny and Rose: “Those bitches killed my daughter,” he says (2004a: 321). Seeing the fond interaction between Larry and Caroline in the courtroom, Ginny thinks back to one day in Cabot when she overheard Larry talking to Caroline, mixing up in his mind the three daughters and attributing Rose’s velveteen coat and Ginny’s playing at the drainage wells to Caroline:

Couldn’t ever get you to stay away from those drainage wells! Didn’t matter how we punished you or whipped you, pretty soon, you’d be crossing the road and pushing bits of stuff down the holes! It was like a moth to the flame. [...] I tightened down all the bolts. I *knew* the grates could hold three men, but it made me so nervous anyway, I got some U-bolts and went around and bolted ’em all down a second time. Then all I could think about was you crossing the road (2004a: 272).

Remembering that Larry sounded different from his usual resolute self, “[a]ll soft and affectionate,” she wonders whether “there might have been just this fondness, too” “along with all the anger and the will to have his way that Daddy carried to me during those strange lost nights” (2004a: 274, 318). In a futile attempt to set the facts straight Ginny shouts to Larry in the courtroom: “Daddy, it was Rose who had the velveteen coat! [...] It was me who dropped things through the well grates!” (2004a: 321), symbolically indicating that it was Rose and her who had been molested, not Caroline. All heads in the courtroom turn toward her, all except Larry’s. He cannot accept her version. However, as Julie Sanders points out, the fact that Ginny and Rose win the case is a guarantee “that in a legal sense the sisters’ actions are vindicated” (2001: 193).

In addition to covering over the abuse of the women and the land, Larry’s family legend also suppresses a history of transgressions against the indigenous population. By positioning the novel not merely as a trauma narrative depicting Ginny’s individual trauma but also as a sort of a history of conquest,²³⁸ as a reversal of the standard American settler narrative, it is possible to see how the sexual abuse and the land destruction are connected to other forms of exploitations. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s work, Louise Westling remarks that the analogy between woman and land has had a bearing also on the oppression of indigenous peoples because Native Americans are feminized, cast together with women, and thus

²³⁸ As has been suggested by Patricia Nelson Limerick, it makes sense to use the word “conquest” because the word “frontier” suggests coming to live in a more or less unpopulated area which was obviously not the case, since indigenous peoples had lived there for thousands of years before the Europeans arrived and the land should thus be seen as an area of conquest (Flint 2006: 589).

conflated with nature in white patriarchal discourse (1996: 151). The epigraph from Meridel Le Sueur's "The Ancient People and the Newly Come" that opens *A Thousand Acres* as well as references in the novel to the European prairie settlers bespeak the suppressed history of the genocide of Native Americans.²³⁹ Thus the thousand acres are full also with a toxic history of the violent invasion of indigenous people's land, and so Larry's riches are contingent not only on the wrenching of land from his neighbors. Doane and Hodges, too, have perceptively noted about Ginny's father, that his name, Larry Cook, "links him to America's imperialist beginnings through the allusion to Captain Cook" (2001: 73).²⁴⁰ The poisoned water in the ground represents memory, and the filling in and draining of the old wells and potholes was Larry's way of suppressing history.

After teaching a class in world literature at the time she started writing her novel, Smiley realized the problematic relation between the land and agriculture in the US because of the elimination of the indigenous population. The course, which consisted of literature ranging from such works as *Don Quixote* to short stories by Latin American women writers and also involved the reading of Fernand Braudel's *Civilization and Capitalism*, influenced Smiley's own ideas of environmentalism, feminism, and Marxist materialism: "I developed a thought or two about the intrusion of notions of ownership and commodification upon familial and romantic relationships, and a thought or two about the specificity, as opposed to universality, of Western European ideas of family order, of ownership and exploitation of land, resources, and the services of other human beings, of conflict, literary form, ego, power, gender, and the finality of death. [...] While I was teaching this class, I was writing *A Thousand Acres*" (Smiley 1999: 170). Smiley's novel reflects her perception that the deprivation of the Native population and the men-against-nature attitude ultimately prevised the subsequent paternal ownership that

²³⁹ Sinead McDermott, too, points this out and believes that Smiley's novel "also functions obliquely as a critique of the histories of settlement and of the removal of peoples out of which the United States was formed" (2002: 395), and Julie Sanders notes that the text "indicates that below the surface American society is deeply poisoned, not least by that 'originating' act of colonialism" (2001: 205).

²⁴⁰ Critics such as Iska Alter and Neil Nakadate, too, have noted the significance of Smiley's naming in the novel which draws attention to America's colonial "discovery" and settler colonialism (Alter 1999: 155; Nakadate 1999: 162). Names of both main and minor characters as well as place names in *A Thousand Acres* can be linked to European explorers, including Ericson, Lewis, Clark, Livingstone, Amundson, Pike, Zebulon, and Cabot. In addition, as pointed out by Sanders, "Ginny's full name, Virginia, is also evocative of the deliberate feminisation of the land that was 'settled' and 'mastered' by the early modern colonisers of America" (2001: 215, n. 11). What is significant about these allusions is that Smiley emphasizes the connection between the violent "settling" of the nation, with its continuing land destruction, and sexual abuse.

would not only come to characterize America's national identity but which she also links to incest and environmental destruction. Here Smiley engages in the basic ecofeminist tool of intersectional analysis recognizing the interconnectedness of gender and race issues.

In *A Thousand Acres*, the Natives have vanished from the scene and Smiley presents a community which in a way is implicated in the colonization and genocide of indigenous peoples. The only tacit references to settler colonialism make it seem that on the surface Smiley more or less ignores, or is blind to, racial and class issues to the exclusion of gender and environmental ones: there are no racial or class others in *A Thousand Acres*. As Deborah Slicer points out, "Every character in this story is economically secure, not particularly well educated, heterosexual, rural, and white, in fact painfully white in their flatness at times" (1998: 63). However, of course whiteness too is racialized and there are implications of both race and class in father-daughter incest, as was asserted in relation to the memory wars above. Obviously Smiley's treatment of gender and environmental issues is more extensive and much more explicit but the text has more than one layer. US settler colonialism figures in the novel as a subtext to Smiley's dual themes of incest and environmental degradation, as something the text's unconscious contains, only covertly expressed. Smiley most likely expects readers to get what she only hints at implicitly. Drawing attention to the fact that Freud in *Moses and Monotheism* has demonstrated how "the 'latency' phenomenon [...] in the individual may also apply to cultures" (Kaplan 2005: 68), E. Ann Kaplan argues that white Western artists as descendants of imperialism often belatedly address past crimes from a sense of "unconscious guilt" inherited from earlier generations (2005: 107). This seems to be the case with Smiley and *A Thousand Acres*. Smiley does not explicitly tell indigenous peoples' stories, nor does she populate her novel with any Native Americans, but the text demonstrates a wider point of view than that of Ginny's because it alludes indirectly to a past farther back than the American conquest and so obliquely deals with the present relationship to a colonialist past. While Smiley only alludes to the Native population, these textual references powerfully signal that her story takes place precisely at the site where the prairie pioneers "settled," and, as Caruth suggests, an indirect telling of a specific past may provide the more truthful way of communicating that history (1996a: 27). Thus forging a link between domestic abuse and the destruction of land that once was aggressively wrested from the indigenous population, and by extension also – albeit implicitly – her country's white colonialism, Smiley's novel imbricates the politics of private and public, a narrative of domestic abuse with a land abuse and a history of violent conquest to unmask their connection.

Ginny finally comes to view herself within a historical context and to formulate her own story. Where the men in the family have always seen “real history,” as her husband Ty puts it, she tells him how she perceives things differently, “The thing is, I can remember when I saw it all your way,” “[b]ut then I saw what my part really was”: “I see taking what you want because you want it, then making something up that justifies what you did. I see getting others to pay the price, then covering up and forgetting what the price was.” (Smiley 2004a: 342) In this sense, Ginny’s initial amnesia and subsequent recall correspond not only to her own individual experiences and her subsequent awakening but also to a cultural blindness to and a need for recognizing on a wider scale sexual abuse, today’s environmental destruction, and America’s imperialist history. *A Thousand Acres* emphasizes the need to recognize and come to terms with both individual and cultural histories because, as E. Ann Kaplan argues, “trauma conflates or blurs the boundaries between the individual and the collective” (2005: 19). The reader learns to read beyond Larry’s patriarchal discourse to see the damage suffered by the female characters and the land in the novel, to uncover a past that can no more be kept in the dark, a history, Smiley urges, that we must now learn to address because we are all obligated to see the survivors and hear their hitherto illegitimate stories in order to reverse dominant repressive versions of the past.

Despite the banning of *A Thousand Acres* mentioned in the introduction to this section, Smiley’s book continuously sells well: it has been translated into at least nineteen languages, is popular with reading groups and book clubs, and is increasingly placed on college syllabi and reading lists (see Farrell 2001: 79); in a similar vein Ginny’s contested narrative will now occupy a place alongside Larry’s version of the past. Resisting and challenging the prohibition to speak about incest in Larry’s patriarchal discourse by refuting false myths about incest in the white middle-class family, Ginny bears witness to her legacy of pain, unveiling the debts to be paid in her ex-centric narrative, which is perceived from a different angle than Larry’s public version, and one which challenges his for legitimacy. *A Thousand Acres* interlinks the traumatic histories of the daughters with that of the land, and ultimately, with that of the nation itself in terms of the violent and toxic past of American settler culture. Ginny’s recovery of her memory in the novel entails a revision not only of her part in family history but of the repressed history of the land and the nation as well. Smiley’s protagonist provides us with a counter-narrative to her father’s vis-à-vis the past while refraining from arguing for a single truth that is wholly recuperable as she refuses to be forgotten and resists what she initially feared, to disappear “into the black well of time” (Smiley 2004a: 47).

5.4 Suppressed Histories

A Thousand Acres reminds us that memory is linked to place in trauma. The novel uses the notion of a symbolic memory-site as a forceful way of representing the horrific and enduring after-effects of trauma, linking suppressed narratives of the past to the thousand acres of land. The book emphasizes that memory is not limited to pastoral places, but can be produced in relation to other literal sites if it creates a space in the mind for reflection. Although the novel reflects a concern that the application of technology to agriculture has destroyed the thousand acres and so the symbolic function of the land, nevertheless, even areas such as drainage wells are turned into sites of memory that effectively demonstrate the connection between place, memory, and narrative in the novel. But while the traditional conflation of woman and nature – emphasized in the old Western creation narrative, “The Creation of Vegetation by the Mother Goddess,” with which this chapter began – problematizes the representation of trauma and memory in relation to geographical space, rather than reproducing stereotypes that reinforce the woman-land trope, *A Thousand Acres* emphasizes that the exploitation of the women in the novel and the land are linked by the same suppressive discourse of mastery.

Smiley’s novel unveils the consequences of both social and environmental exploitation by forging a connection between gendered violence and environmental destruction, emphasizing also that these are intertwined with US settler colonialism. To Susan Strehle’s “[i]ndeed, the tragedy in *A Thousand Acres* [...] fall[s] [...] to the daughters and the nation” (2000: 215), can be added, that it also falls to the land. *A Thousand Acres* links the politics of private and public, a narrative of domestic abuse with a tale of land destruction, and a history of colonial conquest to unmask their connection. Staging its after-effects as something that needs to be recognized and responded to, the narrative depicts the survivor-protagonist becoming aware of how her pain is related to the suffering of the land and America’s violent past. Thus the book’s depiction of incest abuse is linked to other tragic events which have undergone cultural suppression urging the reader to acknowledge, name, and take part of the oldest daughter’s imbricated inheritance of sexual abuse and land abuse as well as the painful history of nation building of the United States themselves. Underscoring the effects of these practices by exposing the cost to be paid may allow for a more effective critique of the repressive ideologies behind them. As Deborah Horvitz has astutely observed, “That a fictional character may remain unaware of either the political or psychological dimension of her or his trauma does not impede a literary critic from recognizing such a meaning.” (2000: 4) Apart from demonstrating that Smiley’s novel contributes significantly to the discussions of American literature and psychic trauma, this chapter attempts to emphasize also the importance of addressing the

consequences of both social and environmental exploitation. Repossessed suppressed histories may be contested but their repossession also challenges the official versions of the past as well as resists disappearance. While a literary work or its criticism cannot prevent horrific actions and experiences from happening it can accomplish a possibility of change in our thinking.

While this chapter has emphasized a spatial aspect to reading trauma linking landscape, memory, and narrative, the following chapter will set out to explore the representation of trauma as relived in and told through the body, traumatized and poisoned by the same system of mastery.

6 TRAUMA AND THE CORPOREAL

Whereas the previous chapter has emphasized that the “nature” of trauma may dissolve the borders between the mind and its environment in representation, this chapter will explore the rendition of traumatic experience and its aftermath through the figure of the body in relation to the landscape. Trauma invokes, as it shatters, the body/mind binary. It alienates the survivor from his or her body, foreignizes it as it were. But while it severs this relationship, the body and the mind also paradoxically become inseparable in the sense that the same post traumatic symptoms are belatedly played out simultaneously in and through both the space of the body and the space of the mind. The boundaries between the psychic and the physical break down when memories can be located in the body. Citing feminist philosopher (and survivor of a violent rape attack) Susan J. Brison, Brenda Daly says, “If memories are lodged in the body, the Lockean distinction between the memory criterion and that of bodily identity no longer applies” (qtd. in Daly 2007: 143-144). PTSD symptoms such as hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, and sleeping difficulties “resist categorization as either mental or physical” (Daly 2007: 143). In addition, many forms of psychological wounding such as sexual abuse and rape are also physical or bodily traumas, violating bodily integrity, and can thus be seen as an invasion of both the space of the psyche and the space of the body.

As chapter 5 has demonstrated, Jane Smiley in *A Thousand Acres* explicitly links the abuse of the women’s bodies with that of the earth body, their past with the history of the land, forging a connection between domestic violence and land destruction. Drawing on contemporary trauma theory on the body and to some extent also on ecocriticism, this chapter explores the relationship between trauma and corporeality in Smiley’s story where the bodily space of violation is mapped in relation to the toxic body of land; the protagonist’s doubly erased body – turned foreign by trauma and through being poisoned – paradoxically proves an effective means by which it is possible to “unearth” a both painful and toxic past and can thus be read as a historical testimony. The physical return and witnessing of the repressed and poisoned female body through its very concreteness refutes unreliability and thus cannot be contested as easily as a past related solely in narrative form.

6.1 Theorizing “Foreign Bodies”

From his early works onward, Freud not only theorizes psychic trauma along corporeal lines, but also believes that there is a physical side to this psychological phenomenon. In *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), written with Joseph Breuer, he uses the simile of a “foreign body” (*Fremdkörper*) to describe isolated traumatic memories disconnected from ordinary recall: “We must presume rather that the psychical trauma – or more precisely the memory of the trauma – acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work” (2001: 6). The “foreign body” here refers to a space in the mind in trauma, but in the same book, Freud also links psychic trauma to physiological phenomena in the form of “cathexis” (*Besetzung*), which refers to the charge of energy in the mental apparatus. “Cathexis” constitutes the basis of the “cathartic method,” outlined in the *Studies*, by which the patients’ affective symptoms disappear once they have been abreacted and verbalized in therapy (2001: 6). Closely tied to Freud’s idea of “cathexis” is his notion of the “principle of constancy,” expounded in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920), which describes the effort to keep the charge of energy in the mental apparatus constant.²⁴¹ In this context, Freud also blurs the boundaries between the mind and the body by theorizing the physiological nature of memory in what he calls the Pcpt.-Cs, the perceptual system of consciousness (2003b: 63). For Freud, this system functions as a defensive barrier against stimuli from the outside, filtering some through and preventing others from coming through. In trauma, excitations from outside break through this protective layer if the mind has been unable to prepare itself in advance, if the system remains “unprimed” as it were (2003b: 71). In other words, an event is experienced as traumatic only if the mind cannot prepare for it in ad-

²⁴¹ A paragraph written on this principle by Freud in “Preliminary Communications” is missing from the *Studies*, but Freud had hinted at this theory in writings from the early 1890s and had mentioned it under the name of the “theory of constancy” in Draft D, enclosed with a letter to Fliess in 1894, and he developed it further in Part I, Section 2 of his posthumously published “Project for a Scientific Psychology” (1950 [1895]), where it is termed “the principle of (neuronal) inertia” (Freud and Breuer 2001: xiv, xix, xxiv, 197, n. 1). Breuer discusses the theory in *Studies on Hysteria* (see Freud and Breuer 2001: 197ff). The first public enunciation of the theory by Freud himself to appear in his lifetime is found in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920) where it is viewed as inextricably linked to the “conservative” or economic nature of the drives and “the pleasure principle,” which are all seen as subordinate to “the principle of constancy” (see Freud and Breuer 2001: xix-xxi, 197, n. 1). As the editor of the *Studies* rightly observes, “The ‘conservative’ character which Freud attributes to the instincts in his later works, and ‘the compulsion to repeat’, are also seen [...] to be manifestations of the principle of constancy; and it becomes clear that the hypothesis on which these early *Studies on Hysteria* were based was still being regarded as fundamental in his very latest speculations” (Freud and Breuer 2001: xxi).

vance either because the event is unanticipated or goes beyond the mind's efforts to cope with it. The compulsion to repeat, he argues, is a function that retrospectively seeks to master the stimuli by producing the fright or anxiety that was absent in the first place, and, thus allowed the breach in the protective wall that caused the trauma. Repetition functions to maintain the excitation in the mental apparatus in a state of equilibrium, which in turn will allow for mastery. While for Cathy Caruth, Freud's "emphasis is on time rather than quantity, which ultimately, it could then be argued, marks the difference between the nature of bodily and mental barriers" (Caruth 1996a: 132, n. 7), to Freud, psychic phenomena actually blur the mind/body dichotomy.

Like Freud, Caruth, too, relies on bodily images to describe the mind's reactions to trauma, but unlike Freud's theories, hers lack a physiological basis. In her introduction to *Unclaimed Experience*, entitled "The Wound and the Voice," Caruth reads Freud's interpretation in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" of the two scenes from Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* which describe the hero Tasso's dual slaying of his beloved Clorinda, emphasizing the blow to the tree as a model for reading psychic trauma, "as the story of the emergence of the meaning of trauma from its bodily referent to its psychic extension" (1996a: 116, n. 8). Caruth's focus on the mind and the voice that cries out to the exclusion of the body has attracted criticism from trauma scholars such as Kathryn Robson (2004) and Laura Di Prete (2006), who both draw on Freud's corporeal or physical metaphors to describe trauma, and who have sought to reconsider the relationship between trauma and the body to construct new approaches of reading the articulation of psychic trauma in literature. These two readers have criticized Caruth's interpretation of Tasso's scenes, arguing that her blind spot lies in her failure to address the relation between body and mind and to recognize the indivisibility of voice and body in traumatic discourse, respectively. Robson, critical of what she views as Caruth's oversight in failing to reconsider the mind-body relation in trauma and its representation, explores bodily images that refer to psychological wounding in both literature and theory, emphasizing that "Tancred's *psychic* wounds are figured through Clorinda's *bodily* wounds," and that this points to a complex relation between the body and the mind (2004: 31, n. 2, italics in original). While Di Prete agrees with Caruth's emphasis on the voice and the demand for a listener, she is in some disagreement with her about the relation between the body and the voice; arguing for the inseparability of the two, she reads Tasso's story in conjunction with Freud's notion of the "foreign body," illustrating that the voice, which in Caruth's interpretation is "released *through the wound*" (Caruth 1996a: 2, italics in original), is "a voice released through an unfamiliar, unrecognizable 'foreign body'" (Di Prete 2006: 10). In other words, the unspeak-

able is articulated or told through the body as well as through the voice, and so it is not only the latter that haunts Tancredi but also Clorinda's misrecognized body.

The relation of mind and body has regained focus in contemporary trauma studies. In the scientific discourse this is visible in Bessel van der Kolk's work: trauma he notes "seems to affect people on multiple levels of biological functioning" (1996: 215).²⁴² In fact, traumatic memory itself is seen as mainly corporeal: the nonverbal memory of traumatic experience produces a mark of the event on the brain as a neural pathway (see, e.g., van der Kolk and Lisa Fisler 1995; van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995). In this way the experience is inscribed in its literality both in and on the body. The PTSD diagnosis helps us understand the link between soma and mind in trauma; traumatic stress shapes both biology/physiology and personality (van der Kolk and McFarlane 1996: 4). Painful memories may be banished from the mind through defensive dissociation, but the effects of the traumatic experience continue to make themselves felt in the body (Herman 1994: 108). Roberta Culbertson calls the perceptual and sensory or physical knowledge of the traumatic experience "body memories," arguing that telling the story of trauma is complicated by what it entails to narrate that which is "not known in words, but in the body" (1995: 174, 170). In other words, sense memories that have not cognitively been registered but are instead stored within the body are necessarily involved in narratives of trauma.

Contemporary literary discourses on trauma underscore the body as a medium for representing trauma in fiction. According to Laurie Vickroy, "the visceral qualities of [trauma] fiction [...] not only make the prose memorable to readers but also immerse them in the bodily lives of the characters, helping to create a situation of intimacy between text and reader" (2002: 223). Emphasizing that writers of literary trauma can use characters' bodies to show how the trauma is not available for ordinary memory but is remembered instead through the body, in terms of bodily suffering of various kinds, Vickroy and Laura Di Prete suggest that in this way trauma fiction not only exposes and rejects but also interrogates and subverts culturally-inscribed identities of inferiority contingent on Western binary logic (Di Prete 2006: 12, 16, 18, 19; Vickroy 2002: 10). Readers of trauma fiction, then, must learn to decipher these bodily signs.

Thus the body, marked by ideologies that often legitimize violence and abuse, today reinforces the key trope voice in telling the untellable in discourses of

²⁴² For a discussion of the bodily effects of trauma, see, e.g., van der Kolk's "The Body Keeps the Score: Approaches to the Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" (1996).

trauma, and these corporeal notions further fortify the connection between contemporary trauma theory and green studies, a link which is central to this present study. Ecocritic Gretchen Legler has found that, because gendered bodies to a large extent are eliminated in American nature writing, “the politically potent raced, classed and sexed body is erased along with the marked body of the author/writer” (1998: 72). The nature thus constructed is “raceless (white), genderless (male), sexless (heterosexual) and classless (middle class),” rendering bodies marked by gender, class, race, or sex “foreign” (1998: 72, 75). In *A Thousand Acres* the protagonist’s body is doubly marked and doubly erased, marked and elided by trauma and, in the landscape as well, a “foreign body.” Smiley reads its absence as resulting from patriarchal ideologies that promote and perpetuate the abuse of women and the exploitation of the natural world. The presence of the violated and poisoned real body is linked in the novel to the foreign body of the mind in the sense that the psychic foreign body signals the material body’s absence. However, the body also becomes a vehicle for remembering the abuse that the mind has forgotten. The estrangement of the figure of the foreign body echoes not only Ginny’s dissociative split between her mind and her body but also the alienation of the human body from the natural world. Paradoxically, however, when constructed foreign by the trauma and in the landscape by the poisons the erased body becomes visible.

6.2 “The body repeats the landscape”: Re-Membering the Body Traumatic

Whereas criticism of Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* often bespeaks the notion of voice, that the narrator/protagonist in the end finds a voice to tell her own hitherto untold story (Carden 1997; Nakadate 1999; Olson 1998; Strehle 2000; Amano 2005), the body has received less attention. This reading positions the novel also as something Laura Di Prete (2006) terms “corporeal narratives” (2006: 19), trauma narratives that use the body as its chief figure in representing trauma and its aftermath: in corporeal trauma narratives, the body, which is “turned foreign, alien, and unfamiliar as the result of traumatic experience” paradoxically “becomes the vehicle through which trauma is told and, possibly, worked through” (Di Prete 2006: 2). But Smiley’s novel, in its concern with material/physical toxicity – emphasizing the nature of the harmful chemical substances, how they enter into bodily tissues, and their belated effects – and the gendered aspects of it, is also an environmental justice text belonging to the literature of environmental justice, or “the literature of toxicity,” as Terrell Dixon calls it (Adamson, Evans,

and Stein 2002: 19). The trauma and the poisoning in Smiley's novel are both gendered. In Smiley's novel, the incestuous abuse of the daughters and the resulting trauma is linked with the pollution and destruction of the land where aggressive farming destroys natural habitats for animal bodies and generates invisible toxins that seep into the well water, poisoning the bodies of Ginny and Rose and other women in the county.

The connection between the land and the body as well as the gendered dimension of the pollution in the novel has generated a good deal of critical comment (see, e.g., Strehle 2000: 217; Sanders 2001: 211), especially, but not surprisingly, among ecocritics/ecofeminist critics (see Slicer 1998: 63; Carr 2000b: 124), and other critics have also observed how the novel interlaces such mental poisons as incest with potentially hazardous farm chemicals (see, for instance, Mathieson 1999: 137; Nakadate 1999: 170; Sanders 2001: 212; Farrell 2001: 42). In a 1991 Iowa Humanities Lecture, Smiley herself links metaphysical evil to toxic exposure as she relates how she feels about poisonous chemicals finding their way into human breast milk: "Without my having bought [toxic chemicals], I now have possession of them. They have come to me by secret paths – through the air and the water and the food chain": she adds that "this contamination above all things strikes me as a metaphor for evil" (qtd. in Nakadate 1999: 167). In her novel, it is precisely the reproductive organs of the female bodies that prove especially vulnerable to, or powerless against, the exposure of potentially harmful agricultural chemical substances.

This study suggests that in *A Thousand Acres*, invisible toxic contaminants causing miscarriages and cancer in the female characters are connected to the traumatic memory of incest also in that they similarly occasion a return of the repressed on a physical level. Both the trauma and the poisonous chemicals leave traces that are stored as "foreign bodies" in the women's material bodies – which are in turn turned foreign by trauma and the harmful chemical exposure – and internally revived on a second occasion as trauma and cancer or sterility, appearing as symbols of the stored-away unclaimed experiences and toxins. In other words, the notion of trauma acts as a powerful symbolic vis-à-vis toxicity, and vice versa.

An epigraph from Meridel Le Sueur's "The Ancient People and the Newly Come" opens Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*: "The body repeats the landscape. They are the source of each other and create each other" (Smiley 2004a [n.p.]; Le Sueur 1982: 39). The novel bodies forth and parallels the psychic return of the repressed memory of sexual abuse with the physical return of the invisible farm chemicals that for a long time have been interred in the earth and found their way

into and making devastating and even fatal blows at the female bodies. As Glynis Carr chalks up the pertinent connections between the poisoned land and the poisoned female bodies, between the physical and the mental poisons, “This ‘injured’ landscape is the one that the bodies of Smiley’s female characters ‘repeat,’ becoming contaminated by toxic meanings [...] as much as by pesticides” (2000b: 124). For Ginny, discovering her past entails unveiling the trauma and the toxins through her body as well. Even if the mind wants to forget, the body remembers the traumatic crisis which leaves no visible physical scars. Similarly, the largely invisible chemical farm poisons remain permanently lodged within Ginny’s and her sister Rose’s bodies. Smiley suggests that the body knows the truth of the traumatic experience before it can be registered by the mind. A body that knows this truth, however, is a foreign body because it has been suppressed by the trauma. Smiley also suggests that, in a similar vein, the female bodies have been erased from the landscape by certain farming practices. James Schiff deftly observes that the poisoned land in Smiley’s novel in part corresponds to the gods and the wheel of fortune in *Lear*: “Chemicals have replaced the gods, becoming the invisible and mysterious forces that influence our fate” (Schiff 1998: 378). To Schiff’s contention it can be added that trauma, too, has replaced the Shakespearean gods because poison and trauma symbolize each other in the novel. In fact, trauma and toxicity constitute two connected strands of the plot: physical or material poisons merge with the toxins of trauma. Like the trauma, the long-buried poisonous chemicals emerge as a disruption of the symbolic order, evoking the uncanny Lacanian real in a haunting return of the repressed. As trauma’s physical equivalent, the toxic substances cannot simply be thought of as a motif, but rather as a trope for the dissolving borders between the body and its environment, between the psychic and the physical, and between the public domain and private space.

From the very beginning, Smiley clearly marks in her text the way that the older sisters’ trauma in a corporeal sense is intertwined with the poisoning of the land. Ginny tells the reader in the beginning that her sister Rose, thirty-four at the time, last Valentine’s Day has been diagnosed with breast cancer, and that she has since had a mastectomy and ensuing chemotherapy (Smiley 2004a: 7). Simultaneously, she relates that she herself has had more than one miscarriage (2004a: 8). At this time, the cause is unknown and the sexual abuse forgotten. At other points in the novel, the reader finds out that other women, too, one after the other, have died young. Ginny’s grandmother Edith died at forty-three, apparently of cancer, Ginny’s mother Ann Rose and Jess’s mother Verna Clark died in their early for-

ties respectively of breast cancer and lymphatic cancer which started out as breast cancer.²⁴³ Rose dies at thirty-seven from a recurrence of breast cancer, and Ginny herself, the reader finds out, has suffered numerous miscarriages.²⁴⁴ Smiley suggests here that the hazardous farm chemicals are in various ways encoded upon the female bodies in the novel: it is the women who pay the consequences with their bodies, as their bodily tissues are specifically exposed, invaded, and affected by the overuse of chemical farm poisons. In this sense, “The terrors of the earth” (2.2. 456) invoked by Lear over his daughters are (hu)man-made, and the novel amounts to what Lawrence Buell calls an “environmental illness narrative” (2005: 119). However, the connections are more complex in that *A Thousand Acres* is also a trauma narrative of father-daughter incest. The poisoned bodies of Ginny and Rose have also been targets for sexual abuse.²⁴⁵ In other words, the two sisters are the subject of both human and non-human toxic agents as the women (and children) in the novel are targets for toxic exposure and at greater risk than men as the overuse of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides poison their reproductive organs and thereby establishes a link to the past incest.

In fact, cancer in the novel links concerns of environmental justice with ecofeminist issues. As Sandra Steingraber points out, breast cancer is a gendered issue because of the known connection between this form of cancer and the environ-

²⁴³ Caroline Cakebread accurately points out that “*A Thousand Acres* creates a *Lear*-like world in which the mother is present only in the Iowan soil – not in the home, but in the cemetery” (1999: 96). This study suggests that the dead mothers’ buried bodies also produce a fairy-tale-like world such as in the “Thousandfurs” tale and “Cinderella,” where the absent mother is present only in her grave.

²⁴⁴ Smiley relates in her “Shakespeare on Iceland” essay how, when she moved to Iowa with her then partner she had misgivings regarding the drinking water: “My absolutely first ecological concern when I got to Iowa was to wonder, as a result of reading Barry Commoner’s *The Closing Circle*, whether the well water on the farm we were renting was contaminated with nitrates, and whether, if I got pregnant, I would be able to carry the baby to term.” (Smiley 1999: 170)

²⁴⁵ Smiley’s theory about the association of environmental chemicals with cancer has been corroborated to a degree. As historian John Mack Faragher points out: “In laboratory tests the chemicals in agricultural runoff have been identified as carcinogens” some of which “are ‘endocrine disrupters’ – compounds that when broken down by the body mimic human hormones such as estrogen, greatly increasing the risk of breast cancer in adult women.” Although “[t]he epidemiological data are not yet sufficient to allow scientists to make firm connections between incidents of cancer and the agricultural pollution of groundwater,” one 1994 study indicates that “many rural Corn Belt communities suffer with drinking water supplies heavily contaminated by chemical runoff and face cancer risks 10 to 116 times the federal benchmark of acceptability” (2001: 151). According to Kyoko Amano, “Larry Cook must have known of the danger from his farming magazines, yet he withheld the information from his daughters, apparently choosing to continue using the fertilizer to promote his own success” (2005: 32). A somewhat different picture now emerges: if the poisoning is made with full knowledge of its consequences, Larry’s crimes seem even crueller.

ment, and also because it is an under-researched area and because women's bodies react to certain carcinogens differently than men's bodies do (Tarter 2002: 223).²⁴⁶ Moreover, it is a feminist issue also because, in Steingraber's words: "the parts of women's bodies that have been affected – our ovaries, our uterus, our breasts – are the parts of the body that have been despised, objectified, fetishized" (qtd. in Tarter 2002: 222), and, one can add, often abused. Smiley's choice of location for her story, a white middle class family in a Midwestern small town, points to a social class that has seen itself as more or less immune from those environmental hazards that affect other social groups, and although, in general, that class has been protected from the worst effects of industrialization (Reed 2002: 151), women are sometimes more at risk than men. As it is the privilege of the white middle class to deny, cover up, and project incest elsewhere, as was discussed in the previous chapter, it is also the prerogative of white society to cover up different forms of toxicity that poison not merely the land but women and racial others, too.

Larry's malediction on his oldest daughter, "You'll never have children, Ginny, you haven't got a hope" (Smiley 2004a: 183) not only echoes Lear's "Into her womb convey sterility. / Dry up in her the organs of increase" (1.4.257-258), but literalizes it, too.²⁴⁷ Ginny's body refuses to sustain her husband Ty's seeds, and in line with the male-empowered culture in Zebulon county that views women's reproductive process as subject to and under male control, Ty does not want them to try and have any more children after the third miscarriage (Smiley 2004a: 26). Her natural, biological body emerges as a colonized territory by both father and husband. However, Ginny secretly resists Ty's command and goes ahead and has two more miscarriages, burying her nightgown and some underwear with the stains outside the house under the dirt floor of the old dairy barn (2004a: 26). The bloody bundle that Ty finds six months later, after excavating the floor in the old barn when expanding the hog operation of the farm, represents the violence where incestuous abuse and land abuse meet. The blood here serves as a trope for the

²⁴⁶ Jim Tarter links Steingraber's environmental justice text, *Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment* (1997) – an argument about the environmental causes of cancer foregrounding her own personal experience – to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, reminding us that it is now a known fact that Carson herself suffered from breast cancer at the time she wrote *Silent Spring*, and she died of it in 1964, two years after the publishing of her book. Although she kept her illness a secret and only focused one chapter of her work on cancer, in retrospect, it becomes obvious that it indeed forms the basis of the book's thesis about the risks of pesticide use. (2002: 215)

²⁴⁷ As pointed out by Sarah Appleton Aguiar, "the malice of Larry Cook's curse carries a doubly horrific significance because Rose is in remission from a cancer that has taken one of her breasts and Ginny has suffered numerous miscarriages" (2001: 96).

vicious destruction of the female powers of reproductivity and also a possible loss of the future. The future is lost when babies do not survive; there is no child to perpetuate memory from one generation to the next. In addition, one significant link to the natural world is lost, too.

Nor are the men in the novel immune to the consequences of poisoning the landscape on which they too depend. There are indications that Larry's madness after the disposition of the farm can be attributed to toxic exposure. On the night of the storm, Rose says to Larry after he has verbally abused Ginny, "This has got to be senility talking, or Alzheimer's or something" (Smiley 2004a: 181). Then she talks to Ginny and asks her if she remembers "that guy who used to pilot the spray plane when Daddy was having the crops sprayed from the air," who "supposedly got very crazy as he got older" (2004a: 186-187). Tim Keppel believes that the "poisoning and its ramifications [...] destroys them all" in the novel, women and men: in addition to Rose's death from cancer, "Harold Clark is blinded by a chemical fertilizer. Rose's husband, Pete, implicated in the blinding, consumes a toxic quantity of alcohol and drives into the quarry." (1995: 113) Ecofeminist scholar Deborah Slicer correctly suggests about the men's "destructive uses of" and "tragic relationships with" water that "The reader gets the impression that a certain hubris, a refusal to acknowledge certain limits, is punished, or, put in more neutral terms, is consequential" (1998: 65). Smiley here seems to indicate that there are costs to be paid by the farmers themselves for the overuse of agricultural chemicals.

The connection between the trauma and the material poisons is also clearly visible in Ginny's attempted soricide and Rose's death from cancer, whereby psychic toxins are literalized to show the connection with material ones. After Rose "steals" Ginny's lover Jess from her, Ginny hopes the water hemlock²⁴⁸ with which she cans the pork liver sausage and sauerkraut for Rose's body will counteract the effects of her psychic poison, or rid herself of the toxic energy of the trauma of both her father's and Rose's/Jess's betrayals. Catherine Cowen Olson (1998) has noted that Smiley has carefully chosen the ingredients of Ginny's toxic cocktail in terms of their symbolism. The water hemlock, an herb which grows wild in Iowa, suggests Ginny's connection with the natural world rather than with the human-made insecticides used by her father and husband; the pork most obviously invokes filth, but in this case, Olson notes, is interpreted as linked to

²⁴⁸ The hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) "that grow / In our sustaining corn" and which is among the plants with which Lear is crowned (4.3.4-6) offers a powerful anaesthesia and is translated in the novel into the lethal water hemlock (*Cicuta virosa*), native to the swampy Iowan prairies.

Ginny's feelings of defilement because of the sexual assaults (1998: 29-30). Pigs are also sometimes associated with lust – “and what could be more lustful or ego-tistical than Rose's knowingly committing adultery with her sister's paramour?” – whereas liver, in addition to acting as a filter system for poisons – “only in this case Ginny's sausages represent family poisons like incest, greed, jealousy, and emotional manipulation” – also connotes gall and bile as well as sexual passion (1998: 30). What Olson fails to observe, however, is that the greed, lust, jealousy, and emotional manipulation, are all linked to Larry's incestuous abuse of his daughters as chapter 3 of this study has shown.

Becoming a vegetarian under the influence of Jess saves Rose from eating the canned sausages that her older sister prepares for her, but cancer kills her instead. When Ginny tells Rose on her deathbed about the lethal concoction, Rose's reply is: “I guess I think if you'd really wanted to kill me, you would have shot me or something. Ty had a shotgun. So did Daddy and so did Pete. Anyway, you didn't have to bother. All that well water we drank did the trick.” (Smiley 2004a: 355) As Neil Nakadate aptly puts it, “Not only is Ginny's poisoned sausage a too-clever home-made time bomb that she may not really wish to go off, it is, in the face of so much invasive chemistry, simply redundant” (1999: 166-167). Among other things, it is possible to interpret Ginny's sausage as “an exorcism and objectification of the emotional poison of incest that impinges on the present and future; and an effort to manipulate a natural world (specifically the water hemlock) that now seems more fatal than fertile” (Nakadate 1999: 178). In this case the phallic sausages which here refer to Larry (and Jess) metonymically can be seen as representing both the trauma of incestuous assaults in the two sisters' past and the material poisons which have adversely affected their bodies. When the farm in the end after Rose's death is split up between Ginny and Caroline, the canned sausages are all Ginny is left with, and, as she rinses them down the drain, with them go also mental poisons of her father taking her virginity.

Rose's cancer and the attempted soricide demonstrate not only the link between the physical and the psychical in the novel but also their connection to the dual nature of chemical products as medicinal and toxic and their relation to emotional poisons. The drug of choice for Rose is anger: “The more pissed off I am, the better I feel” (Smiley 2004a: 192), she says. She tells Ginny: “Sometimes I hate him. Sometimes waves of hatred just roll through me, and I want him to die, and go to hell and stay there forever, just roasting!” (2004a: 150). On her deathbed, she urges Ginny too, to share in her anger: “We're not going to be sad. We're going to be angry until we die. It's the only hope” (2004a: 354). While she did not “get Daddy to know what he had done, or what it meant” (2004a: 355), her “sole, solitary, lonely accomplishment” is that she “saw without being afraid and with-

out turning away” (2004a: 356, 355). At the novel’s beginning, Rose was in remission from cancer, healed by the drugs she was given during chemotherapy. Now that the cancer has returned and spread, chemotherapy is supposed to heal her body again. This time the therapies fail. Some readers even suggest that Rose dies from the *emotional* poisons of her anger and hatred rather than from the material chemicals which might have caused her cancer. Barbara Sheldon suggests that, because Rose is “hard, unforgiving, and full of hatred,” she “cannot survive”: “the emotional and physical harm she has suffered through her father and the hatred she subsequently developed have crushed her [...]. Her death is a symbol of her defeat at the hands of her father” (1997: 55, 46). Similarly, many of Slicer’s students suggest that, although Rose dies from cancer, her “anger [...] destroyed her body,” which, as Slicer points out is “an especially grim thought, indicating that her father literally gripped her body to death” (Slicer 1998: 68).

Smiley repeatedly references the attitudes and practices that link the violation of the body of earth with that of women’s and animal bodies in the novel. Slicer puts it precisely: her “association of women’s bodies, animals’ bodies, and the land – “matter” – all similarly inscribed by a masculine gaze and by the literal force of male bodies, is deliberate and obvious” (1998: 63). The ecophobic²⁴⁹ and misogynistic Larry has succeeded in erasing women’s marked bodies in his thousand-acre-farmland, filling in, draining, and poisoning the old wells and potholes where the female characters used to swim and play. In a similar manner, he more or less exterminates the animals he fears and/or cannot use and exploit in his farm operation. Jody Emel and Julie Urbanik stress that as women’s labor remains private and unacknowledged, so also do “animals’ labor, sacrifice, and bodily contribution to the economy” (2005: 447). Larry laughs at their neighbors Cal and Elizabeth Ericson, who had what Ginny calls “a petting zoo” with sheep, hogs, beef cattle, ponies, dogs, chickens, geese, turkeys, goats, gerbils, guinea pigs, cats, parakeets, a parrot, and who kept cows “because they like them,” as he puts it (Smiley 2004a: 43, 44). “Daddy killed animals in the fields every year,” Rose says (2004a: 235). Obviously so did Harold; Rose tells Ginny something Jess told her of a time when Harold “was driving the cornpicker [...] and there was a fawn lying in the corn, and Harold drove right over it rather than leave the row standing, or turn, or even just stop and chase it away,” and then “[a]fter he drove over it, he didn’t stop to kill it, either. He just let it die” (2004a: 234). In the first few pages of the book, Ginny spots a flock of pelicans that are native to the region but which have largely become extinct: “I hadn’t seen even one since the early six-

²⁴⁹ See chapter 5 on this term.

ties,” she says (2004a: 9). Like the female bodies, animals, too, have been erased in the landscape.

There are rich significations of ecological collapse, cannibalism, and incest in Smiley’s use of pelicans, imagery that also harks back to Shakespeare. Like the women in the novel, the pelicans are victims of agricultural practices of drainage, and like the fawn, they represent animals which cannot be used by human beings in the name of Western progress and so have been erased, ultimately signalling human dominance over the animal kingdom. In other words, the extinction of birds is clearly intended to recall the obliteration of women in the landscape and vice versa. Julie Sanders astutely notes that “the images of this novel are doubly weighted, fraught with early modern and modern significances” (2001: 211): the pelicans in *A Thousand Acres*, whereby Smiley signifies Lear’s allusion to the moral of loving one’s children too much – found in early modern theories such as that from an emblem collection by Geoffrey Whitney’s 1586 *Choice of Emblemes*, where the mother-pelican feeds her brood by unselfishly sacrificing herself, “The Pelican, for to reuiue her younge, / Doth pierce her breast, and geue them of her blood” (qtd. in Sanders 2001: 209) – “have an emblematic significance within *Lear* that serves to remind us that land and family are two sides of the same coin in Smiley’s narrative” (2001: 208). Larry has conquered and claimed the bodies of his daughters, especially the uterus and reproductive process, as his own territory subject to his rule, which is clear both from the poisoning and from the sexual abuse.

Marina Leslie, for her part, observes that the novel’s “metaphor of incorporation serves to reverse the play’s persistent imagery of cannibalism associated with Lear’s ‘pelican daughters’ (3.4.73)” (1998: 37): while Goneril and Regan are in the play, attributed with “boarish fangs” (3.7.59) with which they are imagined to devour their father’s “anointed flesh,” “the aggressive images of cannibalistic incorporation suggest not only the self-destructive impulses of an impotent father, but also patriarchy’s self-serving appropriation of women as property” (1998: 38). Leslie puts it precisely when she argues that, the incorporation “performs a grotesque literalization of Cook’s annexation of his two older daughters” (1998: 36).²⁵⁰ The causal connection between the disposition of the acres into a corporation on the one hand, and the female bodies on the other, is visible in the play on

²⁵⁰ The eating of human flesh is of course also a metaphor for incest in *Pericles*, where the infringed physical boundaries of Antiochus’s daughter are depicted through the language of cannibalism (“I am no viper, yet I feed / On mother’s flesh which did me breed”) (1.1.107-108).

words in the word *incorporation* itself, which refers both to the business corporation formed and to the colonization of Ginny's and Rose's corporeal selves.

Ginny's first memory of the nocturnal assaults is surrounded by images of cannibalism and disintegration.²⁵¹ These also bespeak the "visceral qualities" of trauma fiction of which Laurie Vickroy speaks (2002: 223). When Ginny goes over to her father's house after he has moved into his friend Harold's after the storm, she hopes to find her mother, but all her "head[ily] scent[ed]" dresses of "crepey freshness" (Smiley 2004a: 224) in her closet were gone, and Ginny suddenly remembers how it was that she had "disappeared" as the church ladies came and collected her belongings "for the poor people in Mason City" (2004a: 227). Immediately after this recollection, Ginny heads for the stairs to her old bedroom "in a self-conscious distance from my body": "My hand on the banister looked white and strange, my feet seemed oddly careful" (2004a: 227). As she lies down in her childhood bed she recalls the nightly molestation with one striking image ("I had looked at the top of his head, at his balding spot in the brown grizzled hair, while feeling him suck my breasts") (2004a: 228), which connotes the devouring of one's own flesh and blood. Marina Paniccia Carden rightly notes about this picture, "her father's abuse emerges as an image of him as a kind of monstrous baby": "In her father's economy of ownership, her body serves to nourish him; he claims sites associated with her potential maternity as resources that satisfy his needs" (1997: 196). This recall of her father's metaphoric consumption of her flesh is linked in Ginny's mind to "the memory of my mother's things going to the poor people of Mason City" (Smiley 2004a: 228). Slicer astutely reminds us that "the cloth that took the shape and smell of her mother's body, that represented the public body – distributed to and appropriated by the bodies of numerous strangers" invokes an image of "physical dismemberment, appropriation, consumption" which reflects "the eventual fate of Ty's hogs," and so graphically signals "[t]he meaning and fate of both the hogs and the Cook women" (1998: 66). In this image of incestuous cannibalism, Smiley again forges a connection between the molestation and agricultural practices.

The theme of incestuous cannibalism also raises the specter of self-injury or self-mutilation in Smiley's novel. As sexual violation creates disintegration, self-harm or other self-destructive behaviors such as eating disorders can be seen in cannibalistic terms that speak symbolically for piecing together the self through a

²⁵¹ Kathryn Harrison, too, uses the language of cannibalism for her father's actions in her incest memoir *The Kiss*: the kiss is "the drug my father administers in order that he might consume me. That I might desire to be consumed," she tells her reader (1998: 70).

process of re-corporation, or a gradual self-integration, as it were. In *A Thousand Acres*, Rose has dreams of hurting her body as a way of mitigating painful emotions resulting from the abuse. She does not harm herself in the wakeful state, but only acts out self-injury in her dreams. Early in the novel, she tells Ginny that she has a recurring nightmare about self-harm: "I have this recurring nightmare about grabbing things that hurt me, like that straight razor Daddy used to have, or a jar of some poison that spills on my hands. I know I shouldn't, and I watch myself, but I can't resist." (Smiley 2004a: 62). The jar of poisons foreshadows the canned sausages Ginny prepares for her and thus establishes a connection to the poisoned land and their father's abuse. The fact that Rose has dreams of her father's razor can also be seen as symbolic; in her dream she associates the sharp object, the razor, with her father as he is the one who has penetrated and injured her. Studies have shown that self-harm in the form of cutting and/or other self-destructive behavior such as self-starvation, bulimia, and drug abuse is not an uncommon but violent response to molestation (see, e.g., van der Kolk 1989: 2, 10, 12; van der Kolk and McFarlane 1996: 11; Herman 1994: 109-110). Judith Herman notes that self-harm is carried out for the purpose of "simulat[ing] an internal state of well-being and comfort that cannot otherwise be attained" (1994: 110). However, while self-injury, paradoxically, is a form of self-preservation and a way to re-establish the severed link between the body and the mind in trauma, this kind of self-destructive behavior can also be seen as what Brenda Daly calls "the inevitable perpetuation of the abuse" (1998: 115).

Ginny does not engage in any kind of self-injury in *A Thousand Acres*, but in some versions of the fairy tales behind *Lear*, most notably in "The Maiden Without Hands," her fairy-tale sister self-mutilates, cutting her hands off to render her sexually less attractive in her refusal to comply with her father's incestuous command. In Lorraine Brown's 1998 retelling of this tale, the protagonist Mariah has for years been sexually abused by her paternal grandfather, and at seventeen, she threatens to shoot him in self-defense if he touches her again. In a struggle for the gun, however, a shot goes off, shattering her right hand, which had to be amputated at the wrist: "Like an animal caught in a trap I'd chewed off my own paw to win my freedom," she says (1998: 5). From her early teens Mariah engages in cutting to achieve some form of mastery: "When I held the razor in my hand, I was in control. *I was not subject to death; death was subject to me*" (1998: 366, emphasis in original), and she also suffers from eating disorders; she has had anorexic amenorrhea since she was fifteen (1998: 235).²⁵²

²⁵² A number of contemporary incest novels convey a pattern of corporeal self-harm or other self-destructive behavior such as eating disorders. For Sapphire's protagonist Precious in *Push*

Although Smiley's survivor-narrator in *A Thousand Acres* does not self-harm, she internalized her father's hatred and fear of the female body. As a result, her cleanliness went beyond the notion that "you didn't want to wear" the farm smells, "especially into town": "In and behind the ears, around the neck, all over the face, the knuckles, the fingernails, the armpits, the back where you could reach, then all below. I suppose what I was afraid of was some sort of stench" (Smiley 2004a: 278-279).²⁵³ Smiley here signifies on Lear's women-are-centaurs speech (4.5.121-126). Simon Estok rightly observes that "Nowhere is his misogyny more clear than in what he reveals in his mad ravings to Edgar and the blinded Gloucester" (2005: 20); in fact, "The ease with which literature deploys bestializing metaphors and environmental metaphors against women speaks to a set of material practices that is at once ecophobic and misogynist" (2005: 36, n. 12). In *A Thousand Acres*, references to non-human creatures in the novel are connected to the abuse and Ginny characterizes herself in animalistic terms, thinking of herself alternately as a dog, a horse, a sow, and a weasel, proposing her dehumanization by Larry's patriarchal discourse and pointing to the way that it is not unusual for sexual abuse survivors to think of themselves as some kind of animals or "nonhuman life forms" (Herman 1994: 105). In this Smiley does not suggest correspondences between animals and women, as is found in Susan Grif-

(1996), self-harm is an attempt to re-establish the severed connection between body and mind. She tells the reader about how she inflicts pain on herself after her father has raped her: "Afterward I go baftroom. I smear shit on my face. Feel good. Don't know why but it do [...] I bite my fingernails till they look like disease, pull strips of my skin away. Get Daddy's razor out cabinet. Cut cut cut arm wrist, not trying to die, trying to plug myself back in" (Sapphire 1997: 111-112). Patricia Chao's incest-abused protagonist Sally in *Monkey King* (1997) has internalized her father's disgust at her physical self as a "PIECE OF MEAT": "I hate my body," she says (1997: 21, 103); since high school she has cut herself and the process is carefully described: "Using the smallest blade of my Swiss Army knife to pick away at a spot until I could not stand it anymore. [...] I had it down to an art, savoring the very first sting of it, before my brain had time to distinguish pleasure from pain. Finally it would subside into something dull and predictable, a nasty little wound that I could have gotten by accident" (1997: 15). While the sexual abuse has left no physical scars, only mental, the self-injury, which is linked to the molestation, leaves her body with "tiger stripes" (1997: 306). The narrator in Elizabeth Dewberry Vaughn's *Break the Heart of Me* is twelve when she starts to purge herself, and she explains her bulimia as a corporeal effort to obliterate her traumatic history, as a form of reverse cannibalism, reversing the cannibalistic act of incest: "Throwing up is the closest I know how to come to undoing the past" (1994: 77).

²⁵³ *A Thousand Acres* typifies the physical expression which feelings of defilement and shame related to the abuse are often given in contemporary incest novels. Sylvia, the survivor protagonist of grandfather-granddaughter incest in Elizabeth Dewberry Vaughn's *Break the Heart of Me* (1994), scrubs herself obsessively to delete the non-visible scars the abuse has left and which make her feel unclean. Yet she still feels "dirty," that she "can't get clean" (1994: 169). Like Sylvia, the main character Mariah in Lorraine Brown's *The Handless Maiden* (1998) is haunted by feelings of dirt and cleanliness, obsessively washing her hands: "Get him out of my bed before the filth has a chance to settle. And, with his departure, the hand-washing: over and over, like Lady Macbeth" (1998: 113).

fin (1978), but establishes a link between the abuse of the women's bodies and the exploitation of the natural world.

The link between women and animals is obvious in the different versions of the folktale behind Shakespeare's play, too. As Marina Warner suggests, referring to the "Thousandfurs" tale, "As an outcast, spurning the sexual demand made upon her, her disguises – donkey, cat, or bear – reproduce the traditional iconography of the very passion she is fleeing" (1995: 355). These daughters wear animal furs "because they have been violated, by their father's assault or by another's, and it has contaminated them, exiled them"; it matters little that they "have suffered wrong in all innocence in the fairy tales," these figures accept the shame as guilt repeatedly enacting it on themselves and their bodies "by performing it over and over in gesture and dress" (1995: 358). In other words, these abused heroines introject the shame that their fathers refuse to feel.

In the novel, Ginny is frequently shown as being uncomfortable with her physical form. In one scene, she runs home to fetch eggs that she has forgotten to bring down for her father's breakfast: "I was conscious of my body – graceless and hurrying, unfit, panting, ridiculous in its very femininity [...] my father could just look out of his big front window and see me naked, chest heaving, breasts, thighs, and buttocks jiggling, dignity irretrievable" (Smiley 2004a: 114-115).²⁵⁴ Her father's objectifying and violating her is the main reason why Ginny experiences repugnance for her female body. As Susan Farrell notes, "to Larry, the female body is more than just ridiculous; it is *foreign* and even threatening" (2001: 50, emphasis added). Ginny smiles to herself as she surmises that the box of Kotex pads she finds in the linen closet of Larry's house are still there because her father "never dared to touch it" (Smiley 2004a: 228). Farrell puts it precisely:

It makes sense, then, that Larry's most insidious form of mastery over his daughters takes the form of incest. In dominating them sexually, he feels that he can control the very essence of what makes them female – their physical bodies. Just as he and his ancestors could transform the physical appearance of the water-logged virgin prairie into the cultivated and tamed one thousand acres, Larry Cook wishes to assert his dominance and control over his daughters' virgin bodies (Farrell 2001: 50).

²⁵⁴ The eggs, fruits of the thousand-acre farmland, are also associated with fertility and here their absence signifies on Ginny's infertile state as a result of Larry's farming practices, which have contaminated the well water.

In Larry's view, female bodies, no less than the natural world, are foreign, and as a result of abusing the land and Ginny and Rose, the bodies of his daughters are also turned foreign to themselves.

Ginny describes how she lost contact with her body in her adolescence, which is when the abuse started: "[b]odies fell permanently into the category of the unmentionable" (Smiley 2004a: 279), or as she puts it, "[o]ne thing Daddy took from me when he came to me in my room at night was the memory of my body" (2004a: 280). For years Ginny's self-hatred, which is connected to the sexual abuse that she does not consciously remember, has made her disregard her body. Smiley ascribes the loss of Ginny's body to the history of Western patriarchy, reading its absence as resulting from patriarchal ideologies promoting and perpetuating abuse and exploitation. The estrangement of the figure of the foreign body echoes this loss as well as Ginny's dissociative split between her mind and her body.²⁵⁵ Later, when she is "betrayed" by her sister, she feels helpless and detached from herself again; "[t]his couldn't be me" (Smiley 2004a: 308), she says. In fact, her first reaction after Rose had told her about the affair with Jess was that she "felt that sense [...] of being outside [her] own body, of watching it and hoping for the best" (2004a: 304). In other words, Ginny links Rose's betrayal to that of her father and dissociates in order to cope with both betrayals.

Ginny's dissociation from her body also affects her sex life, yet, her sexuality proves a means of working through her trauma. It remains for Ginny and Rose to reclaim their bodies. Although *A Thousand Acres* is an incest novel, sexuality is not always negatively represented therein, but it is always related in some way to trauma. The poisoned and violated bodies of Ginny and Rose paradoxically prove vehicles for working through the trauma. In Ginny's case this also involves remembering the dismembered and dissociated parts of it piece by piece, as it were, and in Rose's case the re-appreciation of it after the abuse and the mastectomy. Without overstressing the role of sexuality, Smiley seems to suggest that, since incest is a sexual violation, working through needs to be represented also on a sexual level, that the way to overcome the traumatic body/mind split created by

²⁵⁵ Contemporary incest narratives frequently convey the notion of a profound severance between the body and the mind in trauma. Dewberry Vaughn's novel *Break the Heart of Me* (1994) describes how the protagonist Sylvia develops another persona, Amazing Grace, in response to her traumatic experience. Sylvia Fraser, too, relates in her memoir *My Father's House* (1987), the development of multiples and tells the reader that, at seven "I acquired another self with memories and experiences separate from mine, whose existence was unknown to me. My loss of memory was retroactive. I did not remember my daddy ever having touched me sexually. [...] In future, whenever my daddy approached me sexually I turned into my other self, and afterwards I did not remember anything that had happened" (1989: 15).

the sexual trauma partly entails coming back through the sexual body. In other words, re-claiming the sexually traumatized body also involves re-claiming sex/uality and desire, and just as Jess reminds Ginny's mind about the poisoning of her bodily tissues (Smiley 2004a: 164-165), so also is he a catalyst for awakening her body and her relation to it, as well as for re-evaluating Rose's body.

At first glance, sex and trauma seem an uneasy combination, however; they seem polar opposites in the sense that sex is usually associated with pleasure and trauma with pain. As Judith Herman explains, "Traumatic events violate the autonomy of the person at the level of basic bodily integrity. The body is invaded, injured, defiled. Control over bodily functions is often lost; in the folklore of [...] rape, this loss of control is often recounted as the most humiliating aspect of the trauma" (1994: 52-53). Accounts of sex in trauma literature, Marie-Louise Kohlke notes, risk putting the ethical function of the witnessing characteristic of this kind of text at risk, as well as calling authorial intent and reader response in question; the representations of sex acts seem to cater to authors' and/or readers' sadomasochistic titillation-seeking by either pretending to express the humanity that was denied in the moment of violation or compensating for survivors' pain and/or readers' secondary trauma (Kohlke 2005: 1).²⁵⁶ There is a fine line between going deep, showing what happens in/with the characters, and exploitation, perpetuating the objectification and victimization or re-appropriating the suffering of the trauma. In addition, continuous graphic depictions may produce a numbing effect in readers which would in turn downplay their force. However, there is another way of looking at it. Rather than affirming the critical position that "implicitly situates *pain* rather than *pleasure* as the only legitimate response to traumatic experience, written/read as something passively endured or unwillingly undergone rather than actively sought out, initiated, and engaged in," Kohlke suggests that sexuality, precisely in "its capacity for pleasure," bespeaks the possibility of "agency, will, and issues of consent" (2005: 1-2, 2, original italics). To Kohlke, sexuality in trauma fiction acts as "a counter-erotics, a politics in-and-of the flesh," which recognizes not only pain but also pleasure "as an ethical effect of and response to trauma writing" (2005: 7). The representation of sexuality allows for an alternative form of communicating untellable events and experiences and thus "facilitates rather than hinders or detracts from trauma narrative's truth-telling" and "ensures that as much as possible of the body is retained in the telling

²⁵⁶ Kohlke emphasizes that this is usually true only of fictional accounts: "Sexual material in first-person testimonies or documentary texts, such as autobiographical writings of child-abuse victims or memoirs by Holocaust survivors, tends not to raise the same suspicions of exploitation as it does when employed in fictional, factional, or pseudo-documentary texts" (2005: 9 n. 8).

and continues to make itself *felt*: it “holds the individual living human body squarely before our vision, refusing to let its suffering be wholly abstracted, dematerialised, or promiscuously universalised” (2005: 7, original italics). For Kohlke, sexuality is not only often part of trauma but it also constitutes part of working through it for characters, writers, and readers. As this study suggests, sexuality in the context of trauma fiction opens up alternative pathways of potential connections between the body and the mind.

In *A Thousand Acres*, the protagonist and narrator, Ginny, is initially not comfortable with having sex, and her sex life demonstrates a compulsion to avoid the context of her father surprising her in her dark room. As she explains:

But sex did make me touchy. It was full of contradictory little rituals. There had to be some light in the room, if only from the hall. Daytime was better than nighttime, and no surprises. I always wore a nightgown. When he pushed it up, I closed my eyes. When he entered me, though, my eyes were wide open, staring at his face. I hated for him to turn away or look down. I didn’t like it if either of us spoke. He made the best of it and I never refused him.

I didn’t want to see my body.

I assumed that all of this was normal, the way it was for everyone. (Smiley 2004a: 279)

Nighttime was when the parental rapes took place, and her father showing up in her room was an unthinkable surprise. Although Ginny initially has no conscious awareness of that time, she wants to avoid the context in which she has been traumatized. However, sex constitutes special difficulties for adult child sexual abuse survivors and can cause long-term injuries in the abused person’s sex life (see, e.g., Freyd 1996: 172-173; Terr 1994: 172). Judith Herman explains why “Sexual intimacy presents a particular barrier for survivors of sexual trauma”: “The physiological processes of arousal and orgasm may be compromised by intrusive traumatic memories; sexual feelings and fantasies may be similarly invaded by reminders of the trauma. Reclaiming one’s own capacity for sexual pleasure is a complicated matter; working it out with a partner is more complicated still” (1994: 206). Ginny does not want to see her body; in her mind she has dissociated herself from it and her sexuality. As Susan Strehle points out, “Unlike Goneril, she recognizes no desire” (2000: 213). Ginny relates that in high school and after, “every date had the potential to paralyze” her, and she “unparalyzed” herself by breaking dates with boys to whom she was attracted (2004a: 262). As a

result of the sexual abuse Ginny's father put her through, she also dissociates herself from her body while having sex with her partner Ty.²⁵⁷ According to Janet Liebman Jacobs, the survivor is able by dissociation to escape "from the female self that the body signifies" and "from sexual feelings, the sensations that hold the somatic memories of pain mixed with pleasure and shame" (1994: 132-133). Thus when Ginny dissociates herself from her body, she is free from her traumatized/feminine physicality; she cannot feel it, nor does she experience feelings of a sexual kind.

Representations of female sexuality in a context of father-daughter incest also clash disturbingly with the expectation that victims are innocent and desexualized. The good innocent girl has traditionally been seen in the Western world as incompatible with knowledge of sexual things and constructed on dichotomous terms with the bad knowing girl, i.e. the Madonna/Whore duality. In order to seek to challenge a gendered discourse that view children and adolescent girls as seductive and responsible for what powerful men do, feminist scholarship frequently emphasizes innocence on the part of the child (Doane and Hodges 2001: 115).²⁵⁸ This strategy is problematic, however, for while it allows for a discussion of unequal power relationships it also de-sexualizes the child. On the other hand, as Janice Doane and Devon Hodges observe, "admitting to children's sexuality becomes a demand to forget that adult-child relationships are structured by asymmetries in power" (2001: 115). The challenge then is to create a discourse that acknowledges the power asymmetries in the relationship between father and daughter without denying sexual feelings to the latter. Contemporary incest novels do not usually question the sexuality of the daughter or the fact that children are sexually aware. Dorothy Allison's autobiographical fiction *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992) is an example of trauma literature that employs the trope of sexuality in the form of masturbatory s/m fantasies to emphasize healing from incest, and also, as Ann Cvetkovich appropriately points out, challenges "the demand that victims be passive, innocent, or desexualized in order to be sympathetic" (2002: 348). In Allison's novel, the twelve-year-old body of Bone becomes a site for the safe encounter with her past and of resistance to the abuse and her abuser, Daddy Glen. Her masturbatory practices interlinks sex and trauma: "I

²⁵⁷ It is not unusual for incest narratives to convey sexual difficulties related to previous abuse. For instance, Dewberry Vaughn's protagonist, Sylvia, in *Break the Heart of Me*, relates how she is "starting to disintegrate" and has to stop while trying to have sex with her lover, Jake: "It's too much like death [...] like something I can't name, but it isn't right" (1994: 144).

²⁵⁸ As Brenda Daly observes, society increasingly expects innocence from survivors of father-daughter incest: "Demands for the female victim's purity have escalated despite the fact that the law is far from 'pure' and public opinion often far from just" (2007: 157).

would imagine being tied up and put in a haystack while someone set the dry stale straw ablaze. I would picture it perfectly while rocking on my hand [...] I am not sure if I came when the fire reached me or after I had imagined escaping it” (Allison 1993: 63). In one sense, these fantasies are reproductions of the abuse, but they also provide Bone with the power she was denied in the scenes of violence in the traumatic moment. In her mind she takes an active part, and when her body tells the story of her abuse in this way, she is empowered instead of victimized. For Cvetkovich, however, it is not sex in itself that has healing potential for incest survivors but the s/m, which precisely in its similarity to incest functions much in the same way as therapy, where repetition and memory recall are key to recovery; s/m practices can be seen as “repetition with a difference,” as she puts it (2002: 333). Also Laura Di Prete emphasizes “the constructive potential of Bone’s fantasies”: “the body becomes the medium through which Bone tries to grasp her trauma and to appropriate its effects, in a way re-exerting control over her physical and mental perceptions. As her body imaginatively disintegrates or is about to disintegrate, her masturbatory pleasures return it to her” (2006: 135, n. 6, 114).

In *A Thousand Acres*, a reawakened sexuality returns Ginny’s traumatic body to her. As her defenses weaken in the course of the novel, she starts having sexual feelings for Jess. He reawakens a sense of her body and her sexuality. Jess seems to appreciate her body, for instance telling her that she has “nice ankles” (Smiley 2004a: 164). Neil Nakadate aptly notes that Ginny’s relationship with Jess “puts her back in touch with her physical self” (1999: 175). One night, after having spent the afternoon with Ty castrating baby pigs, she lies awake and thinks about having sex with Jess: “It wasn’t like me to think such thoughts, and though they drew me, they repelled me too. I began to drift off, maybe to escape what I couldn’t stop thinking about” (Smiley 2004a: 161). Here Ginny is close to remembering what has happened between herself and her father that lies buried in the unconscious; the thoughts of sexual desire repel her because she has an implicit memory of the incest. Her sexual feelings for Jess are frightening because sex has represented danger in the past. Ginny’s sexual mood influences the recovery of information about her incestuous relationship with her father, but she is not ready to deal with the memories yet and she begins to drift off into oblivion again. Then she wakes up:

Ty was very close to me. It was still hot, and he was pressing his erection into my leg. Normally I hated waking in the night with him so close to me, but my earlier fantasies [about Jess] must have primed me, because the very sense of it there, a combination of feeling its insistent pressure and imagining its smooth heavy shape, doused me like a hot wave, and instantly I was breathless. (2004a: 161-162)

This time Ginny is able to visualize she has a body while making love to Ty; she dreams she has the body of a sow:²⁵⁹ “The part of me that was [...] a sow longed to wallow, to press my skin against his and be engulfed. Ty whispered, “Don’t open your eyes,” and I did not. Nothing would wake me from this unaccustomed dream of my body faster than opening my eyes” (2004a: 162)

Ginny has no memory of her body. To enjoy sex she must dream she has one. The following day she thinks, “last night was the best ever with Ty, last night when I dreamt I was a sow” (Smiley 2004a: 163-164). Brenda Daly has expressed problems with the association of sex and swine in this scene, arguing that it evokes “ugly connotations” of filth to suggest that, “in Ginny’s mind, sex is ugly, pig-gish” (1998: 182). Glynis Carr, on the other hand, appropriately notes that, “In this moment, Ginny glimpses her body’s capacity, its agency, and takes back some of that which had been stolen during Daddy’s nighttime visits” (2000a: 132). Because, as Carr suggests, “Smiley emphasizes the spiritual vacuum in which pigs are mass-produced, an operation that reduces them to little more than money-machines for Ty and his banker,” and “also suggests the vulnerability of pigs as terminal animals” (2000a: 132), she draws a parallel between pigs and women in the sense that both pay the price in the patriarchal capitalist system in the novel.²⁶⁰ The sexual trope in this passage creates continuities between male violence against women and animals, and critiques a patriarchal capitalist ideology grounded in force, while also bespeaking resistance to the trauma of the past. Here Smiley signifies on the long-standing association of pigs with myths of regeneration that invoke feminine power.²⁶¹

In *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley urges readers to reconsider notions of the body and corporeality. One way in which authors of corporeal trauma narratives address the vanished traumatized material body is to represent it as, in the words of Laura Di Prete, as “a fluid, metamorphic entity,” thereby rejecting limiting symbolizations and cultural inscriptions that mark bodies and identities by e.g., gender, race, and class, and resisting repressive ideologies that often sanction the corporeal exploitation and abuse that produced the trauma in the first place (2006: 19). In *A Thou-*

²⁵⁹ In invoking the metaphor of a pig, Smiley here also deftly makes a connection to the heroine in Charles Perrault’s “Peau d’Âne,” who is described as a swineherd, washing the dishcloths and cleaning out the pig troughs in her disguise after she has fled her incestuous father (see Zipes 2001: 42).

²⁶⁰ See the (eco)feminist theorist Carol Adams’s *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), which points to a connection between the slaughter of mass-produced animals and violence against women.

²⁶¹ James Frazer has observed how this animal historically has been connected to myths of rebirth or renewed existence calling forth female power (Olson 1998: 30).

sand Acres, Smiley breaks down the separation between humans and animals in an ecofeminist fashion, effacing the Darwinian hierarchy of living creatures and emphasizing instead the interconnectedness of all creatures. Animalistic allusions in the novel and their connection to Ginny's body also represent resistance. Ginny's relation to animals is quite different from Larry's: she "liked the silence and the sense of companionship [she] felt from the animals" at the neighboring Ericsons' (Smiley 2004a: 135), and it is at different junctures in the novel that she links her feelings and drives to non-human creatures. Contemplating her attraction for Jess which subsequently acts as a cue for remembering the incest, she felt that "beneath this was an animal, a dog living in me, shaking itself, jumping, barking, attacking, gobbling at things the way a dog gulps its food" (2004a: 172). After the storm, when she has told Jess about what Rose has related about the abuse that she still does not remember, she "felt another animal" in herself that tries to break free: "a horse haltered in a tight stall, throwing its head and beating its feet against the floor, but the beams and the bars and the halter rope hold firm, and the horse wears itself out, and accepts the restraint that moments before had been an unendurable goad" (2004a: 198). Finally, when she realizes that Rose has betrayed her with Jess, a betrayal she links to that of her father's she "was as alert as a weasel [...] and all my swirling thoughts had narrowed to a single prick of focus, the knowledge that Rose had been too much for me, had done me in" (2004a: 304). Feeling these different animals within herself aids Ginny in her becoming more human in the sense of being more alive. Ginny no longer feels her body is apart from the rest of nature but rather that it constitutes a part of something larger, recognizing that her body and the animal bodies are the same both in terms of their embeddedness in nature and in terms of being victimized as a result of Western binaristic and hierarchical thinking.

Also in the "Thousandfurs" type of tales, Ginny's folk sister is changed from woman into animal, and for this heroine, too, the change is beneficial. As Marina Warner puts it, "bodily transformations of fairy tale heroines," rather than working against them, work wonders so to speak, and can also "be preferable as a temporary measure to the constrictions of a woman's shape" (1995: 354). In other words, this kind of bodily metamorphosis enacts resistance to the forces that suppress and foreignize it.

When Ginny a few hours after her lovemaking with Ty finally sleeps with Jess, it symbolically occurs in the little dump at the back of the farm, suggesting the parallel between the body of the earth and of Ginny's body. The encounter is framed in an environment of wild rosebushes, aspens, honey locust trees, and some dried-out prairie plants (now classified as weeds) such as timothy, prairie indigo, and locoweed, so that both the nature and the sex act are revealed as counterparts of

the damages and injuries suffered by Ginny and the land. In this spot, Ginny and Jess spotted a snake earlier, an eastern hognose (Smiley 2004a: 123), which obviously has sexual undertones, but as Julie Sanders observes, “Smiley builds in the material relevance of species extinction” (2001: 211), too. That this is also a place of regeneration is signalled in part by Ginny’s orgasm, which she did not experience with Ty but which was really commenced the night before when she dreamt she had the body of a sow. As Glynis Carr states, “Ginny’s dreamy identification with the sow’s body initiates the only pleasurable sexual experience narrated in the novel, in which Ginny grasps what it might be to be fully healed and fully at peace, if not with all of nature, then at least with that part of her nature that is her own body” (2000a: 132). The orgasm she experiences after Jess removes himself from her body partially returns it to her, “I began all at once to shiver [...] Now the shaking was pure desire. As I realized what we had done, my body responded as it hadn’t while we were doing it – hadn’t ever done, I thought. I felt blasted with the desire, irradiated, rendered transparent [...] and I came in a drumming rush from toes to head” (Smiley 2004a: 162-163). Slicer aptly points out that this climax occurs not with Jess either, because Ginny’s body responds “not to the man as he is inside of her” but instead resists and “defies the heterosexist order that consolidated the Cook’s one thousand acres when first [Ginny’s grandmother] Edith and then Ginny were bartered in marriage” (1998: 67).²⁶² Ginny’s body takes control, reclaiming what was originally claimed and dispossessed by her father (and subsequently by Ty) as colonized territory. In this passage, Ginny reclaims her body, her sexuality, and her desire on her own terms, and Smiley takes control of the traditional metaphors of American pastoral that constructs the land as man’s female lover, reconstructing and writing the body and a form of female sexuality into the wild landscape.

Ginny’s love affair with Jess helps trigger her memory, and she abreacts for the first time as she lies down in her old bed in her childhood room. However, the memories of her father’s repeated visits to her room are merely piecemeal: “What I remembered of Daddy did not gel into a full figure, but always remained fragments of sound and smell and presence” (Smiley 2004a: 280). This statement bespeaks the literal, nonverbal, and perceptual nature of traumatic memory of which Caruth talks (1995a: 5). Finally remembering it, her past is shown to be a horrific story, and a story that Ginny tells through her body, because although her memo-

²⁶² Slicer correctly observes that “The first and final consolidations of the Cook family’s one thousand acres involved the exchange of women’s bodies”: Ginny’s homestead great-grandparents gave Ginny’s grandmother Edith in marriage to John Cook, and almost a hundred years later “Larry Cook secures the last few acres of his 1000-acre kingdom when Ginny marries Ty, a neighboring farmer with a productive 160 acres” (1998: 63).

ry has returned, that is, she has partly integrated the memory of the abuse, she has dissociated during the incestuous abuse itself to the extent that her memories are only sensory; different kinds of visual, auditory, and olfactory sensations.

Their father's sexual assault has influenced both Ginny's and Rose's sex lives, but the two sisters polarize here; while Ginny is uncomfortable with her body and with having sex, in fact has to dissociate, Rose has developed a sexualized persona equating sexual objectification with power, and sees her own body as a means of attaining masculine favor. Studies show that the sexual behavior of survivors "may be either excessively restricted or excessively promiscuous" (Freyd 1996: 173). Rose's promiscuity in high school and college (Smiley 2004a: 299) can be seen as a way to cancel out the times with her father in which she relives her trauma by and through her body through sexual encounters, but it is also a quest for masculine validation. Women in our Western society grow up in and construct their feminine identity according to cultural images of objectified females, and Janet Liebman Jacobs notes that these portrayals "merge with internal representations of the self that have been shaped by the experience of traumatic sexualization" (1994: 119). When this happens, the survivor "begins to assess her self-worth in terms of her sexuality" and "may confuse perceptions of personal power with the reality of sexual objectification" (1994: 120). Rose relates to men mainly in a seductive way, using sexuality as a means by which to achieve attention, authority, and power in relation to men. However, the attention gained in this way is objectification and dehumanizing/degrading.

Rose, like Ginny, has lost out on developing her own sexual self, both as a result of the abuse she suffered and as a result of negative cultural messages about the female body as male property. She tells Ginny that her sex life with Pete has "never been good": "You know what Pete always said? That I had what he called frenzied dislike of sex" (Smiley 2004a: 298, 300). After the invasive surgery for breast cancer, Rose is hounded by her mutilated body and a sense of disintegration which is reinforced by Pete's response to it: "you don't know what it was like with Pete. He told me when I got back from the hospital that he preferred me to keep my nightgown on if he was in the room," she tells Ginny (2004a: 298). Like Ginny, Rose reconstructs her physical self through sex with Jess: "He seems to have this sense about my body [...] He just looks at it a lot, you know, touches it as if he appreciates it. He says, you know, that my shoulders are a nice shape, or that he likes my backbone. He sees me differently than other men have," she tells her older sister (2004a: 300). Jess's engagement for either Rose or Ginny, however, proves lasting, and as Rose suffers a recurrence of breast cancer he abandons her as well as his dream of an ecological farm, heading back to Vancouver or Seattle. Signifying on Smiley's contention that "Women, just like nature or the

land, have been seen as something to be used” (in Duffy 1991: 94), Iska Alter puts it succinctly: “Even Jess [...] sees land as an instrument upon which he can practice theory, just as he sees the bodies of women as sexual landscapes to test, to probe, to use” (1999: 156). While Alter’s judgment does have a point, it may be a bit too cynical. As Farrell notes, Jess’s “ideas about the environment are largely vindicated in the novel” (2001: 55), and as this study argues he acts as a catalyst for Ginny’s working through of the abuse and the poisoning which have initially robbed her of her bodily self, and also during a period of time, genuinely helps Rose.

In addition to dissolving the boundaries between the body and the mind through sexual tropes, Smiley’s novel also disrupts the borders between the symbolic and the literal. At first, and as long as Ginny cannot consciously recall her traumatic past, she describes her father’s working the land in terms which symbolically evoke sexual subjugation: He “spread[s] himself more widely over the landscape,” “the buzzing machine monotonously unzipping the crusted soil” (Smiley 2004a: 136, 136-137). Ginny makes use of this symbolic because she cannot handle the pain of its literal meaning at that point. As Di Prete appropriately points out, “[o]ne uses metaphor to escape the literal dimension of pain, to remove the physical nature of the experience of violence from the body, and to place it somewhere else (in the realm of the figurative)” (2006: 83). Later in the novel (Ginny still does not remember the trauma in her mind, but only has corporeal memory of it) she viscerally feels something is wrong in connection to her father when he talks to her about some Spacelab coming down: she “glanced at a passing field, flat and defenseless, and thought for a moment about meteorites and space capsules, things glowing in the atmosphere, then making holes in the ground,” feeling “a visceral flutter of fear” (2004a: 172). In this way the violation is hidden behind the same symbols of gendering the land as female that have been used to justify land destruction since early US settler history, as Annette Kolodny has shown (1975; 1984). In addition, the unseen poisons in the land initially figure as foreign bodies, pointing to the environmental violence perpetrated by Larry and other farmers in the community, seeping into the drinking water and affecting the women’s bodies, their ovaries, uterus, and breasts. In the course of the novel, however, the land is demetaphorized and becomes a literal object, abused of its own, and the toxins are real, too, affecting real material human bodies. Ginny becomes aware of the literality of both the land destruction and of the bodily abuse.

A parallel can here be drawn to the fairy-tale world, and the group of folk narratives behind Smiley’s novel. As Maria Tatar suggests, “the hero escapes the tiresome clichés of reality by entering a world where the figurative or metaphorical

dimension of language takes on literal meaning. Ideas become matter” and “the ‘natural’ children of fairy tales literally become children of nature, aided by nature and protected by it from the highly unnatural villains of their home life,” such as when the heroine in “The Maiden Without Hands” literally has her hands chopped off for refusing her father’s hand in marriage (1987: 80). This kind of fairy-tale rhetoric can also be linked to the inception of contemporary environmentalism. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* starts with a tale, “A Fable for Tomorrow” to describe ecological collapse: “There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields” (Carson 1987: 1). The presence of various elements of the fairy tale is significant here. Like in fairy tales, Carson’s fable starts with what looks like an idyllic situation which soon gives way to disequilibrium. The third paragraph tells of an “evil spell” that “crept over the area” with sickness and death, and subsequently, the ensuing paragraph relates “a strange stillness” lingering over the town as the birds were all gone (the silent spring of the title) (1987: 2). As Greg Garrard notes, the book “initially suggests that the mythical eco-catastrophe of the fable might be supernatural,” but then goes on to corroborate the reality of an ongoing “apocalypse” (2005: 2). In other words, Carson’s writing here emphasizes that the illusion that appears supernatural in the natural world has a natural significance. Sanders has rightly observed parallels between Smiley’s novel and Carson’s ecological treatise, noting that “A Fable for Tomorrow” “strikes a remarkably familiar note to readers of *A Thousand Acres*” (2001: 204), but does not discuss the fairy-tale connections between the two works.

Ginny finally and literally repossesses a space for her body in the landscape, albeit an urban one, by blurring the boundaries between nonhuman and human-built environments. Gradually she awakens to the fact that her body cannot survive in a rural landscape that is toxic. As Ginny has become aware of the land destruction and the abuse and therefore has to distance herself from the land and her past she leaves her husband and the thousand-acre farm to make a life for herself in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she writes herself into and onto a more urban landscape: a two-bedroom “garden apartment” and a swimming pool “[b]ehind a fence at the other end of the building” (Smiley 2004a: 335). So although *A Thousand Acres* is in many ways a rural novel, it ends in the city. The city seems to have held special appeal for the women in Zebulon County, as a place of independence and freedom: Caroline leaves the farm early and makes a life for herself as a lawyer in Des Moines; as a child Rose fantasizes about their mother leaving Larry and the farm to live with Ginny and Rose “in a Hollywood-style apartment” (2004a: 187), and after Rose has told her about the sexual abuse, Ginny thinks about escaping to

the Twin Cities with Rose and her daughters together in a garden apartment (2004a: 219-220). Sara Farris suggests that “the city is the site of slow healing and eventual regeneration” for Ginny (1998: 40). In an ironic reversal of the American pastoral, or settler narrative, in which the hero after having fled civilization renews his body in nature, Ginny escapes *from* the country *to* the city.

In her effort to tell her untold story of the past from her own perspective, Ginny, and Rose too, reformulate their own histories grounded in the body. Deborah Slicer deftly suggests that, “In seeking a ‘best’ story, Ginny and Rose repeatedly refer to and employ their bodies as histories, as paradigms of the materialized body more generally, as resisters. They do not use ahistorical, transcendental criteria in evaluating the epistemological status of their discoveries. They trust the corporeal and their dialogue about it” (1998: 68). Their bodies document Larry’s control of his land and his daughters, but the scars they bear are not visible; their bodily ailments are both symbolic and literal.²⁶³ Theirs are stories also told through the body which reinvent and rewrite the female body from the debase-ment of Western binaristic thinking. The body is neither degraded nor romanti-cized, but seen as an agency. Smiley’s novel efficiently challenges and subverts the Western mind-body opposition by blurring the dividing lines between the two, making the body a significant sign through which to represent trauma. Just as the divisions between Ginny’s memory and the land are blurred, so also the land and the body prove permeable boundaries:

my inheritance is with me, sitting in my chair. Lodged in my every cell, along with the DNA, are molecules of topsoil and atrazine and paraquat and anhydrous ammonia and diesel fuel and plant dust, and also molecules of memory: the bracing summer chill of floating on my back in Mel’s pond, staring at the sky; the exotic redolence of the dresses in my mother’s closet; the sharp odor of wet tomato vines; the stripes of pain my father’s belt laid across my skin; the deep chill of waiting for the school bus in the blue of a winter’s dawn. (Smiley 2004a: 369).

Ginny realizes the physical nature of memory and the past, that in fact she carries the toxic script of her history in her blood, on a cellular level, that her history is continuously encoded in her genes. Ginny realizes that the body of land and the human body are connected, not in the sense of being “one” as suggested by Slicer (1998: 69), because this would mean denying the independence and distinctness of both (see Plumwood 1996: 158-161), but rather in a relationship with each

²⁶³ It is also possible to understand Ginny’s miscarriages and Rose’s cancer not merely as a sym-bolic affliction but as somatic symptoms of sexual trauma.

other in the sense of bearing witness to each others' sufferings. Previously unable to read the signs of her body, Ginny learns to read the scars of a violent past. Situating her story within the gendered body, Smiley interweaves the politics of public and private space, trauma and ecological concerns. In view of the many contemporary sexual abuse cases and the global environmental crisis, Smiley's work exemplifies a critical reading that emphasizes attending to the body and its signs, as trauma and environmental threats inscribe themselves onto the bodies of today's generation.

To conclude, this chapter has explored the representation of traumatic experience and its aftermath through the figure of the foreign body in relation to the landscape. The foreign body here alludes to material bodies erased and turned alien by traumatic experience and by poisoning through overuse of environmental farm chemicals. Reading trauma through the written body in *A Thousand Acres* – that is, attending to bodily signs – this study emphasizes the significance of the body for expressing, and to a certain extent, working through trauma. The novel “gives body to” traumatic experience through a physical mode of testimony. Staging the gradual process of the reintegration of self and the remembering of the body, it enacts a working through of the past in a physical sense, inviting the reader to read for nonverbal signs and symbols reflecting the foreign body. Previously unable to read the signs of her body, a site where both trauma and environmental destruction are played out, both Ginny and her reader learn to read the scars of a violent past. Situated as a witness, the reader learns to read beyond Larry's patriarchal discourse to discover the damage suffered by the female bodies, their minds, and the land in the novel. As Mieke Bal points out, “Even ‘body memories’ are culturally inflected narratives” (1999: xvi-xvii). Thus the foreign body in *A Thousand Acres* bears witness not only to the trauma of its origin but also haunts and unmasks the repressive ideologies, events, and practices that elided it in the first place.

After the trauma has been reactivated and articulated through the signs of the body, the trauma finally needs to be represented on a textual level in narrative form. In other words, the violated body becomes a text. The next chapter turns to exploring trauma and textual space in trauma in the sense that the text itself can become a memory-site not only for remembering and bearing witness to the past traumatic moment, but also for allowing for a working through for both characters and reader, providing it does not understand too much but can convey the spatio-temporally disruptive force of trauma.

7 TRAUMA AND TEXTUAL SPACE

Although *A Thousand Acres* was, when she wrote it, so far her only trauma narrative to date, Jane Smiley's non-fiction book *Thirteen Ways of Looking at the Novel* (2005) is one she started writing in a context of mediatized trauma²⁶⁴ in the days after the 9/11 attack of the World Trade Center in New York. She relates that "for [her], as for most Americans, the September 11 attacks were simply too huge to comprehend"; "[t]here was no grappling with its enormity" (Smiley 2005: 4, n., 4), thus signalling the incomprehensibility characteristic of traumatic events. Her traumatized response to the event is also evidenced by the words she uses; it was "overwhelming," and she felt "scattered," "dissipated and shallow" (2005: 4). Simultaneously she experienced a writing block for the first time in her life. Instead of writing another novel she decided to distance herself from the attacks by starting to read a hundred novels, from a thousand-year-old tale to chick lit. As soon as she started reading she found it a "comfort," "an antidote to history" (2005: 274, 271). The books she read for the first four months proved revelatory. One of these was Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron*,²⁶⁵ "a reminder of human resilience" (2005: 273). Reading it, she found that her "immediate concerns and fears could be reflected back to [her] by books and authors so remote from 2001": "Boccaccio's effort at detachment aided my own," she says, and the WTC attacks and the anthrax scare "got smaller than the Black Death" (2005: 274). She believes this is because she came to understand trauma in a context of human history: "History is full of crimes and massacres. Millions have lived and died," "dangers have come and gone and we still have these books" (2005: 272, 280).

To Smiley, fiction has curative properties for author and reader alike: a novel is a "therapeutic act," a way to "come to terms with" as well as convey pain and suffering to readers (2005: 40, 42). She believes that literature in general can make

²⁶⁴ According to trauma reader E. Ann Kaplan, "all media response should be seen as at most vicarious" (2005: 90). Kaplan has developed a five-part model for the experience of traumatization that spans from direct experience to traumatic countertransference mediated by visual and/or semantic information: 1) first-hand experience as victim; 2) eyewitness experience, "one step removed"; 3) "visually mediated trauma" such as seeing trauma in the media including films, "two steps removed"; 4) reading trauma "and constructing visual images of semantic data," "three steps removed"; and finally, listening to a patient's traumatic experiences involving "both visual and semantic channels" coupled with a "face-to-face encounter with the survivor of the bystander" (2005: 91-92). Whether one agrees with Kaplan's model, and believes the reader to be further removed from the trauma than the moviegoer, or not, it is crucial to distinguish between primary and secondary trauma.

²⁶⁵ Smiley's book, *Ten Days in the Hills* (2007), to which *Thirteen Ways of Looking at the Novel* gave rise, is an appropriation of *The Decameron*, set in the Hollywood hills in the aftermath of the American invasion of Iraq.

people feel more empathy and thus make inroads to understanding and healing, and that conversely society “will be brutalized and coarsened” by a lack of empathy if people in power do not read books (2005: 177). In her emphasis on the therapeutic effects of literature, Smiley argues along the same lines as Geoffrey Hartman, who also uses the words “antidote” and “resilience” to describe this phenomenon: “A larger, transhistorical awareness of the incidence of trauma – personal or collective – should make us realize the extent of human suffering. Also of a *resilience* based on a balm we do not yet understand, and which acts as an *antidote* drawn from a deeply incorporated memory-source” (Hartman 2003: 269, italics added). Smiley’s emphasis on the empathic role of literature also finds resonance in Hartman’s suggestion that, “is it not the risk involved in widening the sympathetic imagination [...] that defines art – and should define what it means to be fully human?” (2003: 274).

This last chapter seeks to explore literature and/as healing in terms of the function of trauma fiction as a textual memory-site for remembering and bearing witness to extremity, providing it does not understand too much but powerfully conveys trauma’s spatio-temporally disruptive force, emphasizing also the reader’s role as empathetic witness. Chapter 6 has explored the representation of traumatic experience and its aftermath in bodily terms, but ultimately the traumatic experience needs to be verbalized into ordinary discourse. While a textual acting out without actually dealing with the traumatic moment of the source text – as in the contemporary *Lears* discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis that have suppressed or displaced the narrative of incest behind their works – may have healing potential if read intertextually as resistance to forgetting, intratextually the refusal to directly treat the unclaimed experience of the previous work forecloses a textual working through for both characters and readers. Intertextual trauma books such as *A Thousand Acres*, on the other hand, that overtly depict and deal with the unclaimed moment of the precedent text, draw readers into a highly disturbing traumatic textual space, a space that paradoxically also offers up a possibility for a textual working through.

7.1 Trauma, Narration, and the Reader

In psychoanalysis, the patient is, by free association, supposed to tell the story of his or her trauma. This “talking cure” is then what is said to heal the patient. Freud and Breuer’s *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) outlines the development of this “talking cure,” or as they call it, the “cathartic method.” By this method, the dissociated affective memory is made conscious and can thus be discharged or abreacted in the telling, which means that traumatic recall can be verbalized instead

of just acted out. Underlying the cathartic method is the “principle of constancy.” The key to this principle is Freud’s idea of *Besetzung* or “cathexis” (Freud and Breuer 2001: 89), which, in turn, refers to the charge of energy in the mental apparatus. What catharsis does, Freud indicates, is establish a state of equilibrium by discharging the excessive excitation caused by trauma.²⁶⁶ In a lecture at Clark University, Massachusetts, his “First Lecture on Psychoanalysis at Clark University: Breuer and the Treatment of Hysteria” (1909), Freud distinguishes psychoanalysis from the medical method to emphasize how the talking cure demands a new mode of sympathetic listening (see Freud 1997). Freud describes this new approach as a taking into account not only of what was said in therapy, but also of what was not said, that is, the narratives that were only communicated through the cadencies of the patient’s bodily or mimetic movements and symptoms, silences, images, and incoherent oral communications. What the cathartic method does is translating these stories into intelligible speech or a coherent narrative.

In spite of stressing trauma’s intrinsic unrepresentability and the inefficaciousness of language to contain traumatic excess, today’s trauma experts in contemporary discourses on the subject emphasize – as Freud did – that for some form of closure to take place, trauma needs to be told and recognized in a social context of empathic understanding, such as in the therapist-patient relationship, where the timeless experience is verbalized and retemporalized, or temporally organized, in narrative form. Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart stress the importance of transforming “traumatic memory” into “narrative memory,” that is, into a chronologically coherent story: “the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences [...] need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language” (1995: 176).²⁶⁷ In a similar vein Judith Herman observes that the “wordless and static” memory, which is “a past experience of frozen time” and initially without emotion, has to be reconstructed through narration and “integrated into the survivor’s life story” (1994: 175, 195, 175). As she puts it, “[i]n the telling, the trauma story becomes a testimony” and “[t]ime starts to move again” (1994: 181, 195). Dori Laub, too, emphasizes the relational element of testimony and memory with the teller and listener as co-authors: “The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to – and heard – is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the ‘knowing’ of the event is given birth to” (Felman and Laub 1992: 57).

²⁶⁶ The notion of catharsis is later replaced with mourning or working through.

²⁶⁷ Van der Kolk and van der Hart draw on Pierre Janet’s distinction between “traumatic memory” and “narrative memory.”

This can, of course, be extrapolated to indicate that *writing* the story of a traumatic past will produce a similar effect. Suzette Henke certainly believes this to be the case. In her *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (1998), an exploration of how women in the twentieth century use autobiographical representation as a way of healing the self after it has been shattered by trauma, Henke proposes that writing down the memories of a trauma "is, or at least has the potential to be, a powerful form of scriptotherapy" (1998: xv). Although Henke's book concerns autobiographical writing, her acknowledgment is also valid for thinking through the potential for coming to terms with loss through narration in trauma fiction, where a similar process can be said to occur. Literary works may not merely enact traumatic experience but also possibly a coming to terms with the past through narration. Deborah Horvitz indicates that "narrative offers a unique possibility for healing" because "[n]ot until the victim encounters and translates her 'unspeakable' tragedy into 'her' story can she envision a future devoid of violence" (2000: 40). This, she believes, is also true of fictional characters. As she explains:

Fictional characters experience trauma and, subsequently, as a self-protective response, repress its memories. And, it is within the discourse of healing that the operative dynamics among memory, remembering, and narrative converge. Then they may find both the capacity to remember and 'the words to say it,' making healing possible (2000: 10).

When traumatized characters recall their traumatic past and actually say the words, healing is made possible. Incest novels such as *A Thousand Acres*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1983), and Sapphire's *Push* (1996) effectively and clearly demonstrate this process.

Yet narrative representation of traumatic experiences has its perils. Inherent in trauma is the tension between remembering and forgetting. Despite the painfulness of their memories, survivors usually fear that a letting go of the past to live in the present would mean not only the forgetting, but the negation of that historical fact, as well as part of their identity (Herman 1994: 195). In addition, Cathy Caruth emphasizes that since testimony paradoxically presupposes or is made possible by trauma's unrepresentability, in integrating the traumatic memory as part of the past, there is the risk of understanding "too much," to lose "the event's essential incomprehensibility" (1995a: 154). Anne Whitehead eloquently espouses this problem as it pertains to trauma fiction: "Narrative needs to understand enough, so that it can convey a forgotten and excluded history, but it should simultaneously resist understanding too much, so that it can also convey the disruptive and resistant force of a traumatic historicity" (2004: 160).

Furthermore, trauma literature, to be testimonial, demands that the reader share and witness the characters' trauma, which in itself puts them at risk of secondary traumatism. Although trauma literature is instrumental in helping to close the gap between the reader and the text and to shorten the distance between the text and the world, trauma narratives may also have such a powerful impact on readers that they may become vicariously traumatized themselves and thereby victimized. As Judith Herman puts it; "Trauma is contagious" (1994: 140). Just as therapists and eyewitnesses or bystanders to a traumatic event are liable to experience secondary or vicarious trauma and may exhibit signs and symptoms of PTSD, so also readers who have psychically invested themselves in reading traumatic literature may experience some kind of traumatic suffering. As "intellectual witnesses," Geoffrey Hartman says, academics "too are at risk: our academic hygiene, which often sanitizes art, will not shield us from secondary traumatization" (2004b: 24).

At issue for the reader of trauma fiction is how to empathetically recognize the pain while resisting over-identification with the victim/character, to carefully and responsibly navigate between sympathy and distance. Historian Dominick LaCapra describes the process of literary works to convey traumatic experiences with the concept of "working through,"²⁶⁸ enabled by something he calls "empathic unsettlement," which can be described as an emotional response in the reader that entails the critical distance necessary for understanding traumatic experiences and victims, and through which over-identification may be avoided.²⁶⁹ His description of "empathic unsettlement" is as follows:

a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other's position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other's place. Opening oneself to empathic unsettlement is [...] a desirable affective dimension of inquiry which complements and supplements empirical research and analysis. Empathy is important in trying to

²⁶⁸ For LaCapra, working through "means coming to terms with the trauma, including its details, and critically engaging the tendency to act out the past and even to recognize why it may be necessary and even in certain respects desirable or at least compelling"; it does not entail a strictly linear process that moves straight from acting out to closure (2001: 144). Rather, the process is recursive and works against total transcendence; acting out constitutes an essential part of working through (2001: 70). LaCapra's concepts of "working through" and "acting out" cover Freud's ideas of mourning and melancholia respectively (Freud 1959b: 52-70), and also correspond to van der Kolk and van der Hart's "narrative memory" and "traumatic memory."

²⁶⁹ Although LaCapra emphasizes empathy for an understanding of historical phenomena such as the Holocaust or slavery and chiefly focuses on Holocaust trauma and its victims, his concepts may also hold true for victims of other kinds of traumas such as that of familial abuse, and so the notions of empathic unsettlement and working through are relevant for reading other types of trauma narratives as well.

understand traumatic events and victims, and it may (I think, should) have stylistic effects in the way one discusses or addresses certain problems. It places in jeopardy fetishized and totalizing narratives that deny the trauma that called them into existence by prematurely (re)turning to the pleasure principle, harmonizing events, and often recuperating the past in terms of uplifting messages or optimistic, self-serving scenarios.” (2001: 78)

LaCapra distinguishes between Freud’s “acting out” and “working through” on temporal and spatial grounds: in the former, history is relived or acted out in the *hic et nunc* and there is no distance between the past and the present, whereas in the latter there is remembering and an acceptance of the past as something having transpired back then as distinct from the present time. He emphasizes that trauma should not be worked through in full only to the degree that it prevents the survivor from acting out or being stuck in the past, and allows a moving on in the present without forgetting (2001: 142-144). Ideally trauma writers need to eschew a sentimentalized and harmonizing approach to trauma in favor of a non-redemptive narrative involving both “acting out” and “working through” (2001: 179).

This chapter argues that *A Thousand Acres* opens up a space for reading trauma belatedly, a process that allows for a working through for both protagonist and reader and so becomes a textual memory-site for housing the past traumatic moment. The novel is haunted by a rhetoric of survival that comprises acting out and working through recursively, and the story can be said to act as some form of narrative recovery where Ginny’s healing efforts of engaging in mental communication to herself reconstructs her traumatic memory: narrating her life story is a form of “scriptotherapy” for Ginny whereby she recalls and puts her traumatic past into words. While creating a space for Ginny’s voice to bear witness to her trauma and come to terms with her loss, the novel simultaneously involves the reader, who can experience some kind of working through precisely through empathic witnessing.

7.2 Textual Working Through: “The Gleaming Obsidian Shard”

I can’t say that I forgive my father, but now I can imagine what he probably chose never to remember [...] This is the gleaming obsidian shard I safeguard above all the others.

—Jane Smiley, *A Thousand Acres*, 1991

Some critics have commented on the aloof and dispassionate narrative style Smiley uses for Ginny's voice in *A Thousand Acres*, without necessarily connecting it to the trauma she has experienced. Barbara Sheldon notices a distance in the narration, that Smiley's protagonist "is "detached," that she in fact "seems as distant as a doctor, or maybe rather a psychologist, since she is so impersonal and so far removed from self-pity or bitterness" (1997: 63). James Schiff observes about Ginny that "it is doubtful that she knows her own motivations" (1998: 374), and Susan Strehle similarly notes that "[s]he is defined by what she does not know" (2000: 213). Ron Carlson (1991) again says Smiley's narrator/protagonist is "neutral, without agenda."

Brenda Daly notes that "Ginny narrates the story of her family's destruction almost without emotion," initially interpreting "her almost disembodied voice" as a "flaw," but later realizes that "such flat affect may, quite possibly, be one result of sexual abuse" (1998: 172). This study argues that Ginny is "neutral" and unknowing because she suffers from a variety of complex and numbing post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms such as a feeling of detachment from others, restricted range of affect, and amnesia. Neil Nakadate puts it rightly when he says that "Ginny's post-traumatic behavior is consistent with that observed in formal studies" (1999: 240).²⁷⁰ This chapter suggests that it is possible to see Smiley's novel as Ginny's attempt to recognize, understand, and integrate what has happened to her. The working through of her trauma begins with her looking back at her life to where it was before her father misused her. After acknowledging the trauma, the rest of the book deals with her attempt to reconstruct a belief system that makes sense of the betrayal. Smiley has chosen first-person traumatic narration for Ginny's story to create an address in order to emphasize the importance of empathetic readers as witnesses for working through.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, trauma is known or understood by its symptoms, which protect the individual from the horrific event, disguising it while simultaneously demanding an outlet. In this vein, Smiley has written *A Thousand Acres* as the story of Ginny's life. The novel actually contains what Ginny is initially unable to face. Although the revelation of the sexual abuse in the Cook family is the core event of the novel, Smiley does not confront the reader with it in an explicit way until halfway through the book. Instead, the generally detached narration reflects the numbing of general responsiveness that Ginny has suffered

²⁷⁰ Nakadate mentions, for instance, Judith Lewis Herman's work *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), in particular chapters 2-4: "Terror," "Disconnection," "Captivity" (Nakadate 1999: 240).

from as a result of the childhood-abuse that took place twenty years earlier. The depiction of her numbness typifies the “dissociation of affect and representation” characteristic of trauma; “one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel,” as Dominick LaCapra puts it (2001: 42). Ginny has distanced herself to the extent that as an adult she does not consciously remember that she was incest-abused at fifteen: “you don’t have to remember things about yourself that are too bizarre to imagine. What was never given utterance eventually becomes too nebulous to recall,” she says (Smiley 2004a: 305). Not talking about it or otherwise acknowledging it, she actually preserves the traumatic memory of the abuse until it becomes so distorted that she believes it never happened. In that sense, she has kept it a secret even from herself. Nevertheless she creates an address as she wordlessly conveys what is indeed an impossible story to narrate: not having herself been there when it occurred, having missed it as it were, she still bears witness to the origin of her trauma through her symptoms, which repeatedly allude to but do not spell out what happened.

The numbing that has been necessary for the confrontation with death which trauma invariably entails has enabled Ginny to survive but hinders her from living in the present. In fact, it spills over and contaminates her everyday life: past and present are side by side. So on the one hand, there is the search for truth, a quest that Ginny pursues without realizing what it means and where it leads, but on the other hand there is also the desire to forget. Here Smiley touches upon the tension that exists between remembering and forgetting that runs through the novel and is inherent in trauma. Survivors are supposed to tell the story of their trauma; the truth needs to be integrated into their life history if a cure is to be accomplished (see van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995). But, as Cathy Caruth emphasizes, with integration “the precision and the force” of the traumatic memory may be lost (1995a: 153). LaCapra calls the reluctance to remember and to work through tragic events in the past “fidelity to trauma” (2001: 22). This loyalty to the trauma in fact prevents survivors from moving on in the present, as they mistakenly believe that moving on means forgetting. Although Ginny does not remember the incestuous abuse she is possessed and haunted by the event.

As long as Ginny remains loyal to the trauma and does not consciously recall it, there is no distance from it. Since this does not allow the possibility of working it through, there is consequently no possibility for the reader to know about it or make sense of it either. As she has lived closely with her father on the same farm property under his control, cooking and cleaning for him for years, so she has never found the right distance to gain the perspective necessary for coming to terms with what has happened: “I had been with my father so constantly for so

long that I knew less and less about him with every passing year,” she says; “[e]very meaningful image was jumbled together with the countless moments of our daily life, defeating my efforts to gain some perspective” (Smiley 2004a: 105). Still she envisions an “optimum distance”:

Perhaps there is a distance that is the optimum distance for seeing one’s father, farther than across the supper table or across the room, somewhere in the middle distance: he is dwarfed by trees or the sweep of a hill, but his features are still visible, his body language still distinct. Well, that is a distance I never found. (2004a: 20)

Living so close to her father Ginny could not find this right distance to gain perspective of him. This is true, of course, as long as her father governs her life and she does not have any conscious awareness of the abuse.

Minrose Gwin’s use of the concepts “compression” and “expansion” of physical, psychological, and cultural space in Smiley’s novel is useful here: Ginny is at the beginning of the story situated in a “highly compressed physical and psychic space” as her father’s daughter and “the model farm wife” in a patriarchal society, and the kitchen, the “equivocal space that historically has been physically, psychologically, and culturally confining for women,” constitutes the main “material space” of her compression (2002: 110). Paradoxically, this compression creates distance from the trauma for the reader; Ginny’s story needs to be told, but is initially distanced, both from the protagonist herself (as she does not remember it) and her readers, and only unveiled a little at a time so as not to inundate the minds of the readers.

However, when the unclaimed moment remains unspoken working through is not possible. In *A Thousand Acres*, there was never any discussion about the abuse that went on in the Cook family; Rose always thought that Ginny knew and remembered about the abuse, and that Ginny knew that Rose knew, even though the two sisters never discussed it: “I thought you knew. I thought all these years you and I shared this knowledge, sort of underneath everything else. I thought if after that you could go along and treat him normally the way you do, then it was okay to just put it behind us” (Smiley 2004a: 190). The fact that Rose thought that Ginny knew probably helped the younger sister to remember the event. She believed they shared the information between them. Marina Paniccia Carden also aptly suggests that “Rose remembers Daddy’s abuse because she has been equipped with a language for it,” having been assigned a “special” place in the farming economy by providing his needs (“He seduced me. He said it was okay, that it was good to please him, that he needed it, that I was special. He said he loved me” (Smiley 2004a: 190)) (Carden 1997: 189), whereas Ginny “receives no

such assurances” and is instead silenced (“Quiet, now girl. You don’t need to fight me” (Smiley 2004a: 280)) (Carden 1997: 189).

Due to the increasing distance between father and daughter, or in Gwin’s terms, as Ginny moves from compression toward expansion – as a result of the division of the acres and the ensuing arguments over the property as well as the revelation of her father’s sexual abuse – her defensive structure gradually collapses and several cues trigger her memory of the past.²⁷¹ These include her love affair with Jess and Rose’s telling her about the molestation. When she finally experiences her first abreaction of the event, acting out the scene of trauma, she is unable to distinguish between past and present, she feels as though she is back in the past again (Smiley 2004a: 228). At that moment she cannot tolerate knowing more, even though there is obviously more to know, and instead lets out what can be termed a prelinguistic cry:

So I screamed. I screamed in a way that I had never screamed before, full out, throat-wrenching, unafraid-of-making-a-fuss-and-drawing-attention-to-myself sorts of screams that I made myself concentrate on, becoming all mouth, all tongue, all vibration.

They did the trick. They wore me out, made me feel physical pain which brought me back to *the present*” (2004a: 229, emphasis added).

This scene simultaneously shows the impossibility of verbalizing a trauma and bearing witness to it through this impossibility. The knowledge of the event is too painful to bear and she screams till she is back in real time feeling physical pain. Like Clorinda’s address in Torquato Tasso’s story, Ginny’s literal scream can be said to be the crying out of another. Deborah Slicer rightly asserts that Ginny’s crying out signifies that “from then on she inhabits her body as she could not inhabit it when Larry Cook came for her those nights twenty years before” (1998: 66). However, Ginny’s screaming also signifies, as Neil Nakadate suggests, the “beginning of speech” for her (1999: 178).²⁷² This passage demonstrates that voice and body are inextricably linked in trauma.

²⁷¹ This is consistent with what Herman has found to be the case with survivors; a collapse of the survivor’s defensive structure usually occurs when he or she is in his/her twenties or thirties, and, generally, “the precipitant is a change in the equilibrium of close relationships” (1994: 114).

²⁷² Some other incest novels, too, such as Patricia Chao’s *Monkey King* and Elizabeth Dewberry Vaughn’s *Break the Heart of Me*, emphasize the importance of gaining a voice for recovery through literal screaming. Chao’s protagonist Sally “screamed up into the dark gray-green sky fringed with overhanging trees” out in the Floridian swamps because she “probably needed to do that,” as her boyfriend Mel points out (1998: 237, 238). During a fight with her husband Buddy, Dewberry Vaughn’s narrator Sylvia yells “as loud as I can, my throat hurts I’m yelling

But whereas her first abreaction produced a terribly shocking effect, a later description of the event shows more distance. Ginny has partly assimilated the memory of the abuse and there is a distinction between the past, what happened then, and the present time:

And so my father came to me and had intercourse with me in the middle of the night. I could remember pretending to be asleep, but knowing he was in the doorway and moving closer. I could remember him saying, “Quiet, now girl. You don’t need to fight me.” I didn’t remember fighting him, ever, but in all circumstances he was ready to detect resistance, anyway. I remembered his weight, the feeling of his knee pressing between my legs, while I tried to make my legs heavy without seeming to defy him. I remembered that he wore night shirts that were pale in the dim light, and socks. I remembered that his hands were heavily callused, and snagged on the sheets. I remembered that he carried a lot of smells — whiskey, cigarette smoke, the sweeter and sourer smells of the farm work. I remembered, over and over again, what the top of his head looked like. But I never remembered penetration or pain, or even his hands on my body, and I never sorted out how many times there were. I remembered my strategy, which had been desperate limp inertia. (Smiley 2004a: 280)

This time she has partly integrated her imperfect memory of what happened and interprets the event critically. For instance, she tells us that she never “sorted out how many times there were,” and she talks about how she felt no pain because her “strategy” had been to dissociate. The dissociation is, of course, a direct result of the compression of her abused “bodied self” (Gwin 2002: 112). Ginny’s words about how she remembers her father’s nocturnal visits two decades earlier communicate the powerlessness of the abused child who desperately tries to find a “strategy” in order to handle the situation.

Thus Smiley’s protagonist finally finds the capacity to remember and to convert her traumatic memory into narrative, but the novel does not simply repeat or enact the basic psychological scheme of recovery expounded by such influential trauma therapists as Judith Herman. Herman (1994) identifies three stages of recovery for incest trauma survivors conceived within a therapeutic relationship: the first stage entails establishing a sense of safety,²⁷³ the second involves reconstructing the

so loud, only I can barely hear myself over the noise” until she comes together and reconnects herself (1994: 159). Because these characters have been objectified by the sexual abuse, these books underscore that not having a voice of one’s own indeed makes healing impossible.

²⁷³ Feminists have rightly problematized the notion of establishing safety in Herman’s tripartite model of healing. Christine Shearer-Creman and Carol L. Winkelmann note: “In a patriarchal culture, most abused women live without safety on several different levels. First of all, safety from male violence is not a guarantee for abused women, who may endure abuse, may

story of trauma through a process of “remembering and mourning,” and the last re-establishing a connection to the community. She also recognizes that, in practice, these stages usually co-exist, as traumatic symptoms have a tendency to fluctuate. In other words, to Herman, healing for sexual abuse survivors is possible when they feel safe enough to tell their stories of trauma to supporting listeners. In *A Thousand Acres*, Ginny’s working through does not occur within such a therapeutic framework; instead she finds her healing through what James Schiff appropriately calls “a process of self-therapy” (1998: 380). In this way, Smiley suggests that her memories of abuse are not confabulated in formal therapy.²⁷⁴ In addition, she avoids perpetuating the view of survivors as being ill, or what Kali Tal refers to as a standardized narrative of “medicalization,” which regards survivors as objects suffering from an “illness” that can be “cured” within existing institutionalized structures of psychiatry (1996: 6).²⁷⁵

Smiley’s novel complicates Herman’s model of recovery by pointing to the problems of securing safety to narrate the past within the climate of a patriarchal society. Although Ginny does not actually seek formal therapy in an effort to face her traumatic past, after her sister Rose has told her about their father’s nightly assaults and before she herself remembers the abuse, she fantasizes about going to the psychiatrist with Rose and their father to talk about what has happened: “Daddy needed some psychological help, had needed it for a long time, and Rose needed to confront him with her memories” (Smiley 2004a: 207). She imagined a positive reception: “The psychiatrist would of course take our side, Rose’s side, that is;” “he would phrase our, Rose’s, accusations perfectly,” and these accusations “would flow smoothly around Daddy’s angers and defenses, dissolve the mortar joints like sugar, crumble the bricks themselves” (2004a: 207-208). However, another passage echoes the situation many survivors face when they make

not be able to escape it even if they leave, or may find it re-created in other relationships. Second, as long as women inhabit a patriarchal society, they are never fully safe. Even if they live with non-violent partners, the threat of violence from other males is an ever-present reality. [...] Furthermore, in patriarchal discourse, women’s narratives will always be called into question, doubted, made invisible – even by other women, who may be in denial that the reality of pervasive male violence against them even exists” (Shearer-Creman and Winkelmann 2007: 10-11)

²⁷⁴ Like Ginny, the survivor-protagonist of grandfather-granddaughter incest in Dewberry Vaughn’s *Break the Heart of Me* (1994), recovers her memories of abuse outside of therapy. She is twenty-three when one day at a restaurant her mind is inundated with memories: “I could still feel my grandfather’s hand on my stomach” (1994: 20).

²⁷⁵ Many incest narratives attribute the healing mainly to the characters’ own efforts, such as in Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992), Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1983), and Elizabeth Dewberry Vaughn’s *Break the Heart of Me* (1994). In case studies, on the other hand, the opposite is often true, such as in Freud’s famous “Katharina” case (see Freud and Breuer 2001: 125ff) discussed earlier in this thesis.

an attempt at seeking help: they are afraid of not being believed because of the tendency that exists in society of reproaching the victim for the crime (see, e.g., Herman 1994: 115-118; Tal 1996: 19). Ginny is “so eager talk to someone, anyone” (2004a: 209) that she decides to go and see her pastor Henry Dodge. When she gets there he is not in his office, but outside mowing the lawn, and after waiting inside for five minutes, she panics and runs out, thinking that the pastor is “too small for his position, too anxious to fit in to our community, too sweaty and dirty and casual and unwise” (2004a: 211). Ginny does not trust him and fears that he will not understand her position, and that he will not side with her and Rose in standing up to the community. Here Smiley criticizes not the notions of securing safety, of narrating the trauma, and of reconnecting with the community, nor does she question their adequacy, but rather emphasizes the difficulties in meeting these conditions within a male-dominated society.

Narrating the story of trauma is not enough if there is no empathic and affirming listener. In part, Ginny testifies to the past suffering, and re-interprets what has happened, together with Rose, who shares the same background, and whose position as the one who remembers the family trauma, enables her to be cast in the role of a psychoanalyst in that she makes her older sister face her repressed traumatic memory, firstly by telling her what happened and then urging her to put it into words: “Say it,” “Say the words, Ginny!” (Smiley 2004a: 274, 302). However, when Ginny is reconstructing and re-interpreting her trauma narrative, the reactions of the other immediate relations are not what she had hoped for. She does not find a way to get along with her husband Ty and leaves him. Ginny no longer sees things the way he sees them. Had she stayed with him in Zebulon County, she would have had to make an attempt to get along with people whose beliefs are different from her own. When Ty comes to see Ginny at the restaurant where she now works, he does not acknowledge that the abuse ever took place. Even after Rose tells him about it “[i]t was clear he didn’t believe her” (2004a: 340).

While Smiley’s novel enacts working through in the figure of Ginny, it also emphasizes resistance to this process in the character of Rose, who does not allow herself to mourn because she believes that grieving signifies yet another condition of surrendering to the abuser’s wishes (see Herman 1994: 188). She thinks that forgiveness is “a reflex for when you can’t stand what you know” (Smiley 2004a: 356). Rose resists mourning the loss she has suffered as a result of the abuse and her resistance to mourning takes the form of fantasies of revenge and compensation. According to Herman, “The revenge fantasy is often a mirror image of the traumatic memory” but “the roles of perpetrator and victim are reversed,” that is, the fantasy is a replay of the event but the survivor is the one attacking the ag-

gressor instead of vice versa (1994: 189). In Rose's revenge fantasy, she enacts the powerful perpetrator that will take the farm away from Larry, and he is the helpless victim. As Nakadate puts it, "her need and purpose is to turn the family story into a revenger's tragedy": "Having been objectified, she is still a prisoner of the ideology and the language of commodification," and her revenge is "retribution in kind" (1999: 172). She wants Larry to pay for the suffering she has endured, and according to her measure-for-measure attitude, what better way of paying, she believes, than through making sure that Larry will lose his thousand acre farm and that she will win it? However, it is not enough that her father is crushed by revenge, however: "Destroyed isn't enough. He's got to repent and feel humiliation and regret" (Smiley 2004a: 216). Rose wants her father to admit what he has done. She believes that what her father has done to Ginny and her is still with them "until there's true remorse," that "[n]othing will be right until there's that" (2004a: 216). Rose aims for an apology from her father but never gets it. According to Herman, "[t]rue forgiveness cannot be granted until the perpetrator has sought and earned it through confession, repentance, and restitution" and "[g]enuine contrition in a perpetrator is a rare miracle" (1994: 190). Ginny's father never really confesses the abuse, nor does he ever seek to earn his daughters' forgiveness. "I can't tell you how it makes me feel that Daddy's taking some sort of refuge in being crazy," she tells Ginny, "As long as he acts crazy, then he gets off scot-free" (2004a: 235). Rose has come to the realization that her father will never acknowledge what he has done to her.

In addition to trying to reconnect with others on a personal level, a small number of survivors go on "a survivor mission" to seek justice; the aggressor should be held guilty of his or her actions "for the health of the larger society" (Herman 1994: 207, 209). After Rose finds out that Ginny does not remember the abuse, she says "He won't get away with it, Ginny. I won't let him get away with it. I just won't" (Smiley 2004a: 192). After the hearing she realizes that revenge is of no avail: she wins the farm from Larry and he is weakened, but this can never compensate for the loss she has suffered. She says: "I wanted him to feel remorse and know what he did and what he is, but [...] he's just senile. He's safe from ever knowing" (Smiley 2004a: 303). That is when she thinks everyone should know about the family secret, "She's told everybody by now," Ty tells Ginny (2004a: 340).

Smiley provides her protagonist with the last word, but Ginny chooses not to tell her sister Caroline about her and Rose's childhood past although she gathers that Rose would have: "There are just some things you have to ask for," she says (Smiley 2004a: 364). When she and Caroline meet at the farm to choose and collect personal possessions before the bank will sell the thousand-acre property,

Ginny has her chance to tell her and makes a futile attempt but Caroline refuses to listen: “You never have any evidence!” she says (2004a: 363). She does not want to believe that her father mistreated his two oldest daughters; she does not want her childhood ruined. She tells Ginny, “You’re going to wreck my childhood for me” and claims that Ginny has “a thing” against their father (2004a: 362, 363). Even when suddenly for one moment, Caroline is at a loss as to what to do and Ginny “could tell her everything, pour it right into her ear, with no resistance on her part” (2004a: 363), she does not tell her the trauma of her past because she does not find an empathic listener in her. As the reader will recall, the people in the community were on Larry’s side, not on hers and Rose’s. Their stories are contested and challenged by their receiving community. The negative reception makes them doubly violated and forecloses the therapeutic function of affirmative listening. This puts the reader in an important position: *A Thousand Acres* implicates the reader as a responsible witness, calling upon him or her to listen empathically to Ginny’s credible story, allowing for a reading of the incest-abused daughter’s plight in which she is believed.

By gradually moving away from the trauma through an increasing understanding of it, the narrator of *A Thousand Acres* appears to have achieved some form of understanding of what happened as she continues to work through her traumatic legacy: she is no longer fully possessed by it. Writing her own history, she also writes her future. Smiley’s narrative opens up a space for Ginny to repossess her inheritance of pain so that an alternative future can be imagined. In the closing moments of the novel, she has finally accepted the loss she has suffered as a result of the abuse, and remembers both the good that was lost and the bad, and she claims that “each vanished person left [her] something” – her “inheritance” (Smiley 2004a: 370). Reviewing the past in the present in terms of her subsequent insights and experiences, she explains in the epilogue:

When I am reminded of Jess, I think of the loop of poison we drank from [...] I am reminded of Jess when I see one of my five children on the street, an eleven-year-old, a thirteen-year-old, a fifteen-year-old, a nineteen-year-old, a twenty-two-year-old. Jess left me some anger at that.

Anger itself reminds me of Rose, but so do most of the women I see on the street, who [...] ride children on their hips with the swaying grace that she had, raise their voices wishfully, knowingly, indignantly, ruefully, ironically, affectionately, candidly, and even wrongly. Rose left me a riddle I haven’t solved, of how we judge those who have hurt us when they have shown no remorse or even understanding.

[...] Waking in the dark reminds me of Daddy, cooking reminds me of Daddy, the whole wide expanse of the mid-continental sky, which is where we look for signs of trouble – that, too, reminds me of Daddy.

A certain type of man reminds me of Ty, and when I think of him I remember the ordered, hardworking world I used to live in, Ty's good little planet. (2004a: 370)

In Minrose Gwin's words, Ginny "herself is a compression of others": of Jess, her lost children, Rose, Ty, and her father (2002: 109). She continues to work through her past, and as she continues to work at the restaurant and take care of Rose's two daughters, she studies part time at the University of Minnesota, majoring in psychology (2004a: 358). Thus, as Gwin points out, this compression "has its expansive points, extending beyond her father and his dominion, beyond her unborn children and failed marriage, beyond even her own desires" (2002: 109). Barbara Sheldon believes that Ginny works in the field of psychology at the time she narrates her trauma story for the reader because, as she puts it, Ginny's "new life is one of minute analysis and of talking about problems instead of letting them smolder under appearances": now she "talks about problems openly, faces her past, and tries to use her knowledge for the good of others" (1997: 60).²⁷⁶

But *A Thousand Acres* has a non-redemptive narrative closure. Smiley criticizes the notion of complete recovery, of working through once and for all: "what is left at the end of this story is [...] the fluctuation between compression and expansion" (Gwin 2002: 109). Ginny is left with scars: for instance, she has difficulties in her later relationships with men: "Solitude is part of my inheritance, too. Men are friendly to me at the restaurant, and sometimes they ask me to a movie," but "[i]t is easier, and more seductive, to leave those doors closed," she says (Smiley 2004a: 369). Smiley shows here that, despite surviving and making a life for herself, living is not easy in the aftermath of trauma because closing the loop between remembering and forgetting in order to move on is not wholly possible. The past cannot be undone.

In the epilogue's last paragraph, Ginny tells the reader that the "inheritance," or "the gleaming obsidian shard" as she calls it, she is most protective of is the ability to imagine her father's crimes that he himself probably refused to remember, "the goad of an unthinkable urge, pricking him, pressing him, wrapping him in an impenetrable fog of self that must have seemed, when he wandered around the

²⁷⁶ As evidence for her claim, Sheldon (1997: 60) cites, for instance, Ginny's remark about Rose, that "she had that large-eyed, astonished-but-not-surprised look about her that I've since seen on other cancer patients" (Smiley 2004a: 57).

house late at night after working and drinking, like the very darkness” (Smiley 2004a: 370-371). Caroline Cakebread puts it aptly when she indicates that “Ginny’s ability to penetrate her father’s exterior and to open herself up to what he must have been feeling at his lowest point as a human being – the point at which he hurt her the most – goes beyond the economics of forgiveness” (1999: 100).²⁷⁷ Moving beyond forgiveness here does not mean acceptance of the transgression, but a forgetting in the sense of releasing bitterness, making peace with it, and letting go of the past’s hold over one’s present life. Unlike Rose, Ginny has not resisted mourning or working through but has reconstructed the trauma to herself and has thereby come to some sort of understanding of what has happened to her and what it means. Now, that she finally remembers, she will never forget how her father came into her room at night and repeatedly raped her. However, there is also a rejection of the traditional discourse of casting blame on the transgressing parent. Smiley does not want her readers to completely demonize Larry, because such a polarized perspective, which is an initial response to traumatic experience, will not be constructive in the long run. In trauma literature, a binary division of good and evil can be linked to a split in consciousness of traumatized characters where it functions as a defensive mechanism for maintaining a more benign and seemingly just view of the world. In the words of Roland Granofsky, “Viewing the perpetrators of a traumatic event as totally evil, for instance, and using this as a causal explanation for the event itself, will be temporarily consoling, but will freeze the individual or society within the regressive stage of development” (1995: 110). While such a Manichean explanation or juxtaposition of good and evil in general so dominates the American dream worldview, it will not allow for a coming to terms with the past or a working through of the trauma.

Critics who have commented on this figural “obsidian shard” have interpreted it variously as a protection against Ginny’s father, symbolizing her resistance, as a symbol of her past, and in some cases as a link to that past that carries over into the future and a possible construction of a new identity. Susan Strehle compares it to “an arrowhead to clutch in the night against her father’s arrival,” symbolizing the language through which she gained her memory, and which is now “transformed into the weapon of her resistance” (2000: 224). Marina Paniccia Carden’s reading is cognate with Strehle’s: “As a weapon and a tool, this ‘shard’ – her

²⁷⁷ In some contemporary incest narratives, the abused party does forgive her abuser, not in the sense that she condones the crime but as part of a healing process. The narrator in Sylvia Fraser’s memoir *My Father’s House* (1987) claims that she forgives her father, who has sexually abused her since she was a small child, “so I can forgive myself” (1989: 241), and the molested child Frances in Ann-Marie MacDonald’s *Fall on Your Knees* (1996) as an adult forgives her incestuous father.

knowing and speaking of what is unknowable and unspeakable in paternal language – propels and preserves her break through the unsaid” (1997: 198). In Tore Høgås’s analysis, the shard is linked to the jar of poisoned sausages and helps her to guard against falling back into “the destructive system of Zebulon County” that “she both was an integral part of and a victim of” (Høgås 2001: 72, 73). Marina Leslie and Cakebread see Smiley’s metaphor (of the obsidian shard) as a link to the stygian darkness of Ginny’s traumatic history, but whereas the former views it as “something hard and sharp and black that connects her to her past” without “a sense of her future” (Leslie 1998: 48), the latter sees it also as part of her future in terms of her capacity to deal with that past “and to integrate it into a new sense of herself” (Cakebread 1999: 101).

The “gleaming obsidian shard” is, like a cat’s eye, a *summa* of all of these (above) things, and more. It is simultaneously a safeguard against Ginny’s father and what he and the community represent as well as a reference to the past and the future, potentially a bulwark against forgetting. This chapter argues that the metaphoric shard symbolizes trauma in both its temporal and spatial aspects and that time and space merge in it. It represents broken pieces of a history shattered by trauma, unveiling what was not known or only obliquely so of the past in the past. But this link between past, present, and future is not only temporal; it is spatial, too, in terms of representing a symbolic memory-site. In this sense it refers to Ginny’s memory/remembering and has a commemorative importance. Time and space meet, as it were. In her analysis of the trope of the obsidian shard in the novel, Minrose Gwin reminds us of the word’s original or ancient meaning as *obsidional*, relating to the word obsess in the sense of being under siege and (2002: 109), which consequently connects it to the trauma in the novel in its temporal aspect of being possessed by a traumatic history (this is obvious from the fact that about ninety percent of the novel’s three hundred and seventy-one pages deal with Ginny’s past and only about forty pages with her “afterlife,” as Ginny calls the most recent years of her life) (Smiley 2004a: 334). The material nature of a shard, on the other hand, the hard volcanic glass (Gwin 2002: 109) also links it to an obsession with the material space which holds the memory. In other words, the image is weighted with double references. Smiley’s use of a material metaphor, as it were, serves as a connection to nature, to “The productions of landscape, of earth” (Gwin 2002: 109). Jane Bakerman correctly links the shard with nature in terms of ecological issues: “A family cannot thrive with its roots in poisoned soil. The agrarian dream turns nightmare when exploitation replaces nurture” (1992: 136). The image of the shard is a part of something related to other parts, serving to signify interconnectedness, nature’s immutable laws of interrelatedness in which everything is related to everything else.

As such, the symbolic shard in *A Thousand Acres* is connected to knowledge or insight in trauma. Jay Lifton, who has interviewed and written on survivors of such catastrophes as Hiroshima, Vietnam, and the Holocaust, has observed that trauma survivors talk about having gained some sort of insight from their traumatic experiences, that they have learned something, something which “has to do with knowledge of death,” and a knowledge some say they would not want to be without (in Caruth 1995c: 135). In fact, Freud emphasized that “people can really only achieve insight through their own hurt and their own experience” (2003a: 40). As an epiphanic mirror of possible insight, the symbol of the obsidian shard in *A Thousand Acres* counters the fear to confront the past that has pervaded much of the novel. “I’m afraid to see,” Ginny tells Rose, “afraid of anything having to do with Daddy” (Smiley 2004a: 211). The shard symbolically suggests Ginny’s confrontation with the past, and as a mirror object, it is now reflecting back at her, imaging her newly discovered knowledge.

Smiley is not alone in employing obsidian as a source of illumination in a context of remembering childhood sexual abuse. In the introduction to her *The Obsidian Mirror: An Adult Healing from Incest* (1988), Louise M. Wisechild writes: “Ancient Mexicans used mirrors of obsidian for visions. Some believe that gazing into polished obsidian brings whatever an individual needs to deal with the the [sic] surface of consciousness. Looking into the mirror, I saw buried scenes from my past” (qtd in Tal 1996: 206). Protagonists of other incest novels than Smiley’s, too, make use of either real material objects or images to suggest symbolic sources of insight or even the lack thereof. The artist and incested daughter in Patricia Chao’s *Monkey King* contemplates at the end of her novel on “jagged shards,” accidentally broken glass, linking these symbolically to her attempted suicide and literally to her history of self-harm into something that expands her traumatic vision into a fusion of her art and her life. Sally tells her reader that the morning she had tried to kill herself, “It was my doom to be able to see, to feel [...] and not be able to translate. Still at that moment I’d known: this life is exquisite” (1998: 306, 307). The protagonist in Sally Patterson Tubach’s *Memoir of a Terrorist* (1996), on the other hand, never remembers the sexual abuse to which she was subject at the hands of her father, nor can she consciously recollect the bondage murder of which she is accused and for which she awaits trial in a mental asylum. In her mind, what she has blocked out “has become like a smooth, polished silver ball. Everything surrounding this ball is reflected in its shining surface, but no matter how I turn it, it doesn’t seem to have an inside, or if it does, there’s no way of penetrating to it. [...] You go deeper and deeper into its transparent molecular structure, which looks soft and lace-like, until you approach the center. Then you see this pulsating red ball which forms its core. All of its power is enclosed in it, seemingly unreachable” (1996: 167-168).

Smiley's protagonist Ginny has realized that an obsidian shard, like her newfound insight, can be used for good or for ill, "A sharp thing, used for cutting, for surgery, in other times for spears and knives" (Gwin 2002: 109). The "gleaming obsidian shard," more than anything else, represents in *A Thousand Acres* Ginny's textual working through, a story that is not merely a dark story in time but a narrative that also links time to space, as it is passed on to the reader.

7.3 Reading as Witnessing

The ending of *A Thousand Acres* has generated somewhat contradictory views by author and readers alike. Smiley herself has said that since the structure of the novel follows Shakespeare's play, it is formally a tragedy with a tragic conclusion (2001: 162). But she has also said that her book has a positive finale for the new generation, Pam and Linda, who "have escaped the sense of danger that their mother communicated to them," and who understand about the past, and also possibly for Ginny who, when relieved of the farm, can "explore her own talent for life" (1998: 70). The fact that "Ginny and Rose can talk about it [the incest], and Ginny and her nieces can talk about it," and that "they can go into the future making lives for themselves," Smiley has said, is "a movement away from the apocalypse" (in Berne 1992: 37).

The novel's ending divided the critics, too, who were at a loss as to whether to view it in a positive or more negative light. Whereas some have interpreted the conclusion as closing on a hopeful note (see, for instance, Amano 2005; Carden 1997; Keppel 1995; Nakadate 1999), others view it as less positive or at best ambiguous (see, e.g., Alter 1999; Carr 2000a; Sanders 2001; Schiff 1998). Those critics who interpret the outcome as somewhat optimistic often mention the new generation, Pam and Linda, and emphasize hope on an individual level. Tim Keppel believes that "Ginny's final act is life-affirming: she washes the poisoned preserves down the sink and resolves to push on, knowing that she has Rose's daughters to care for" and that she is now far better off knowing the truth (1995: 113, 115). On the other hand, those who tend to read Smiley's conclusion in a more somber way do so in part at least because recovery is not a simple matter: Julie Sanders thinks that the finale of the novel is all but hopeful because "the farm, like family memories, will never really be escaped" and "nothing is really forgotten" (2001: 213). According to ecofeminist readings of the novel, the ending is at best ambiguous: Glynis Carr claims the novel is a warning because "rebirth – whether individual, cultural, or natural – is not guaranteed" (2000a: 134). Such critics often find the ending tragic because the past and the farm remain with Ginny in her mind and as poisons in the bloodstream, "[t]he physical body and

the land are limits, are not entirely malleable,” battling with toxins “and with the grip on our reproductive lives” (Slicer 1998: 69), or because Ginny’s relationship with nature is seen as “cut off” (Mathieson 1999: 141).

These differing assessments of the close of the novel are reflective of the contradictory conclusion itself: Ginny survives and testifies to her own history, but she is still scarred by it. Thus both critical lines are at least partly correct. *A Thousand Acres* offers a happy outcome of sorts in that the protagonist walks out of her past to record her story and that of the land, allowing the memory to live on and the reader to witness and re-imagine the meaning of it all. The open ending also gestures toward optimism in that it holds out the promise of transformation: what Smiley seems to emphasize is the need to tell the truth of the past, to move on and to offer the possibility to effect change. However, as Marina Leslie aptly puts it, “Forgetting is a kind of death, but then so also is remembering. While we can applaud Ginny’s ability to walk away, to underestimate her enduring emotional scars is to contribute to the suppression of the memory of what she has suffered and what her suffering has made her capable of” (1998: 48). In refraining from compensating for the trauma by offering a redemptive narrative, and instead refusing total closure, the novel also bleakly conveys the tragic aftermath and painful legacy of incest trauma.

The ending of *A Thousand Acres* is again equivocal simply because it reflects the contradiction inherent in trauma; it is connected to the tension between remembering and forgetting, and the risk to lose what Cathy Caruth calls “the force of its *affront to understanding*” (1995a: 154, original emphasis). More than anything, the divergent critical readings of *A Thousand Acres* bespeak the novel’s hold over them. Trauma literature, like Smiley’s book, powerfully conveys the shocking force intrinsic to trauma. Her novel does not understand too much, however, as the discordant readings of the book’s ending seem to indicate. As traumatic events refuse full understanding, so does the finale of *A Thousand Acres*. In this sense there is no end(ing). The impact has not been lost. Minrose Gwin says that after reading the book “for the fourth or fifth time” she “realized anew just how devastating and haunting a novel it is and how difficult to speak or write about”: Ginny “seems to have exceeded her own history while continuing to bear its story as her burden – a burden [...] that she places on the reader’s shoulders as well” (2002: 66-67, 109).

Thus, in this kind of fiction, the trauma is partly the reader’s, too. Ginny’s (and Rose’s) suffering also implicates the reader. Gwin concludes: “I feel that the most appropriate response to it is to sit for days and weep for daughters everywhere” (2002: 66-67). Trauma narratives like *A Thousand Acres* offer up a textual space

for working through the trauma for its characters, and demands that the reader gives them an audience. This is where empathy comes in; empathic witnessing provides a particular kind of insight denied by the limitations of reason, to understand the phenomenon of extremity. The willingness to empathically witness, on a textual level, unimaginable events that are so painful that they even surpass complete working through and full closure, may provide a space for the possibility of change, of healing the world, while at the same time also make sure that these events are not forgotten. Books like *A Thousand Acres* open up a space of possibilities both on an individual and a cultural level, demonstrating that, although the past haunts the present and possibly also the future, it can also on a textual level serve to work through it through empathic witnessing. As Jane Smiley herself puts it, “You don’t write a novel to salve a wound, but to bear witness” (2005: 8).

8 CONCLUSION

[A]ll efforts to confront and remember the past must be preceded by a consideration of the perspective from which we, as belated witnesses, view the event.

— Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction*, 2004

The concluding words of this study circle back to the issues that were raised in the space of its opening pages relating to trauma's intrinsic spatio-temporal structure – an unexpected and therefore shocking experience that is not understood as it occurs but is repeatedly re-enacted later and elsewhere rather than remembered, thus offering fundamental challenges to preconceived ideas of referentiality and reality as well as defying traditional notions of time and space. The crisis that trauma invariably entails raises issues of representation, memory, and witnessing with specific implications for literary studies. In addition, trauma literature presents readers with radically new problems of interpretation. As trauma is not fully experienced upon occurrence and only available belatedly and somewhere else, it can then only be represented through a failure to possess time and space, narrated through temporal (dis)ruptions and spatial (dis)locations.

An “unclaimed experience,” as Cathy Caruth calls it (1996a), trauma is a phenomenon that is not experienced upon occurrence and thus forecloses witnessing from within the experience itself. It is this inability to witness the traumatic event from the inside that Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992) have asserted, lies at the very heart of trauma. Jane Kilby puts the point precisely: “No one has or possesses the inside view, perhaps least of all the victims, since they cannot bear to witness the horror of what is happening to them” (2007: 90).

But nor can trauma be witnessed from without. Suspended between time and space, it hovers also between the sociocultural and the individual, disrupting while sustaining private/public or inside/outside binary distinctions and borders, which means that it is not situated within or without, but that it (con)verges on the boundary lines between inside and outside; it is simultaneously a private and a public phenomenon with both personal and socio-cultural causes and implications. In addition to the failure of witnessing traumatic experience from within, then, some challenges to bearing witness come from the outside. Traumatic recall does not emerge as ordinary memory, straightforwardly narrativized, which in turn raise questions as to the truthfulness of the witnessing. Rather than untellable or uncommunicated, the traumatic experience is not acknowledged from without.

Trauma can only be testified to, and then possibly also understood and worked through, at the threshold between the inside and the outside by way of narration in a meeting of belated empathetic interlocution, which does not deny but instead moves beyond historical “truth.” This thesis started out from the assumption that literature and literary criticism can achieve the relationality of listening needed for empathetic witnessing in a meeting between author/text and reader, emphasizing that reading trauma not only mimics the testimonial process but rather is one. Narratives of trauma invariably bespeak the inherent tension in trauma between an “untellable” event in the past and the exigency to narrate and testify to the experience in the present in an effort to perhaps work through it. Today’s trauma readers and key trauma theorists stress the crucial role of literature in containing traumatic excess emphasizing the particular role or responsibility of literary scholars. Laurie Vickroy emphasizes that “Scholarship and literature on trauma is an important part of a group support process” (2002: 19), and Geoffrey Hartman argues for a more (com)passionate style in literary criticism (see Hartman 2004b), and is wary of “apparently disinterested scholarship” because academic readers “are, or should be, intellectual witnesses” (2004c: 23, 24). Literature and literary criticism, as this present work suggests, have an important role to play in resisting repression of traumatic experiences in an attempt to offer at least the possibility of effecting change. A responsibility to bear witness, in turn, raises predicaments that are inherently ethical. Trauma narratives are ethical precisely because, as Hartman notes, they address “the other as a responsive, vulnerable, even unpredictable being” (1995: 549). There is neither testimony nor story without readers. Hartman puts the point precisely; “unclaimed experience’ [...] can only be reclaimed by literary knowledge” (in Caruth 1996b: 641).

Engaging with one of the most troubling topics of contemporary society, the present thesis has attempted to open up questions about the representation of trauma that demands a more radical model of reading than has heretofore been proposed in literary studies, an alternative mode of reading trauma which is already implicated in many trauma narratives themselves. As the preceding pages have demonstrated, this study has endeavored to explore the representation, reading, and possible working through of trauma by exploring temporal and spatial references: if writing trauma entails writing time and space, then reading trauma must perforce attend to an understanding of trauma in these terms. The division of this thesis into two parts moves between a focus on temporal and spatial aspects and issues. Reading Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* in relation to the *Lear* group of father-daughter incest stories in dialogue with modern trauma theory and contextualized against other contemporary female-authored *Lears* – by The Women’s Theatre Group & Elaine Feinstein, Mairi MacInnes, Margaret Atwood, Lucy Ellmann, Valerie Miner, Ann Tyler, and Laura Esquivel – it has explored trauma’s

time in relation to intertextuality as a kind of subversive cultural memory, whereby the unclaimed moment of trauma in a previous text not only haunts later generations of writers but also engages the person who is implicated by reading to remember as a form of resistance against cultural forgetting. Yet, as this volume indicates, trauma is also acted out, and possibly worked over through references to geographical, bodily, and textual space. By drawing on contemporary trauma theory in dialogue with ecocriticism, this thesis has also read the expression of trauma in relation to depictions of the poisoned farmland in *A Thousand Acres*, emphasizing a connection between the land destruction and the abuse of the daughters' bodies in the novel. The juxtaposition of trauma theory and green studies indicates that the doubly erased corporeal space of violation emerges as a testament to both the sexual abuse and the environmental destruction. Providing it can convey trauma's tempo-spatially disruptive force, this exploration of the representation of literary trauma ultimately suggests that trauma fiction itself, such as Smiley's novel, can become a memory-site for remembering and bearing witness.

Lastly, the new mode of reading trauma offered in these pages opens questions that reach beyond the purview of this thesis. Do the results move beyond its scope of reading pure fictional works of incest trauma and are they particular to the *Lear* cluster of incest narratives, Smiley's novel, and the other contemporary *Lears*? The analyses in this study raise questions of whether this approach (of reading trauma) is suitable also for literary incest narratives of lived experience, and whether perhaps it applies also to literary representations of other kinds of trauma, fictional or non-fictional. These are questions that can generate future work on representing and reading trauma. The division of the study into the two parts again raises questions that also concern the very essence of trauma itself: to what extent is trauma temporal, or rather atemporal? To what degree is it spatial, or aspatial? Thus, this new mode of reading trauma – given the transdisciplinary nature of trauma studies – perhaps even moves beyond the boundaries of literary studies in discussions of trauma, memory, and narrative. Thus these findings can be expected to have validity not only for literary criticism focusing on trauma and/or father-daughter incest but may also raise issues of relevance for how different types of trauma narratives can be read or listened to in different fields. This study has sought to function as an aperture for questions about the problem of trauma, and to define it through its relationship to time and space.

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