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The Other on Her Own Grounds: Female Subjectivity and Subject Becoming  
in the Works of Marie Darrieussecq and Natalena Koroleva

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# Introduction

At her presentation at the Department of French and Italian Studies of the University of Arizona Marie Darrieussecq is asked two questions: what it means for her to be a French novelist and what it means to be French. In response to the first question she tells a story of administrative oppression, in which her friend, born in Morocco to French parents, who had been born into former French colonies, had long-lasting trouble to “prove her Frenchness” while applying for a travel document. She lists it as an example of the absurd realities of bureaucracy, in which absolutely anyone can be questioned as a legitimate subject, and concludes: “I have absolutely no idea what it means to be French except I don’t know” (Darrieussecq 2012).

In response to the question on what it means to be a French writer, Darrieussecq posits, that it is to write in the French language. Being of Basque origin, for her, writing in French is a conscious choice, which brings out many contradictions. Since the Basque Country has a long and violent history of resistance, and because it is divided between the two states where the common aspect and idea is the Basque language, writing in Basque, Darrieussecq states, is a “political issue” (Darrieussecq 2012). Although in many of her novels she brings up the question of Basque identity and occasionally employs Basque vocabulary, all of her writing is in the French language, because, as she explains, she set herself a different goal:

*My mother tongue is Basque, and some of my fellow Basque writers see me as a traitor, because I write in French, which is in a way the language of the oppressor. (...) the Basque do have an identity, and I come from there, and I agree in some way: I am a traitor. But my aim is not to save the Basque country. My aim is to be read. (Darrieussecq 2012)*

As the presentation continues, Darrieussecq refers to Bernardo Atxaga, who translates his own writings from Basque into French, which “is not a betrayal”, however, it does illustrate a certain awareness, that writing in a small language, in Darrieussecq’s terms, puts a writer into a corner, “a geographical corner and also in a linguistic corner” (Darrieussecq 2012).

Conversely, Natalena Koroleva, who is known as a Ukrainian writer but was ethnically Polish and Spanish, decided to write in Ukrainian, the language she learned in her childhood which she spent in Volyn', Western Ukraine, at the estate of her father, a Polish count. After obtaining education at a Catholic boarding house in the French Pyrenees, she arrived in Kyiv, to where her father had moved in the meantime, in order to continue her education at the Kyiv Institute for Noble Maidens (Kopach 2011). Kyiv was part of the Russian empire at that time, and Koroleva, Dunin-Borkowska then, found herself unable to communicate in any language, known to her, until she mastered Russian. She described this period of her life in the autobiographical novella "Without Roots" (1936), one of the many she wrote in Ukrainian, the language she rediscovered at the age of 31, after having emigrated to Prague. Her biographers believe that it was her husband, Vasyl Koroliv-Staryi, who suggested that she started writing in the Ukrainian language. He was a writer, a publisher and one of the founders of Ukrainian Central Council, the revolutionary parliament of Ukraine in 1917-1918, that fell under pressure of the newly formed Soviet Union, leaving emigration as their only choice (Plochy 2017). Whether it really was his influence, it can be debated, but since 1919 for more than twenty years the journals of Western Ukrainian regions, which were not yet part of the Soviet Union, as well as editions in Czechoslovakia included her works (Kopach 2011). Her nouvelle "Quid est veritas?" was published in Chicago in 1961. She never returned to Ukraine and died in Czechoslovakia in 1966; her attempts to establish contacts with Kyiv publishing houses and Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the Ukrainian Socialist Republic did not succeed (Tiurmenko 2010).

In writing this thesis, I wonder, how come the biography is still relevant nowadays, in post-Barthesian times, after the author is officially "dead" and the text rises as an independent unity? (Barthes 143) Does text in its structure not contain everything the reader needs to know? If the author is dead and the reader is "a man without history, without biography, without psychology", there seems to be no need to place a text into any context (Barthes). If a text by itself a combination of non-original intertextualities coming from endless cultural sources and written always here and now, what does it make of an author's and a reader's backgrounds? (Barthes) Still, as a female reader, I tend to resist a definition of my role as "a man without history," and argue on the feminist side of the critique, which views writing and reading as embodied practices, where the structuralist

ideas do not have to be objected to. However, I believe, readership is an intersubjective work, where the author's lived experience may (or may as well not) serve as an intertextual element, especially in life writing. As I choose to work through the feminist lens in this thesis, my aim is to reclaim women's authorship and respect the differences of every singular experience. Since I agree with the idea that the text is always constituted here and now, I believe that the readers' interactions with the text are also unique, and I acknowledge, that this analysis is shaped by my subjective reality.

These two authors may seem an unusual choice for comparison: a modern Francophone writer, translated into more than 40 languages, and a Ukrainian-speaking Modernist writer, who has never received a wide acclaim even in Ukraine. They seem to be situated on different sides of various power structures, or they *would* be situated at the opposite sides of, for instance, (post)colonial power structures, if we compare the position of female subjects in the two imperialist states (Plokhly 2017). However, although the two authors' contexts are generally different, the ways they relate to language echo in many ways with each other, as well as to what it means to be a female speaker, and the differences between them only form additional space for analysis. Moreover, because the two authors tend to employ confessional narrative techniques and their individual writing styles comprise many traits of *écriture féminine*, I find it relevant to place their works side by side in this research. *L'écriture féminine*, the term from Hélène Cixous's *Laugh of Medusa*, stands for writing as a semiotic practice and centers on the self-determination of women as subjects, and I argue that the works of Darrieussecq and Koroleva are bright examples of women's writing (Cixous 1976).

As a reader, I cannot stay impersonal in relation to a text, and keep my subjectivity from intertwining with the text as it is being created anew by my engaging with it here and now. With a phenomenological approach to reading - by this I mean the understanding of reading as a process of appearing, and, consequently, performing, whereas I disagree that objects can be examined as they appear to *any* consciousness (as in the ultimate goal of phenomenology) - the interpretation I offer is guided by my attention to the agency of the female protagonists in the novels by Marie Darrieussecq and Natalena Koroleva, and to the dynamics of the intersubjectivities between the author and the narrator, the author and the focalizer, the author and the reader. I situate my study in continuity with feminist phenomenology since I believe that such an approach can bring out the embodied agency,

movements and actions of the female protagonist. The discussion of feminist phenomenology and feminist literary theory frames the analyses developed in the rest of the work. As to language, I believe it is possible to bypass the agency versus structure binary and regard language neither specifically as an identity forming tool, nor the symbolic and normative, but as a means of embodiment: where the border between the “natural” and cultural” is only a meeting point. Language does not have to be antonymous to the material and somatic realities, and in my analysis it does not stand solely for the theoretical; on the contrary, it is highly representational. Therefore, as an object of study, it can be viewed both as a cultural marker (a marker of identity) and as the expressive function of the body, as it pertains to the body. If we also regard the text as a body, the language adhering to it becomes essentially the matter.

It should as well be mentioned, that reading in translation is a more complex intersubjective process, since it involves the interaction with the translator, who acts as the third side. If a language is a symbolic unity but can as well be pertain to a body, and if a text in its integrity and materiality can be compared to a body, then the text is a body with which I interact by means of my language, which is key to this interaction. The meanings that are created in this *here and now* are not impersonal, but always based on my previous lived experience, individual thinking processes and individual imagination coming from a complex subjective reality. As I interact with the original text, because the works of these two authors are not translated into English, the pattern is different than the one of the interaction with the text, in which a translator becomes the second producer. I chose the texts with which I interact in the original, I am aware of the fact that my translation of the passages which I offer in the analysis is shaped by my personal relationship to both languages and may be different from other translators.

What concerns the lived experience, I must say that I have felt the power-based implications of different languages long before I learned what these terms stand for. As a person, whose mother tongue is Ukrainian and who can speak other languages, I have experienced how differently power is assigned to the languages of the majorities and minorities with different socio-political histories, and how, for a female subject, by the work of the intersectional entanglements, a language she chooses to employ has a strong impact on her symbolic placement in the socio-political structure: uplifting her social standing or locating her deeper into the periphery. Coming from a city in Central-Western

Ukraine, that had not yet recovered from the post-colonial trauma and, in particular, the ill-informed prospect onto the Ukrainian language as inferior, it was troublesome for me as a child to feel at home speaking my mother tongue, without regularly being assumed to have a different (lower) social background or to be a migrant from more Western parts of Ukraine or the countryside. It became even more problematic when at the age of fifteen, inspired by winning a high prize at the state olympiad of the Ukrainian language and literature, I started speaking the standardized literary language as opposed to *surzhyk*<sup>1</sup> spoken by the majority - this time can be marked as the beginning of a certain realization of what it means to be *the other on her own grounds* and, alongside with it, becoming a female subject. Concurrently, I assume, it is a typical timing for a female person to start her (self-)realization as a subject and to start having and receiving a different treatment from the environment, where she becomes positioned at the intersection of various power systems. I have to underline here, that by the term *subject* I mean a position, as opposed to the one of an object, although it may as well include the object position in itself. Most importantly, it is a placement, that is never fixed, and henceforth, one can not continually *be* the subject: it is rather a process of becoming.

What does *subject* mean in feminist theory? What does the word *subject* mean? Should I use this word with a definite or indefinite article? Should I capitalize it? In different drafts of my thesis I have tried out all of these variants and the work ended up having different connotations. It became almost poetic, as a trope of unsteadiness, as a trick, a mirage that goes away (some women do not even believe in it: that this position can be achieved).

After I started using the literary norm of language for my everyday communication, questions about my origins became a mundane part of living in the environment, where *this* language was not the norm. In Sara Ahmed's terms, when someone *appears* as different, their lives become interrupted as they are asked to justify their presence, their belonging to a *familiar/familial* spaces (Ahmed 2010); it may seem bizarre when justification is demanded for speaking your mother tongue on your own grounds, but that is common to

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<sup>1</sup> Vernacular language that is characterized by a high percent of Russian vocabulary integrated into Ukrainian language; by some sources considered a variant of the norm or an interlanguage (Bilaniuk).

all postcolonial realities: as, for instance, in Marie Darrieussecq's example of the absurdist bureaucracy in the beginning of this introduction.

Would it be justified to say that the process of becoming a female subject starts at a certain age? It may be disputed, however, for me as a child, language has not been as much the marker of the body, as it has become after puberty. The language has become real to me: as real, as the pronunciation of hushing sibilants, the postalveolar fricatives, always solid, never softened, foregrounding the "different" way of speaking.

While the author is dead, the language is alive. Both authors in this analysis believe, that in order to be a writer of a certain nation one needs to write in a certain language. Darrieussecq regards French as the language of the oppressor, but, nevertheless, subordinates her writings to it with an agenda that does not involve subordination. This act can be compared to a feminist choice of living that does not aim to subvert the system, but through entering it and operating its language she becomes heard. Darrieussecq puts on the body of the language, making the language serve her, the full-fledged female subject; and so do her characters, always women, who travel, who speak for themselves, who write, who write themselves - in *this* language. Koroleva chooses a different language to write herself; a language that is not the language of the heard: in her time, there was not such a state as Ukraine, and the nation itself was as well being questioned (Schur). As a woman and someone belonging to the underprivileged, she chooses an underprivileged language to write herself. She never explains this choice, but remains faithful to it among all the other languages; she is an emigrant, a woman, an emigrant writer, a female writer - by many intersections situated at the periphery of the Symbolic Order. Simultaneously, she chooses a language of the periphery, which becomes thus an explicable choice for writing herself insofar as an expression of being in contact with herself through language (Plokhy 2017). For a female author, an underprivileged language can as well be a source of empowerment, as is writing.

A foreign language is every language, that is not one's mother tongue. What does it take to create an original work in a supposedly foreign language: conquering, penetrating, inhabiting the structure of something that should be considered as foreign? Julia Kristeva, who compares the learnt language to a prosthesis, writes this idea in the learnt language, and has a wide acclaim as a French, not Bulgarian, psychoanalyst, novelist, theorist: the language defining her belonging to a space (Kristeva 1988).



Therefore, this thesis is dedicated to the figure of the Other and to positioning the Other within the Self, as in Kristeva's trope of Strangers to Ourselves. My focus belongs to female emigrants and the question, at which level or to what extent our so-called 'roots' (the social space at birth, the mother tongue, the entangled histories) determine us and where the language stands in this definition. This work concerns women writers as full-fledged agents within location and language politics, struggling agents/subjects and, therefore, the *becoming* subjects.

For the analysis I engage with two novels of Marie Darrieussecq: "A Brief Stay With the Living" and "The Country", and with the autobiographical novella of Natalena Koroleva "Without Roots". Hence, the analytical chapter is divided into two subchapters: the first part committed to the analysis of "A Brief Stay with the Living" solely, and the second is the comparative analysis of Darrieussecq's self-writing technique in "The Country" and Koroleva's confessional autobiography. I distinguish "A Brief Stay with the Living" as a work that requires an independent subchapter, because it concentrates not as much on self-writing (in comparison to "The Country" and "Without Roots"), but its focus lies primarily within the representation of competing intersubjectivities, born from one body, metaphorically and literally - as the story portrays the Mother and her three daughters. Having acquired contrasting embodiments and attitudes towards environment or space, the four female protagonists relate very differently to their bodies, their languages, their homes, their home country, having each their own histories of displacement. The author-narrator travels from one embodied subjectivity to another, at times narrating from the first person, at times from the third, with the protagonists acting as subjects and as objects. I aim to analyse how the author function is at work in Darrieussecq's writing, and seek to respond, if (and how) Darrieussecq's writing is women's writing (more specifically, *écriture féminine*). This novel poses many questions about what it means to be in one's body, on one's own grounds, what is someone's ground, what it really means to be a female subject - and well illustrates the interaction of female subjectivities within different politics of location, giving subtle and poetic accounts on how subjects are shaped by it, impacted by it, how domestic or foreign spaces add different dynamics to their becoming.

As for "The Country", I will analyse it in a dialogue with N. Koroleva's "Without Roots". Since Darrieussecq has a very distinct poetics and uses a similar technique of

writing the female subjectivity in both novels, I do delve into the intersubjective details of the narrative plot of “The Country”, but aim to research, how the female subjectivity in the novel is shaped by resolving the question of the Other in the language.

All the three novels raise questions of foreignness, and I will try to understand this problem by engaging with the feminist theories of Julia Kristeva (her theory of the foreign space and language in “Strangers to Ourselves”), Simone de Beauvoir’s debate with Hegel on Self and Other, Adrienne Rich’s politics of location and Judith Butler’s (and Husserl’s) concept of performativity. The Introduction is thus followed by three theoretical sections: 1) Is He the Subject, is She the Other? 2) Subject and Author 3) Performativity, Other and Location, and two analytical sections: 1) Analysis: “A Brief Stay with the Living” and 2) Comparative Analysis: Darrieussecq and Koroleva.

I write this thesis in the learnt language, and therefore, I also seek to comprehend what it means to write from my body using the language of the majority. Is it what it takes to be heard? Is it the way of subverting the system from within? As a writer and a poet, should I aim to be read or regard the mother tongue as the one and only way to write myself? I endeavour to find responses to these questions as my thesis will unfold - among the careful analyses of different embodiments of the Other on her own grounds.

## Is He the Subject, is She the Other?

*It must be odd  
to be a minority  
he was saying.  
I looked around  
and didn't see any.  
So I said  
Yeah  
it must be.*

Mitsuye Yamada, "Looking Out" in *Camp Notes*

One of the most prominent ideas, which "The Second Sex" by Simone de Beauvoir brought to the history of thought, lies in the simple and clear comparison, voiced in her Introduction: "He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (de Beauvoir 26). As simple as it seems at first sight, it requires, however, a close examination before stepping into the literary analysis of the Other on her own grounds. It needs to be mentioned, that this idea comes from phenomenology, and more specifically, from "The Phenomenology of Spirit" by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, whom Simone de Beauvoir quotes extensively in her oeuvre. My aim in this section is to dismantle this extensively quoted statement of de Beauvoir in order to realize, firstly, what meanings it carried for her as a woman and a theorist, secondly, how it was accepted in feminist critique, and, consequently, how it can be deployed in contemporary literary analysis and in this Master's thesis.

For both Hegel and de Beauvoir the concept of subject (or Subject) was one of the core theoretical issues, which was discussed alongside the debate on Self and Other. The Subject and the Self were often realized in almost synonymical manner, as in the statement quoted above, or as in this quotation from de Beauvoir's Introduction: "... if, following Hegel, a fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in consciousness itself; the subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object" (Beauvoir 27). From this definition it becomes clear that subject and self (*it'self*) linguistically play equal roles in this argument, in the same way as

“the other”, “the inessential” and “the object” do. Thus, it is the dynamics between these positions that de Beauvoir is interested in: the dynamics between a subject and the object, which act and reveal their properties always “in opposition”, where they have to contradict each other; by properties I mean those qualities by the presence of which certain positions within the power dynamics are occupied. It is important that, according to de Beauvoir, these positions are only two: the dominated and the dominating. Therefore, in the same way, I argue, the Self asserts itself in its difference with the Other: either within the same consciousness (the same body) or with the outer; apart from the dynamics, it is also the properties of these positions that de Beauvoir is interested in; she discusses them broadly before she steps into her radical proposition of emancipation project. The latter one is an example of the fully realized position of subjectivity - especially for de Beauvoir.

Returning to the question of Self and Other, or Subject and Object, de Beauvoir explicitly states, that these two concepts are always in hierarchy and subordination, whereas the Other (the objectified) occupies the disempowered position and cannot realize itself. The latter position is fully deprived of power and it has to become Subject in order to become an empowered agent. In her argument the Other is the female - or just “she” - and the Subject is male: “She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential” (Beauvoir 26). Her use of pronouns can be criticized nowadays, however I will not stop here, but will agree that by the pronoun “she” de Beauvoir refers to the female, although in a very general manner. It would be wrong to reduce her argument to the mere idea of representing the female category as the oppressed, yet this is how she starts her debate. Further in her work she transmits this dynamics onto every other kind of power relationship: interracial communication, the bourgeois and working class interrelation, the colonizer and the colonized, etc. Still, the position of womanhood remains her primary concern and it is the female subjectivity which is at the center of her attention and onto which she places an emphasis through various anthropological examples and theoretical debates.

In order to understand de Beauvoir’s choices, especially why she considers emancipation as the solution to inequality, it is, again, worth looking at how she deploys Hegelian logic:

*Hegel thought the two sexes must be different: one is active and the other passive, and it goes without saying that passivity will be the female’s lot. “Because of this*

*differentiation, man is thus the active principle while woman is the passive principle because she resides in her non-developed unity.” (Beauvoir 46)*

It becomes explicit that she does not believe in the “essential” differences between the two positions and, ultimately, the two sexes, her goal therefore is to bring the Other into the position of Subject through deconstructing this hierarchy.

As I mentioned above, de Beauvoir from the very beginning highlights that the dynamics of Self and Other can be observed in every kind of power relationship. However, she often disregards her own claim, placing more attention to the oppression of a woman - as in this statement, where she critiques Hegel:

*Certain passages where Hegel’s dialectic describes the relationship of master to slave would apply far better to the relationship of man to woman. The Master’s privilege, he states, arises from the affirmation of Spirit over Life in the fact of risking his life: but in fact the vanquished slave has experienced this same risk, whereas the woman is originally an existent who gives Life and does not risk her life; there has never been combat between the male and her; Hegel’s definition applies singularly to her. (...) The other [consciousness - I. P.] is the dependent consciousness for which essential reality is animal life, that is, life given by another entity. (Beauvoir 99)*

This argument, in which she transmits the model of master-slave relationship on the interaction between the male and the female is quite generic and therefore problematic: firstly, because the woman does risk her life not less than a man, whose dominance in the modern realities is not at all linked to the physical life risking; secondly, putting the sign of equality between the master-slave and the male-woman patterns disregards the work of different power structures which led to the creation of various kinds of oppressions. Thirdly, the justification of the object position of the woman within the comparison to a position in which the “life is given” is illogical, especially if in the preceding passage Beauvoir states that “the woman is originally an existent who gives Life”.

In “Comparative and Competing Frameworks of Oppression in Simone de Beauvoir’s “The Second Sex”” Kathryn T. Gines explains that the female Other for de Beauvoir is “being compared to or juxtaposed with the subjugations of men through different forms of oppression (...) white women’s oppression is similar to anti-Black racism, anti-semitism, and classism for men because in all cases they are stereotyped, offered similar justifications for their inferior treatment, segregated, or singled out in certain ways” (Gines 259). Gines accuses de Beauvoir of the lack of her accountability for the different placements that these oppressions occupy. Moreover, she insists, that de

Beauvoir's female Other is a French middle to upper class white woman, who, intersectionally, occupies some Subject positions as well, but in Beauvoir's work this part is left unnoticed, and that the oppressions of non-white women, or those belonging to various ethnic minorities, are not considered at all. Gines builds her argument on black feminists' critique, who attack Beauvoir's heterogenous idea of the female Other, and mentions the work called "Beauvoir and the Problem of Racism" by Margaret Simons, in which the latter notes: "Beauvoir's understanding of racism is central to her philosophical project in *The Second Sex*; but racism and ethnocentrism are also problems for her. (...) In her study of women in history, Beauvoir elects to focus solely on the West, and more specifically France, dispensing with the rest of women's history in a footnote" (Simons 391).

In this thesis I do not engage with race, and yet, this debate is important enough to me and my framework, since I write about oppressed ethnicities. While a female is generally the Other in this polemic, the issues of class, ethnic background and language bring additional structures of opposition, in which - it is significant to realize - the woman may not always occupy the role of the Other, but does so, if her gender identity is considered primarily among her other identities. The other intersection de Beauvoir neglects in her argument are the identities, which do not regard their gender in the binary way. And even if an interaction occurs within the female category where all the agents realize themselves in gender-conforming ways as females, the subject-object binary may be still at work: in a setting, where all protagonists are women, the other intersubjective contradictions come into power.

While some feminist theorists, like Gines, regard de Beauvoir's frameworks of oppression "troubling" and "Eurocentrist", it is hard to underestimate her input into the development of the understanding of the subjectivity. In my work I aim to concentrate on her idea of the Other as the *position*, that can be questioned and changed. I regard the subject-object or Self and Other interrelation as the process, as the conflicting dynamics, where, if this process is acknowledged, the Other may eventually become the Subject. I believe so because I question the notion of the Absolute and argue, that the subject positions should not be taken for granted, as if they (or those who occupy them) have existed (or occupied them) forever.

In her Introduction de Beauvoir draws attention to the unstatic nature of any position of *being*: “But the scope of the verb *to be* must be understood; bad faith means giving it a substantive value, when in fact it has the sense of the Hegelian dynamic: *to be* is *to have become*, to have been made as one manifests oneself” (de Beauvoir 33). Therefore, the subject position can be created through separation and asserting one’s own singularity. It is to be noted that de Beauvoir is not critical, however, of the fact that Hegel attributes subjectivity to the male category and states that the female is “enclosed in the species”. She agrees with the dynamics Hegel leads upon and claims that subjectivity and separateness immediately mean conflict (de Beauvoir 59). However, in this research I aim to show how exactly through this separation - from the “species” or the category, or from what is considered subject in a certain dynamics, that the Other can re-establish themselves. To agree with de Beauvoir: being does not happen without becoming, and the conflict is a necessary and a productive source for this process of change. Thus, for the better understanding of the transformation of the Other I suggest Sarah Ahmed's concept of the willful subject. In her eponymous book Ahmed argues that it is the will and willfulness through which a position is unified as the one of Subject. Willfulness is for her the active separation which “compromises the capacity of a subject to survive, let alone flourish”. She regards it as a radical choice, the alternative for which is only passivity and, consequently, death: “The punishment for willfulness is a passive desire of death, allowing death” (Ahmed 2010, 1).

In the next sections I will reflect on how de Beauvoir’s theory of subjectivity relates to writing, language and female authorship. I use this theory as a part of my framework but for the reasons, mentioned above, it requires to be situated. As a conclusion to this section: Simone de Beauvoir, the female philosopher of the XX century, middle-to-upper class ethnic French, did not particularly convey the oppressions of women, who occupied less favourable positions within the dynamics of power, but nevertheless was very accountable of the oppressions of the French patriarchy and the subject-object dynamics within it. In my work I will concentrate on female subjectivity, not as opposed to male subjectivity, but as such, that involves the more complex *becoming*: in order to become a (willful) female subject, one needs to acknowledge one’s own position of the Other and through the conflict with the Self or Subject - and separation from it - willfully resign from the position of passivity and step into the position of agency.

I employ the notion of subject and subjectivity in this work much more often than the concept of the Other for the reason, that I am not interested in the position of the Other in its objected subalternity. What I am interested in is the process of subject becoming: the process, in which the female Other reconnects with her female Self through the body, the language, and writing — re-establishing herself as a Subject.



## Subject and Author

According to different theories, subject is an individual, an intersection of forms of social stratifications, an identity, a multiplicity of identities, a matter, a whole; a performer, aimed at practical transformation; a carrier of particular qualities and a performer of actions, directed upon an object (Merriam-Webster). Being unlike that, which is being affected, subject as actant recognizes that, which is not itself (Hegel). As a conceptual figure it is fluid: it cannot be fixed or inherently stable, thus, constantly transforming, it differs from the object in its movement of becoming. In some feminist theories, as for Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, subject contains an object position in itself (Kristeva 1988). However, an object is only that part of the objective 'reality' that already exists in the scope of subject's activity and may be carried out within the subject's body. A similar issue occurs with the perception of the author's figure: different schools of thought have reviewed the notion in different ways, which will be examined later.

In critical theory, the understanding of the notion of the author has undergone a similar process of recognition (and transformation, which is still ongoing). Major time periods in the historical development of literature are marked by the changing attitudes to the phenomenon of an author. In Antiquity and the Middle Ages the author was regarded as a medium, or mediator, someone projecting their creative potential onto recipients, or, in this sense, objects. The widespread practice of anonymity made it possible for the figure of the author to be regarded as close to the divine: a nameless, bodiless, thus, holy figure; and whereas the text was regarded as objective truth, the perception of the author's figure could be compared to the all-seeing eye, especially in the works of religious character (Haraway 2004). A similar disposition occurs during Realism era, when the textual body is believed to be created not from within, by or with an interaction with the reader, but from the outside, by the artistic reality of the omnipotent author. Already in the Antiquity many authors' names, like the names of the philosophers of Ancient Greece, were recognised, allowing the understanding the category of authorship as a creative one, however, not recognizing the subjectivity of the lived experience behind the name (Foucault 1993).. Later, Christian exegesis laid the foundations of hermeneutics, where the author was

granted a key role in the interpretation of the text (Foucault 1993). In modernism, where language was regarded as the actant in itself, but also the medium of transmitting experience, the problem of immanent authorship could be resolved. Postmodernism, however, returns to the depersonalization of the author, proclaiming its death (R. Barthes, M. Foucault). The author hitherto is no longer perceived as a producer or the medium, but is considered an anonymous part of the intertext.

With the “Death of the Author” Roland Barthes, undoubtedly, revolutionized the general way of perceiving the text and the author’s figure, and freed the reader from having to “furnish” the text “with a final signification”, by which he means acknowledging the author as subject with the all-encompassing power over the meaning (Barthes). It has been crucial for poststructuralism that a text has stopped being regarded as a mystery to be solved — a mystery, belonging to the physical body and to the lived experience of an author.

For feminist poststructuralists, Barthes’s take on authorship may offer a productive view over the canon, for it allows to dismantle the institutional structures, and extends the limits of patriarchal restriction. In “Situated Authorship” Sarah Wilson explains: “...locating subjectivity in a range of positions, not restricted to gender, class, or ethnicity, a text or author’s relevance to academia and popular culture too is unfettered, unlimited by the actual identity of the author and thereby concealing or invalidating characteristics that would traditionally prioritize certain writers over others, for example, the characteristic of being European, Caucasian, or male” (Wilson 3). The elimination of the author-figure, Wilson believes, may free not only the reader from “universalism and ideological essentialism”, but also the suppressed subjectivities of female writers. Borrowing Nancy K. Miller’s quote: “It is, after all, the Author, canonized, anthologized, and institutionalized, who excludes the less-known works of women and minority writers from the canon, and who by his authority justifies the exclusion” (“Changing the Subject” 105). Thus, some of the feminist postmodern theorists believe, that the death of the author is conceptually liberating and productive in the struggle for recognition of the female subject as equal, and giving space for changing the power structure.

Indeed, Barthes’s theory, in his own terms, appears as “counter-theological”, since “to refuse to arrest meaning is finally to refuse God and his hypostases, reason, science, the law” (Barthes 147). The desire to intervene with a theological structure does coincide with

the feminist goals, and yet, historically, women's claims to authorship has been different than those of the male, for they have had a different relation to their identity.. The idea of voicelessness, the loss of the origin, hardly contemplates granting a different kind of subjectivity, even though Barthes states that literature *is* the invention of the voice, followed by its death, but "to which we cannot assign a specific origin"; in regard to subject he explains: "literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes" (Barthes 142). With this statement in the beginning of the essay he establishes solid grounds for advocating the impersonality and the idea, that it does not matter, who speaks, but matters, *what*: the matter acquiring the materiality of subject, *becoming* subject in itself.

For Barthes, who grants much power to the reader, it is still language which speaks, not the author or the reader: "to write is, through a prerequisite *impersonality* (not at all to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realist novelist), to reach that point where only language alone acts, "performs," and not "me"" (Barthes 143). The claim that an impersonality of any kind exists and pre-defines a human personality, brings the question of neutrality into conversation. Since Simone de Beauvoir's critique of neutrality as construct of dominance, many feminist writers and theorists exercised this notion, and similarly — the one of objectivity. In "Situated Knowledges" feminist scholar Donna Haraway critiques objectivity in regard to epistemology: "They tell parables about objectivity and scientific method to students in the first years of their initiation, but no practitioner of the high scientific arts would be caught dead acting on the textbook versions. Social constructionists make clear that official ideologies about objectivity and scientific method are particularly bad guides to how scientific knowledge is actually *made*" (Haraway 576). She suggests that is no vision is disembodied and no knowledge is abstract: "With whose blood were my eyes crafted?" (Haraway 585). In contrast to feminist poststructuralists, to whom the idea of universality of subjects appears as appealing, Haraway is on behalf of subjectivity of location: "I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. (...) I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity" (Haraway 589). This critique

is widely supported by the theorists of life writing, who, acknowledging the inability to escape construction, argue against neutrality and objectivity in biography writing. In “Strange Hybrids: Telling the Truth and Other ‘Lies’ about Fiction and Life Writing” Camilla Nelson suggests: “But, as fiction invented its own realm, so too, the world of fact was not unaffected. Objectivity – that is, empirically verified knowledge – became the goal of factual writing, and an estrangement between literature and factuality ensued” (Nelson 47). For Nelson, writing never escapes construction, nor does the reading, neither of these practices is depersonalized or deprived of subject’s agency.

However, regarding the author, it is important to clarify that Barthes distinguished between a person and *a* subject: for him, it is subject, whom a text recognizes, but not a person, thus, subject is something that *suffices*, even though it is “empty outside the very enunciation which defines it” (Barthes 145). Yet the question arises: if in Barthes work, subject recognizes the text, and therefore is recognized, does it not make the text subject? When an embodied human being *who writes* is conceptually separated from their work as something that does not suffice, a text is something that exists by itself, but must, however, be discovered by the reader. As for the latter one, this figure is viewed as subjective space, “the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of”, however, this kind of subjectivity is depersonalized too: “the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology” (Barthes 148).

Marie Darrieussecq responds to one of the questions about her attitude to the reception of her creative work as published, with a curious remark: “I accept all sorts of interpretations of my books (...), it means they are alive (...). The only thing I don’t accept is the interpretation that goes exactly to the opposite of the book” (Darrieussecq 2012). *Pig Tales. A Novel of Lust and Transformation, or Truismes*, is the first novel by Darrieussecq, which portrays a dystopian society in which a young woman gradually transforms into a sow, has received a wide acclaim, and was called misogynist by some, with whom Darrieussecq passionately disagrees.

Returning to the question of authorship, the question remains of the reader’s status. Admitting to the idea of the author and the reader as embodied human beings does not have to violate the claims that language is the structure, that utterance is always fluid, or that the text is something that is being constructed here and now. Feminist theorist Cheryl

Walker, in her dialogue with first name Miller and first name Kamuf, proposes that prioritizing the textual body over the subjectivities of the author and the reader - and stating that writing becomes its own production - has a risk of ignoring the fact that subjectivities (and the very notion) have always been shaped and experienced differently. The male subjectivity of 17th century, which Barthes might critique, is entirely different from modernist and postmodernist subjectivities, while engaging in reading and interpretation, for, in Haraway's terms, reading - as well as any other experience - is not neutral. Walker agrees that reducing the text to personal is flawed but she nevertheless insists that a textual body and a lived experience *should* interact: "What we need, instead of a theory of the death of the author, is a new concept of authorship that does not naively assert that the writer is an originating genius, creating aesthetic objects outside of history, but does not diminish the importance of difference and agency in the responses of women writers to historical formations" (Walker 560). For Walker, the idea of performativity is crucial, the author remaining present in the text, being the idea, that unites and put the language in motion, but the text may be read and reread by different subjectivities in different historical periods, in different cultural social contexts, and it will allow a perpetual process of creating and transforming, where reading and writing positions become inexhaustible.

What appears to be particularly useful, apart from the debate on the author notion, is the clarification of what is a text. Reading Michel Foucault's "What is an Author" I come across an argument against the text's absolutism. In this work I do not aim to engage with Foucault, however, his questioning the matter of the narrative is helpful, in order to understand that a text is a construct. In the example with an author who is physically dead and the drafts of whom are being collected, Foucault poses a question: what is a work of a dead author? Do we consider everything, that an author has written, their writing work? All the drafts, diaries - are they the work of writing, the author's legacy, the text? (Foucault 1969). Can, must the written personal notes in the draft of a work be considered as part of a textual body? (Foucault 1969). Thus, we might question, what is the narrative and where its limits are. Foucault inquires but does not propose the answer, if the notes with phone numbers on the corners of pages or reminders to visit the laundry should count as the textual body, but within this inquiry a question arises for textual belonging, as the need to address if a text is something absolutely universal and independent. Even the author's

function, Foucault argues, is not universal and differs from context to context (Foucault 1969). Moreover, Foucault explains, that the text bears the number of signs that refer to the author (it is, however, important to distinguish between the author and the narrator, as well as between a narrator and a focalizer) and lists examples as grammatical person, tense, adverbs of time and place, followed by clarification, that “these elements have a different bearing on texts with an author and on those without one”, for they may simply belong to the narrator, “a fictional author”, who, according to him, is as false as the authorship of the one who wrote the text (Foucault 308). Therefore, if text is nothing more than a structure, a discursive practice, and even those signs that refer to the author are *false*, then is the ethical part of any analysis it is unburdened by any limitations. My question remains: does the death of the author grant indulgence for the absolute freedom of interpretation? For Barthes the author is already an interpreter: “his only power is to combine the different kinds of writing, to oppose some by others, so as never to sustain himself by just one of them”, thus interpretation lies in the authors function as well as the one of the reader (Barthes 145). For Barthes, writing must not delve into desire of expression; he continues: “if he wants to express himself, at least he should know that the internal “thing” he claims to “translate” is itself only a readymade dictionary whose words can be explained (defined) only by other words, and so on ad infinitum” (Barthes 146).

Donna Haraway’s notion of “embodied truth” appears as having a similar goal, namely to dismantle the “divine” process of creation, but also locates the process of interpretation within the body of the interpreter (Haraway). As she critiques the constructivist perspective in knowledge production, she deploys the argument on the impossibility of any “passive” vision. For her, it is impossible to escape construction, even using technology, because there is no neutrality, through or within which an object can be studied, and, as opposed to the all-seeing eye, any kind of knowledge production works through a subjectivity: whether it is a subjectivity of a human eye, located in a human body, or belonging to a camera, or a microscope: “these prosthetic devices show us that all eyes, including our own organic ones, are active perceptual systems, building on translations and specific ways of seeing, that is, ways of life” (Haraway 583). For Haraway, no knowledge or “truth” is unmediated, yet she does not mean to call her take on situated and embodied knowledges “subjectivity”. It is significant to note, that for Haraway embodiment means new, feminist objectivity: “Understanding how these visual systems

work, technically, socially, and psychically, ought to be a way of embodying feminist objectivity” (Haraway 583).

Feminist objectivity means situated knowledges and aims not to distinguish between the subject and the object, therefore it does not involve transcendence. It offers to bring the multiplicity of different positioning into discussion, as in the case with intersectionality. For Haraway, there is no fixed embodiment, as well as no fixed position, but this multidimensionality should be nevertheless acknowledged in the analyses and any practice mapped. However, in Haraway’s account objects do not exist as such, she refers to them as “boundary projects”, and boundaries, in her theory, are what shift from within and what appears during social interaction (Haraway 595). Still, Haraway agrees that a text is a location of literary production, and that the language unfolds by itself, disregarding the author’s intention or will, but for her a text is a body, what she calls a “material-semiotic generative node” (Haraway). With this argument, it is easy to step into questioning, whether a text exists without the reader (does it stop existing on its own when “I” does not look, does it start its life cycle anew in the perspective of another “I”, does it not unfold on its own but unfolds as “I” sees it, does its form change under the view of an “I), but if we agree, that a text is material, and therefore has a body, the interpretation occurs, thus, within it and *is* limited by its material component. Whether we regard it as an absolution or not, account the lived experience of the one who has written it and the one who is reading, the seemingly endless possibilities become exhausted by the very structure - “structuring, and structured body” in Haraway’s terms.

Intersectional reading, for the feminist thought, means that intertextuality becomes “the weaving of women’s texts as they are interwoven with many other texts (female and male),” the author signature acts as “a historically specific configuration of gender, class, race, sexual preference, religion, and so forth”. Both intertextuality a situated subjectivity/ feminist objectivity, allow for fluidity and the plural nature of identity (Wilson 7). Later theorists tend to outline strategies for literary research, which attempt to prioritize the material and psycho-historical realities of women and writers of the formerly colonized territories. According to Barbara Christian, “the modes of reading and writing prevalent in the academy do not work for everyone, just as poststructuralist pluralism does not work for women” (Christian 53). For Christian, women writers, writers of color, even creative

writers are re-marginalized with the theory of the dead author, notwithstanding the fact, that their works have more chances to be read, than, for instance, a century before.

However, the reason for that is in feminist movements, which for many feminist theorists are exactly the opposite of poststructuralism: in Barbara Christian's terms it called "race for theory" (Christian 53). She argues, that the very academic mode of theorizing, the so-called "acceptable" literary language work again the marginalized, and insists, that the death of the author does not pertain to those, whose material reality does not allow to "give up their subjectivity". As, for instance, in Walker's terms: "To erase a woman poet as the author of her poems in favor of an abstract indeterminacy is an act of oppression. However, every version of the persona will be a mask of the author we cannot lightly remove" (571). Thus, in the feminist agenda, that critiques academia for various reasons, the death of the author is not a favourable theory for those whose subjectivity has been denied and marginalized, and for whom the definitions of Self and the political reclamation of every situated identity with its voice will always stand over anonymous, intertextual multivocality (Willson 7). With language in its material form that performs the function of objectification of the individual human consciousness only as a separate monad of the world it becomes oppressive for those who seek to voice and not be voiced, even if by something universal and inhuman. The text becomes a machine; the human consciousness acts as an object.

Moreover, it has to be acknowledged that different genders may have different approaches to the same realities.. Since gender identities involve factors of individual psychosexual development, processes and learning outcomes of certain social roles and the formation of sexual preferences, gender is a process in itself, independent, fluid and potentially changing. The idea of a "transformation" as pertain to gender becomes leading in *écriture féminine*, or women's writing. The term, which gained the acclaim after Hélène Cixous's *Laugh of Medusa* was published, stands for writing as a semiotic practice and concentrates on the self-determination of women as subjects (Cixous 1976). Since Lacan's claim that language is a hierarchy, structured around the Phallus, and that it (language) is always representational through the inescapable process of signification, Cixous aims to redefine the position of "the feminine", that is situated on the margins of the Symbolic Order, through reconsidering the position of "lack" and "otherness" in favour of the one, that is less controlled, and in this way reassigning the power in the structure. As to



women's writing, Cixous employs Freud's argument that "women are the dark continent" to manifest the representation of what is believed to be non-representational (Cixous 1976). For Cixous, women's writing, that used to be perceived as "less rational, less moral, less comprehensible" in the same way as a female, maternal body "is barred from the Symbolic Order" and reproduces the Lacanian Real (Cixous 1976). Even more, as she uncovers the mechanisms of representation of female subjectivity, she insists that an essential factor in writing that can be labeled as feminine, is a conscious appeal to experience of what it means to be female.

At the same time, *écriture féminine* does not pertain exclusively to female gender; Cixous explains that it is writing, that comes from the margins - a position, that can be occupied by male subjects as well; moreover, because all human beings come from a maternal body, this enables anyone to write from that position.

Still, *écriture féminine* is a practice of "writing oneself", which mostly means "herself", a practice that celebrates the loosening, redirection of control, which comes from the phallogentric order. "Woman must write her *self*: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text" (Cixous 875). In this way, the body becomes the signifier *and* the signified, its subjectivity is redefined through the material, while the physical and the metaphysical come together within the process of symbolization of women's corporeal experiences.

As for the time-spatial characteristics of female prose, the change of traditional narrative chronotops (in the Bakhtin sense of the concept) belongs to the category of *écriture féminine* as one of the formal features. Linguistic means of women's prose are closely linked to the discourse of the autobiographical. A feminine text proclaims itself as independent of genre, form and style, however, it is always autobiographical for it always comes from the lived experience. Moreover, the phenomenon of confession (as well as, repentance, depression writing, pain writing) becomes the representative mechanism of women's prose, and the articulated "I" acts as the most effective author's projection (Cixous 1976). The autobiographical "I", for theorists of women's writing, is undifferentiated from a 'real' person, and at the same time *is* a text construct that "speaks" for itself. It is also significant, that autobiography hitherto is regarded as constructed by the writer who selects

and combines those fragments of experience, which in their opinion are the main (constant) aspects of the formation of their personality, in contrast to a popular expectation of “objectivity” in this kind of writing - as antonymous to “irrational fictionality”. Authors of feminine prose, accentuating on sex and gender as personality- and identity-forming experience, question the very paradigms of neutrality and objectivity and aim to bring the marginalized to the centre by relocating the focus. Consequently, the narrative become ego-dominated, and the corresponding prerogative is adhered to genres of lyrical monologue, confession, autobiography, etc.

In this way, a narrative mode is formed, which takes on the significance of demonstrating a gender-based approach to a reality. Among the preferred linguistic means a significant place belongs to self-identification of the author with the narrator, where the choice to confess from the first person often leads to a fragmented organization of narration or the form of the stream of consciousness. An appeal to internal female experience structures the textual reality in such a way, that the potential recipient (the reader) becomes a full participant in the statement of expression and is included in the text on the rights of the author. In this way, the communicative "I - You" model is replaced by the "She - She" scheme, or rather "I - I".

# Performativity, Other and Location

*Speaking, writing, and discoursing  
are not mere acts of communication;  
they are above all acts of compulsion.*

*Trinh Min-ha (52)*

According to *Gender studies: Terms and debates*, the concept of performativity emerged in the wake of two major trends in social sciences: the reorientation of social sciences from structure to action or agency, which is a capacity to act, and the so-called linguistic turn in philosophy, sociology and anthropology, which meant reconsideration of social processes in terms of symbolic forms in which they are embodied (Cranny-Francis). The term “performative” was introduced by the British philosopher and linguist John Austin. In his book *How to Do Things with Words* he developed a theory of speech acts, according to which all of the utterances can be divided into two major groups, namely constative acts (or constatives) and performative acts (or performatives) (Austin 68). Constatives are the utterances performing a descriptive function, and performatives, respectively, performative one, or function of agency. For example, in the sentence “I call this ship “Queen Elizabeth”” occurs an act of actual calling, so the phrase itself is not only a statement, but a performance of it. It is important to mention that a characteristic feature of performatives is a lack of truth value, that is, they are neither true nor false.

It is important to mention that the idea of performativity originates from the phenomenological theory of Husserl, according to which “social agents constitute social reality through language and all manner of symbolic social sign” (Husserl, 54). Therefore the concept of performativity will be furtherly viewed also as an act of constitution or construction one’s identity through acting it out, through speaking one’s language or more precisely, through repetitive acts of naming and other forms of social or self-representation.

The performative theory offers a way to explain how identity shapes itself or changes. According to Judith Butler, reconsideration of identity as a consequence (effect),

i.e. as produced or generated, is what opens up the possibility of “agency”, that seamlessly overlaps, if the identity types are considered to be preset and constant (Butler 1998). If an identity is understood as a consequence, it means that it is neither fatally predetermined, nor entirely artificial and arbitrary. If the identity or, specifically, gender identity, is understood as a practice, but rather as a practice of signification, then it is considered, that identities in a certain culture are formed as a result of a discourse, which is embedded in the everyday acts of significations.

A great example of the performativity in the literary narrative can be encountered in how Natalena Koroleva’s “Without Roots” nouvelle finishes with the issue of (re)naming. The final scene portrays Noèle, the protagonist and the prototype of the author, discussing her future after finishing the Institute for Noble Maidens with her step-mother. When she expresses her desire to study arts and Egyptology, her step-mother proposes three candidates for the role of Noèle’s future husband, concluding, that she is free to study anything she chooses, however, is asked to change her last name (Koroleva 210). With this ending, in which Noèle is demanded to erase the Polish part of her name - which she (or, more precisely, the author) eventually did, adopting her Ukrainian husband’s last name, she is forcefully de-toponimized as a subject.

Therefore, the mechanism of identity change is enclosed in a practice of re-signification. As for the language, when a new life comes into the world, it is helpless not only physically but because it cannot verbalize its own needs. For the one that doesn’t know the language all words are neutral, harmful are only actions accompanied by words. Before one learns the language, as a newborn or as a foreigner, they follow bodily expressions of others and use their own body as a tool to communicate. It does not stop after a baby grows up: after learning a language, words remain only a part of language communication. According to different studies, body language takes up to 80% of the communication space (Claire 15). And nevertheless language remains so important in the process of subjectification. It has the power for choosing what position to grant (or strengthen, or weaken) to its speaker - in correlation with the politics of location. Here and further by *location* I mean spaces inherited and occupied, that have an effect on the identity and its formation, as well as the overall human lived experience. Undoubtedly, places that surround us have the power to frame us in specific and concrete ways, which, as Joan

Borsa (1990, 36) argues, are as much a part of our psyches as they are a physical or geographical placement.

The phenomenological tradition in philosophy regards human self and subjectivity as the only possibility of cognition and the only known experience. The phenomenology of Husserl regarded that phenomena should be studied as they appear in front of a particular, subjective consciousness, as consciousness in general: Husserl believed that this method of exploration could provide a solid basis for all human knowledge, including scientific knowledge (Husserl 181). In the feminist tradition of phenomenology, however, consciousness is always embodied, gendered and located in a particular intersection of power structures. Simultaneously, a geographical location is too 'embodied and embedded' - in Braidotti's terms - whereas embodiment is the means by which specific bodies become meaningful within communities of other bodies, and language is often central to the production of meaning (Braidotti 219).

To understand how the one may be a subject *de facto* but not *de jure*, as in the situation of an underprivileged language user, or an ethnic minority, it is relevant revisit de Beauvoir's conceptualization of a woman of the "the inessential in front of the essential" (De Beauvoir 22). And although de Beauvoir's thinking on femininity is largely dependent on historical context and may seem outdated for the present day research, the hierarchy she describes can serve as a perfect model of theorizing not just the interrelation of male-female but the other dichotomies in the discourse. While in the *Introduction to The Second Sex*, Beauvoir clearly situates the woman as the Other, she argues that it is the woman's sex which is questioned as sex, male sex thus being self-evident and having nothing to do with the performance (De Beauvoir 30). In all acts of *doing* – and she particularly focuses on knowledge production – it is the female body that is 'only a body'; male performance is not seen as a performance, as male knowledge is a 'neutral' knowledge (De Beauvoir 25). It is the same pattern, in which a speaker of a language minority has their body and their language foregrounded, and their performance reduced to "the body", "the language".

For phenomenology theorists body is a nullpunkt: "the point from which the world unfolds" (Ahmed 2004), and this idea is very assertive. It is clear therefore how for someone, for whom the "world unfolds" from their privileged perspective, a woman or a different Other can fall under the umbrella of '*the inessential*': to where any identity may

be assigned, when failing to perform as male and, thus, becoming *visible* (Ahmed 2004). *Visible*, in Ahmed's terms, what fails to be neutral: it appears excessive and *too much*. It can also be incomprehensible, and if so, destined to be staying outside of the male paradigm. The *visible incomprehensible* can never become a Subject, because to become a Subject will have to perform as a male. To be recognised as a subject, it will have to act like one and will have to be scrutinized by another Subject as such, therefore it must act as *comprehensible* to what/who already is a Subject. Moreover, once *visible* it is hard to become *invisible*, as for this it has to be theorised, *written*. Without being theorised and comprehended, the *visible* is always out of place, and thus it is always noticed, for its presence disrupts the usual order of things. For Husserl in Sara Ahmed's reading, the usual - the *familiar* - is also *familial*, so it imagines a known space as a family space (Ahmed 2004). The dis-placed identity in a *familial* space would be perceived in no other way than a stranger and a threat to a *familial* order. For this reason, chances are low that a (*different*) *body* will easily merge with what is considered *Self*, be it a space, a social group or some kind of *family* unity.

In postmodern theory, which is believed to de-emphasize community and intersubjectivity in favour of more individualized modes of being, the self becomes particularly fractured and decentralized, however it still participates in the outer settings (Kitchens 2016, 4). Astrida Neimanis proposes in *Feminist Subjectivity, Watered* that bodies and the networks of power in which they are situated together comprise the politics of location, that includes "historical vicissitudes through which our identities have been invested with power and meaning". She argues that any subject's individual cartography cannot elide dimensions of power that shape it and further suggests that a politics of location "is always personal, and political." (Neimanis 2003, 25). Therefore it is vital to be aware of the politics of location while analysing a feminist writing of any kind of form and genre.

In the next chapter of this thesis I engage with the work of Marie Darrieussecq *A Brief Stay With the Living*, composed in the narrative mode of stream of consciousness, that implies, that all the thinking processes are located in the body - the domestic space for subjectivity.

## Analysis: “A Brief Stay with the Living”

Keeping in mind my research question: “How can one analyse a female subject as an agent of the politics of location represented in a literary text?” I engage in this chapter in a close reading of Marie Darrieussecq’s “Brief Stay With the Living” - a fictional narrative which by its mere form can be or *is* performative and works as an act of *doing*. My aim of is to investigate, what kind of doing it is and how reading itself is a subjective phenomenological experience.

The two recurrent motives in the works of Marie Darrieussecq, a French writer of Basque origin, are migration, or moving in general, and writing or self-writing. While in her other works she concentrates on writing trauma (as in *Tom is Dead*), in *A Brief Stay With the Living* she aims to reproduce an intersubjective space of a family, where every individual speaks as the first person narrator, apart from the third-person presentation, and proposes their own account of the past events as well as the bodily perceived present. The novel starts with the cast of voices and follows as successive utterances of the four heroines which are the mother and three daughters, each having their own histories of displacement. The plot unfolds throughout consequent close-ups of the protagonists’ conscious and sensual perceptions of themselves and the surrounding world during one day. Darrieussecq underlines that all her characters are her voice and that her writing is interactive, where the reader is left to fill the gaps.

Here, the author-narrator splits into the Mother, French-Basque, a daughter, who lives in Paris and has no contact with her body, a daughter, who chooses Spanish - another language of betrayal (Darrieussecq 2012) - over French and Basque and moves to another hemisphere with her lover, and the third, youngest daughter who has not yet lost contact with either her body or the language, and therefore does not understand how her sisters could have moved. The Mother is also carrying a painful memory of once having a son, who spoke the Basque language more than any of them, but who had drowned at the age of four, “the sea swallowed him” (Darrieussecq, 101). The placement of action and landscape are always significant for Darrieussecq, and she emphasizes: “Quand je commence à rêver

sur un livre, en général, je vois d'abord des paysages" (Darrieussecq 2007, 257). In this way the author is mapping her own universe and invites the reader to be her actant.

Just as Darrieussecq presents her characters, I choose to analyse each protagonist individually to highlight their particular subjective manner and location treatment. For the reason that body is the only way means available to sense one exists, I would like to "begin, though, not with the continent or a country or a house but the geography closest - the body" (Rich 1994, 212).

The four protagonists - Jeanne, Anne, Nore and the Mother present very close and intimate connections to their bodies - all except Anne. Starting with the senses, especially sensations of sight and hearing, which are described in detail in the book and are almost palpable, up to the interaction with the outside environment and memories; the experiences that the characters undergo can be read as such that take place in or through their bodies. Nore is the youngest sister, aged nineteen, who lives with her mother and stepfather in the south of France. The first close-up of this heroine occurs as she is visiting an ophthalmologist, and the reader may follow all her thoughts and experience in the stream of consciousness, a technique Darrieussecq uses prolifically in this work. Moreover, the author attempts to locate her reader in the text, using Snellen eye chart and reduced font in italics, as Nore is undergoing her eye sight check. In Husserl's account, human subjectivity evolves through perception and it is especially relevant for the field of vision. "Seeing" and "perceiving" are for Husserl central conceptual experiences on which he draws his analysis on how different subjectivities form, and how they regard each other. The process he describes is the one through which the impossibility of transgressing into another person's life is recognized as the ultimate consequence of a realization of the other, who is not *self*. Therefore, the other can only be acknowledged but never really known.

For Nore, vision is an instrument of sense-making: according to her, being able to see creates the *coherency of the world* (Darrieussecq 2003, 23). By the world she refers to the familiar landscapes, where the most significant and recurrent motive is the sea. She associates herself with the familiar landscape and with the sea in particular, she continually states that there must be no hindrance in this identification: "there are too many trees between the sea and us" (ibid, 12). Nore is the narrator of the present - it is the timeline she is completely in, this is the way in which she experiences her body: "only the body is present" (ibid, 22), "Body and soul, back and forth, the body with its ball of thought up



there, around it and below it” (ibid, 22). For her the pure analytical estimation of the reality does not exist, and while she does not have a strong connection to her sisters, she tries to understand them in her own terms: “maybe Anne experiences her mind like I do my body” (ibid, 22)

Unlike other characters, Nore does not seek to alter her time and space, she is speaking less about memories and of the future, than the three other protagonists, instead she passionately describes the present, where the significant role is played by senses, that are her tools of exploration and identification. At times, she remembers how she played at having no shadow, which only reinforces the representation of bodily integrity (ibid, 29). While enjoying the space she knows so well, she questions ironically: “who said girls lack a sense of direction?” (ibid, 28). She is the also the only sister who has the deep connection to the house - in which they grew up and which stands for the moment of the action empty, since Nore with her mother live in the house of the Mother’s new husband. The house, abandoned by the other sisters who associate tragic memories with it, remains very important to Nore’s identity: “It’s *her* house”, “she is the only one who really likes it” (ibid, 30). By living in the present Nore does not understand the possibility of moving places. She wants to remind Jeane, her older sister, “where she is from” by sending her a postcard with a sea landscape. Furthermore, this is how she describes Jeane’s departure: “an empty room. By the words ‘she’s gone’ understand ‘she’s dead?’” (ibid, 89-91). Her only reality and perception lies therefore in the present.

The character of the Mother is similar to Nore in this sense, however, she has not always been like that. Many years before she lost her child, who drowned in the sea at the age of four. She is at times overwhelmed by the painful memories, so are her other daughters, but Nore had not yet been born. At times the Mother protagonist is presented as she is engaged in dancing, and the bodily activity of dancing is for her a therapy - the one of returning to body, to home: through bodily integration becoming subject again.

Notwithstanding the fact that her three daughters are grown up for the moment when the action takes place, the Mother protagonist describes her motherhood as a physical experience which she locates in her body: “All those bodies out of her own body” (ibid, 32). Her subjective voice sounds in a similar way to the one of her daughter Nore when she speaks about sight; landscapes and the visual perception are of special importance. The choice of bird imagery is peculiar to her narrative, for instance, she uses the similes “like a

bird” or “like hens” when referring to motherhood: “I would... have liked to have the third eye, in the back of my head, or on the sides, like hens” (ibid, 18).

It is worth looking in this regard how Simone de Beauvoir analyses the concept of *Eternal Feminine* that emerged in the German classical literature in the poetry of Goethe: the archetype of total idealization, depriving women of real life embodiment and activity, positioning them nowhere else but in areas of domesticity and/or spirituality, as nurturing or angelic, but always passive objects. De Beauvoir states in this context that “woman is certainly to a large extent man’s invention” (2011, p. 250) and *The Man of Reason*, Genevieve Lloyd later summarises: “Our ideas and ideals of maleness and femaleness have been formed within structures of dominance – of superiority and inferiority, ‘norms’ and ‘difference’, ‘positive’ and ‘negative’, the ‘essential’ and the ‘complementary’” (Lloyd 2002, 104). The protagonist of the Mother is the least flexible in the novel: most of her agency is focused around her nurturing role as the mother (even her name is never mentioned), and her connection to the body most always involves her children. However, she is also the least unruly character in the novel, even counting the painful memory of the loss of a child, and her narrative takes the least of space in the novel.

Nevertheless, there are several occurrences in the text where the Mother distances herself from a ‘mother ideal’ - and consequently experiences some forms of displacement. After the cultural journey on archetypes in de Beauvoir’s work, it is hard to disagree with the framework Lloyd suggests: that the ideals of the genders are in strict hierarchy to each other, approaching the feminine ideal makes a woman lesser a subject, but rejecting it and distancing herself from it displaces her within a patriarchal paradigm.

Her attachment to the surrounding space is spoken out bitterly, especially the one to the old house, in which she had undergone a loss. She remembers how in sorrow she “swallowed the surrounding space”, “she digested the window” (ibid, 101). In her present life she is not alone with the space and it seems to bother her, she points out that Nore is “still living with us, occupying territory” and that due to this there is “so little intimacy” (ibid, 10).

The semiotic centre of the Mother’s space, I argue, is located in the dream, in which she describes a village in which she grew up. She alludes to it as to an idealized home where she feels the power of her subjectivity - viewing herself in this dream as free from gravity. She reconstitutes the land- and seascape with an incredible precision, that

gives the impression of full control, perfection, a reconstituted past as a domestic space and a domestic space as the past in which everything was coherent and made sense. The repetition of “I know exactly where I am, where I am standing” is reinforcing the the sense of direction when at home, palpability, “another physical sureness” that is not there in the present, a nostalgia for “everything back in place” (ibid, 49-51).

As to location, it is noteworthy, that thinking about daughters always involves their placement: “Jeanne in Buenos Aires, Nore here at home, and Anne... as usual” (ibid, 9). Many years have passed but she cannot comprehend how Jeanne could have moved to Buenos Aires, her daughter, who “was born *here*, after all” (ibid, 6). She uses different languages; except the main one, French, she uses Spanish when thinking of Jeanne and sometimes English which is the mother tongue of her ex-husband.

Jeanne is the oldest of the three sisters, living far away from where she was born and her family. Her first appearance in the text is marked by a subsequent repetition of the phrase “All’s well”, which Jeanne pronounces either to herself or to the reader, producing an affect, soothing and uncanny at the same time. The landscape Jeanne describes is marvellously detailed, yet she admits to feel alone among “a vague set of presences” (ibid, 12). Her audial perception is very accentuated, it can be observed in the text through repeated onomatopoeia, representing sounds that surround her: water, sirens, language etc. She remarks that the sirens in Buenos Aires are different, or similar to everywhere in the world except the place where she was born.

Jeanne has designed her place of living herself, and in her narrative she claims to be enjoying it as well as her body. In Buenos Aires she is at home while distancing herself from “real” home - Buenos Aires being for her “a European capital with Europe at the other side of the world” (ibid, 97). It is crucial how she still uses her mother tongue to in designing her new home space. This narrator’s use of language is very specific: apart from already mentioned onomatopoeia, there are many indications that the action is taking place in a Spanish-speaking setting, such as the integration of Spanish songs lyrics into the text, which she apparently hears or thinks of and the recurrently used words “quieres”, “hombre”, “guapo”, “hijo” etc, however the stream of conscious is happening in French, being her mother tongue. Moreover, Jeanne emphasizes her bodily perception of Spanish language as she describes how she speaks, for instance: “between rolled ‘r’s and harsh *jotas*, scraps of Arabic in the back of her throat, shifts in mouth producing other syllables”

(ibid, 13). Jeanne's attempts to understand and perform the language can be viewed as performing an ideal which allows an individual enter the space, and that it is the situation in reference to the ideal which defines an individual's placement or displacement. Moreover, it is in reference to the ideal that the value is estimated; the lesser value assigned deprives an individual of place and of certain power, and who is once defined as *the unacceptable*, her claims for roots will be lost: devalued subjects are excluded and by exclusion become non-subjects. However, at the same time: "The foreigner feels strengthened by the distance that detaches him from the others as it does from himself and gives him the lofty sense not so much of holding the truth but of making it and himself relative while others fall victim to the ruts of monovalency" (Kristeva 1991, 7).

Throughout Jeanne's narrative there are various indications of her experience of the otherness both in the place she grew up in and in the place where she lives for the moment of action, even in the interaction with other protagonists. She is clearly suspecting judgement "travelling so much, being rich, happy, in love and living in an upmarket area of what they see as the Third World" (ibid, 52).

The presented dreams of childhood home are permeated with fears of being attacked by the matter the narrator is surrounded by, displaying indifference, detachedness from the place. The juxtaposition of the animate with the inanimate is a remarkable expression feature in Jeanne's narrative as she portrays herself as ignored or opposed by the surrounded space. In the dream she manages to regain stability with the help of her body - with/in her body when her mother announces it was an earthquake, where the earthquake can be read as a metaphor for an unstable ground, a homespace that is hostile, antonymous to motherly.

Throughout the novel she is constantly questioning her nationality, and towards the end refusing to belong to any nationality at all, claiming to be finally "rooted here where no one has roots" (ibid, 55). There are several references to French and Basque origins in Jeanne's narrative but the protagonist does not find it fulfilling to identify with one completely and - as Darrieussecq herself - chooses to be not defined by the place into which she was born.

In *Phenomenology of Whiteness*, Sara Ahmed speaks about *habitual* worlds – spaces, conceptually are synonymic to *familiar* worlds. She emphasizes that to enter those spaces, one has *to invest in the value* of them (Ahmed 2007). Consequently, to become less

noticeable, one has to conform to the order of things, to merge in order to invest to the value. In order to merge, one needs to be comprehensible in their expressions, where the example of a drag appears particularly useful. Butler explains that drag is an explanatory instance of how something which is read as “imitation” is not a copy of an original, but rather of ideals through which norms are made explicit (Jaworski 2007, 101). This idea is especially useful in understanding semiotically how a foreigner speaks a language that is not one’s mother tongue. In *Toccata and Fugue for the Foreigner*, Julia Kristeva calls foreigner’s language ‘a prosthesis’, arguing that it is an essentially different mechanism one applies while speaking in a country that is not of their origin: “What did you dream up concerning those new people you spoke to in an artificial language, a prosthesis? From your standpoint, were they idealized or scorned?” (Kristeva 1991, 14). Kristeva’s take on language becomes even more radical when she employs the trope of silence onto all of the foreigner’s being, rooting in a native language that is almost never spoken and then being ‘covered’ by a new language, covered in silence and by silence, which almost equals non-existence. Jeanne’s character is presented arguably as the most poetic and the least realistic, but it is not surprising therefore that it is her death with which the novel ends. The physical death, that according to Kristeva would be just the one following her semiotical death, but here I argue that the time should be as well taken into consideration: for Kristeva at the time she wrote *Strangers to Ourselves* digital communication was not yet available - is the one of drowning, due to inability to control the vehicle - the car, and as the reader is invited to follow the protagonist under the water, till the car she is in hits the bottom of a canal, and experience her last minutes until the voice ceases to silence.

The fourth narrator, middle sister Anne is a linguist, doing a research in which she observes how babies react to different languages and their mother tongue. Her narrative can be noted for the repetition of ‘recruitment’ trope, where her work seems to be the only solid ground. Having moved away from her childhood home, she is very unruly in her displacement, in which she is speaking about maps and cartography, wandering through streets of Paris, drawing in her mind maps of locations of her family members, and forgetting her own address. Anne’s fear for her belonging into a workplace and thus to the city’s body is exemplary to Ahmed’s idea that the identities which do not *invest* would be thus perceived as those disruptive of the future, and consequently, a threat to the masculine thinking the world, which finally will deprive them of their own future within the

paradigm. An identity, that does not fit, is questionably a subject, for by the outer world it cannot be empowered, but on the contrary, will be kept away from acting.

This narrative presents its own mapping of the universe, which involves it being surrounded by one consciousness, that is then split between the individuals, and left to be connected to by those who are trained to. Darrieussecq is as if inviting the reader to *be* her *actant*, to participate in her metaphorical build-up: the narrator sees her research work as a mission and believes that she was recruited for the reason that her mind is open enough to permeate the universal consciousness. Anne's imagination of the latter is similar to the description of a home space. She states her intention to "slip into the shell of the world like a hermit crab" (ibid, 17). The choice of this simile and the language use reinforces the affect, the narrator tends to evoke: the one of homelessness, the impossibility of belonging, the unrealistic dreams of moving back in with her mother, the necessity of separation in order to become subject. The affective part is notable of restlessness it gives the reader to feel, presenting Anne as disconnected from her body and having almost out-of-body experiences: "Put my body someplace, be in charge of myself, as though of the mothership", where her relation to her body appears as a mother-child relationship on the stage when the child is separated: for Anne it associates with "Technical control. Autonomy". Notwithstanding the separation, she locates her body in *the house* - the home space in the south of France. In this way the narrator underlines that "the problem is the habitat. Especially at night, more than ever, you float around your body, not knowing what to do with it" (ibid, 44). The reader follows how, in contrast to Paris, in the space that is both *familiar* and *familial* the narrator imagines herself to be in control of her body and mind, and how it becomes possible for her to finally be aware, "be at your thoughts' dashboard, be in unfiltered control of your thoughts' joystick" (ibid, 46).

Engaging with existentialist thought, de Beauvoir writes: "But she is All that which is inessential: she is wholly the Other. And as other she is also other than herself, other than what is expected of her. Being all, she is never exactly *this* that she should be; she is everlasting disappointment, the very disappointment of existence that never successfully attains or reconciles itself with the totality of existents" (de Beauvoir 2011, 251). For Anne, her mis-performed ideal becomes *a disappointment*, her loss of place is inherently the *disappointment of existence*, but this loss is semiotic - a possibility of becoming, a process. Yet, having lost her place, Anne places all her expectation onto the job she wants

to receive (the job being a space of belonging) calling it “my mission” and “my solution”. It is symptomatic how she deploys the trope of the Bluebeard tale into the narrative of the space which she aims to enter - a space, entering which involves death: “You have to die, my lady” (ibid, 24).

Anne sees herself and Jeanne being inevitably related, not by the mere fact of their sisterhood but symbolically, semiotically. It can be observed when she mentions Jeanne: “but her story is only a parable, a way of speaking, a metaphorical description of my existence, with creepy similarities with my life” (ibid, 14-15). It is tempting to make a conclusion that Darrieussecq works through this narrator to interact with the reader, turning Anne’s narrative into her own life-writing grounds.

Anne has a peculiar relationship with her masculinity, apparently believing that employing this side of her personality would be the best way to fit. In her desire to belong to the world of research and technology, she turns her whole perception of the world into a technical outline, sketch, where she is almost deprived of body. She seems to know clearly that if ideals of maleness and femaleness are formed within the structure of dominance, those who do not fit, are viewed outside of the structure. While in the beginning of the novel she is waiting to meet her married male lover, who does not arrive, in the end (whereas the timeline is only one day) she presents herself more as a lesbian: in the romantic experience with a woman “Anne floats down to Anne and reintegrates herself”, she and her lover Iris are “counting on each other to stick it all back together again...keep the body intact” (ibid, 176). At the same time her memories of the old house do not leave her, she relieves them again while with Iris. The Iris becomes the listener of the story about Jeanne that Anne tells at the same time while Jeanne is drowning, and by retelling it to Iris she retells it to the reader: the reader becoming Iris, the lover and the listener (ibid, 190). Hereafter the text becomes a play, where the roles are blurred, the narrator shifts to the other narrative, the narrator of which ceased to speak, and the reader’s role is open.

Throughout the narrative Anne carries the cartographies of places in her mind, viewing architecture as anatomy, parts of buildings as body parts, thus the dream of home transcends for her into a dream of subject becoming, of a greater oneness where she does not feel the interference from the universe. The “haunted” childhood home, where, as she says to Iris - or to the reader - “our father used to *responsibilize* us” (emphasis original) is the only physical space where the narrator’s complicity is possible, yet this question

remains in the form of a conflict until the end of the novel, when Anne wakes up in the middle of the night, and her lover hears her screaming “an inaudible...word, sounds like *maman*” - symbolizing the return to the semiotic.

Using Kristeva’s theory, I as a reader conclude that these four narratives represent what is called “subject in process” - the development of subject within language, or in the case of the novel, throughout the literary narrative. The nature of subject - and of language - is the one of motion, the novel therefore becoming the space of signification and of mobility, a semiotic chora (Kristeva 1988). As to the meaning of subject or what it takes to *be subject*, I agree that subject establishes itself as such through agency, performed within the body or by the body’s interaction with space (Braidotti). The fluid subject matter is forming and deforming itself, building itself *as* a narrative, through the narrative, and within the narrative continually becoming itself. Consequently, a literary subject is that, which unfolds. The process of becoming subject, constituting, creating a ‘self’ is never ending with the multiplicity of readers and their subjectivities, the space of the novel giving new and new possibilities of author-reader interactions and due to this it grants possibilities of subject becoming for the protagonists: as narrators, the author at work of life writing, or the textual body itself.



# Comparative Analysis: Darrieussecq and Koroleva

*Ah madame voilà du bon fromage  
Voilà du bon fromage au lait  
Il est du pays de celui qui l'a fait  
Et celui qui l'a fait il est de mon village  
Ah madame...*

Marie Darrieussecq, *Le Pays*

*El naranje de tu patio,  
Cuando te acercas a el  
Se desprende de sus flores  
Y te lose cha a los peis.  
(Помаранчевники твого домівства,  
коли наближаєшся до них,  
зривають з себе свої квіти  
й кидають їх тобі до ніг)*

Natalena Koroleva, *Without Roots*

I start my analysis with these two poems from the novels under analysis for a reason. The intertextual elements are able to communicate with the reader through the textual body in particular ways, pertain to their genre. The poetic genre or form is known for being concise in its symbolism and expressive in language use. These two poems are written in different languages; the second I listed is translated by the author herself in the text. The effect they produce is the one of immediacy: the presence of here and now in linguistic awareness, created by the rhythm which structures the body of the poem and the visuality of the written language. From the first words the reader engages or disengages in the conversation the poems are about to open - in a particular language, to which a reader has a particular connection, depending of their individual history. If you speak the language, you can participate in the discussion by your choice: accept the open invitation or ignore it. If the language is unfamiliar, so stays the author, unless they are translated.

With this simple poetic example I situate my discussion of the two authors in the realm of language. In this chapter will focus on more on Natalena Koroleva's "Without

Roots” as I discussed Darrieussecq previously, however I will bring the examples of her writing as a point of comparison. Before I step into analysis, two things need to be clarified. First of all I have to mention that Marie Darrieussecq does not consider “Le Pays” an autobiography and neither do I in this research, however, it has certain elements of life-writing and self-writing, pertain to *écriture féminine*. As for Natalena Koroleva, she did consider her nouvelle autobiographical. Secondly, I differentiate between the author and narrator, not in the sense that they are different people, but in the sense that they are different persona. In “The Country” Darrieussecq writes in the first person; in “Without Roots” Koroleva employs the third person. In the first case, there is a novel within the novel, in which the Darrieussecq’s narrator, whether it is Darrieussecq herself or not, is a female writer, working on her creative oeuvre and narrating her life story alongside. In Koroleva’s “Without Roots” the narration occurs in third person in the past tense, and I consider the time frame crucial for the understanding how the author relates to the text and to the narrator as a subject. I believe that the narration from the third person in this case occurs not from the position of omniscience (as it would be in any non-autobiographical fiction) but it is merely a tool of separation: by indicating that the events have happened in the past, alongside with narrating the story from the third person, Koroleva creates the distance between herself as an author, who is the narrator in this case as well, and her protagonist as a persona - herself in the past, the Other for the authorial Self, the object under her careful examination, the *becoming Subject*. In other words, Koroleva takes distance from her protagonist, differentiating between the narrator as her older Self and the protagonist as her subject of careful examination. Darrieussecq-author has the first person narrator who is the female writer, so the distinction between the subject and the object happens within the body of the fictional text, or two texts, to be more precise. The “second” novel in Darrieussecq’s case is written distinctly as a separate textual body, where the usage of a different font and font size reinforces the impression of the separateness of these two, inherently fictional, narratives.

Therefore, aware of the complexity of the different subject-object positions within the novels under analysis, I continue my study of the female protagonists in the same manner as in “A Brief Stay with the Living”. With the author’s biographies it gives an additional layer, in which, as I do not believe that the author is merely a function, bring the author’s relation to language and/or their writing in discussion with the literary work as the

body which structurally interacts with the reader. Moreover, because these works have strong lingvo-political grounding, I discuss how the politics of location is entangled into the textual body. I will attempt to show, how writing, in Trinh T. Min-ha's terms "weaves into language the complex relations of a subject caught between the problems of race and gender" (Min-ha 6). This theorist considers writing to be a "focal point of cultural consciousness and social change", and agreeing with her, in the next section I will concentrate on each specific context and contemplate, how in a literary work a female Other re-integrates with her female Self, and what is the function of language in this process.

In "Comment j'écris" or "How I Write" Marie Darrieussecq speaks extensively about language. She underlines the importance of the family in the formation of a certain preference among writers to use a certain language in their work. She explains that this choice is rational, almost practical, and it is not always the mother tongue that would be considered a primary choice. Interestingly enough, she refers to language as "a convention" and compares the relationship to language as the relationship to body<sup>2</sup>. It adds another layer, when she confesses that Basque, which she "dare not touch"<sup>3</sup> and which is "almost sacred" is the language of her mother. Although her family was Basque, it was only her mother who spoke this language, when her father used French and other relatives spoke Spanish. When it comes to the choice of which language to employ in the literary work, in "writing one's own body", it is the "language of the school" that wins over the language that is considered "too sacred". Moreover, in her interview Darrieussecq refers to Basque literally as to just "the language of the mother", which, however, literally looks as "the maternal" language: "la langue maternelle". It becomes therefore very symptomatic when although the novel is written in French, there are many Basque words and

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<sup>2</sup> "I think writers have a special relationship to their mother tongue#. They dare to touch it, they dare to consider it as something that is outside of them, that they can break, with which they can play, with the body of the tongue. This is not a nature, it is a convention, it could have been another body" (Comment j'écris, 266)

<sup>3</sup>Basque and French were in opposition to me in the sense that French was the language of the school, of the Republic, the language of Descartes, the language of the authors I read, the language I was going to be able to manipulate. Basque had almost a sacred dimension: I did not dare touch it, I did not even dare to speak it. I did not know how to play with it. (Comment j'écris, 267)

expressions in the text, and because the plot is about someone who returns to her home, to her maternal place, in order to write, it allows an interpretation that the protagonist is searching for ways to reconnect with her side, that was either abandoned or that can be fully realized only in the domestic space, and that side is feminine. Indeed, Darrieussecq has mother protagonists and characters in almost every novel, but “The Country” is special in the way that the plot directly refers to the Country of Basque. With the word “country” in the title or “le pays” in French it poses a question to the reader, of what a country is, in the way, that an unprepared reader would probably assume that “country” is a general noun with a generic meaning, and only later realize that it relates to the Country of Basque. Without exaggeration, the question of the home space is central to the novel, and so is the question of what a country is. The questions remain unresolved and open to the reader. The narrator is more focused on her authorial work: her new novel appears in the narrative as the plot unfolds. Her home space allows this creation and inspires her for it, letting her reconnect with the old memories and her former self. She does not interact with the social space so much as she does with the nature: for it she does not need to employ the local language, but in the nature that is the most familiar to her since childhood she heals the separation from her Basque self and strengthens her inner subjective unity.

Since in this section I aim to concentrate on the relationship both authors have to their language as probably core part of their identity performance, before I continue with Natalena Koroleva’s work, I have to mention that in the modern discourse of East-European literature identity deployment is tightly bound with history - and history of language. This connection, of the personal histories intertwining with local collective histories, is one of the most overwhelming and crucial issues, utterly expressed in many artistic works, yet remaining in the shadow of research.

In her autobiographical *nouvelle*, Koroleva, ethnically Polish and Spanish, gives her protagonist name Noèle (among other names, as in Spanish tradition) and narrates her story in the third person. Later in this section I will use “for Koroleva” and “for Noèle” separately, implying, that they are not only the author (-narrator) and their protagonist, but that Koroleva uses this trope with the aim of separation, of distancing from herself in the past, turning her memory of the past Self into an object of a literary investigation. Noèle for Natalena Koroleva is her located Self - the one, acting in a particular here and now: in the space of early XX century Kyiv - before the Revolution of 1917, therefore part of the

Russian Empire, - where the young author came to study at the Institute for Noble Maidens after being raised at the Catholic monastery Notre Dame de Sion, in French Pyrenees.

From the beginning of the *nouvelle*, Noèle expresses a particular desire to find a space of Self, or the familial. By the familial further and on I mean the space of the family, in which the Self is integrated as a Subject, and in which subjects interact, in Ahmed's terms, as comprehensible to each other. This quest of the protagonist is partially realized in the connotations she has developed for different languages she speaks or is about to learn. For her, in contrast to Darrieussecq, language is not a mere convention, language is closely and irreversibly related to the space of the familial.

Both Darrieussecq and Koroleva use the space of a family as a setting for most of their creative works. Even while "The Country" concentrates on the nature spaces and on the subjective work of mind, engaging in writing, and "Without Roots" takes place in the Institute for Noble Maidens for the most part, the theme of the family and the subject's relation to it remains central. It implies, that it is only through interaction with it, either directly, through the spaces of familiar nature, the memories, or the the language, the subject re-integrates all her past and present Selves into a performative unity - which is the finished work of art, as the literary work is. In "The Country" this receives an additional layer, where the protagonist, Marie Rivière, produces her own novel. And it should be considered, that both of these writers, although it is not a central motive in their works, discuss mourning and loss of their family members, and embody this loss in the figures of ghosts. I argue, that both authors locate in these characters, with whom the interaction happens in an almost unconscious manner, the relation of the protagonists to their past selves and also to language as the space of the maternal: Noèle sees her Spanish grandmother when she returns to her family's home on vacation, and Marie communicates with her dead brother, as she is writing her novel in the country of Basque. Marie's novel ends with the following conclusion: "Ghosts do not roam in limbo. They exist only in the meeting. They have no place other than their appearance. When they disappear, it's totally. They have no inner life, they have no life somewhere, they have neither psychology nor memory. They do not suffer. They are born of our obsession, which lights them and extinguishes them (...). They are only for us" (Darrieussecq 2012, 248). With this statement it becomes possible to explain Darrieussecq's attitude towards and recurrent employment of ghost figures (in "A Brief Stay with the Living", "Tom is Dead" and "The Country) as

entities who do not exist separately from a subject's mind but represent the relation to the familial as something that is "dead" or "lost" and through *meeting* - engaging, performing, interaction - help the subject re-live their traumatic memories and heal themselves, opening a possibility of becoming.

For Noèle, the question of Self in the familial space remains central throughout the entire narrative, as is the question of what a family is. She is searching to realize who are "her people", "свої" - this word is used in the quotation marks, as is the word "чужі" - "strangers" or "others". She also trying to find out who can be "hers" "but not in the sense of blood", as she learns that her family, where the father has married for the second time, is not fully accepting her, and she cannot find a connection with them either (Koroleva 111). After her childhood at grandmother's place in Western Ukraine she lived for over ten years at the monastery, surrounded by what she considered the greatest affection and warmth "the care of her people, but not in the sense of blood" (Koroleva 125). She uses the word "home" therefore also always in quotation marks, indicating, that it is more of a formality for her, or even irony, to call so her father's home. One way she defines "her people" is that among them "one did not have to search for conversation topics" (ibid 111). She marks the tension she repeatedly experiences in conversations with her relatives, even the father, with whom she has the closest connection. With her relatives she speaks in French - the language of the monastery in which she was brought up. This language choice functions as a trope amplifying the displacement of the protagonist which she seeks to express as well as the formal nature of this communication, in which she feels perceived as a total stranger. While describing the space in which she finds herself during the first scene and till the end of nouvelle - the final scene takes place in the same house of her father in Kyiv, she contrasts the north (Kyiv) and the south (Pyrenees) as a means to compare different sides of her story, where everything is polar: life and death, closeness and alienation, brightness and paleness, *jouissance* and estrangement. She does not claim, idealistically, that Pyrenees was where she belonged - she realized the temporality of her life there and it only reinforces the affect of constant unfitting, when after returning to the country which was meant to be her home she experiences even bigger alienation as abroad.

Still, French is almost the native language for her, and in this nouvelle it is sometimes used to render the moments of closeness: for instance, when Noèle communicates with her French friend who accompanied her to Kyiv. The reason, why the

use of the same language performs different functions in the same narrative is that the French language, spoken in Kyiv was very different from almost native French for Noèle. The French language of Noèle's father was impeccable, but at the same time strangely alien to her ear. "That's how they spoke in France on stage, or greeted the president of the republic. But in everyday life ... who uses such sophisticated phrases and graceful words?.." (ibid 108). Noèle feels sympathy and respect to her father but notes that these feelings are based on gratitude that he does not impose any authority over her (ibid 145).

In a similar way that the narrator-protagonist of "The Country" by Darrieussecq, "Without Roots" is permeated with the nostalgic subjectivity of living the past in the present moment, the childhood "where everything was back in place". Noèle stubbornly confesses: "Nothing can never fade the sparkling colors of a pleasant memory, nor can it obscure the memories in front of the spirit of the one who wants to live in a happy past" (ibid 180). She uses reading as a tool to ignore the reality in which she is alien in the same way as Marie Rivière uses writing. In this way she escapes from the alienation, acknowledging her own needs and protecting herself. However, the books in her fathers library are often censored, and Noèle experiences another kind of readership, the verified by somebody "second hand activity", "feeling that she was being forced to eat from the dish from which somebody else had already eaten before her" (ibid 167). In this way, she experiences the failure of her attempt to escape and to join something "of her own", and becomes even more aware with the contrasts between the cultures she juxtaposes: the "Western", Catholic culture and the one of the Russian Empire - the culture of censorship for her. For Noèle, who is a believer, the contrast lies not so much in the realm of political, but of spiritual: ways, in which different peoples relate to religion and to God in their daily rituals and practice. A bright example can be found in the scene, in which Noèle's step-mother mocks her for saying a prayer aloud before dinner: "But why publicly reveal you intimate feelings?" (ibid 115). An issue that Noèle cannot comprehend is the use of the word "slave" when it comes to religion, as in the word combination "раба Божя" - "slave of God". Her stepmother even calls her home servants "slaves" for her own amusement, which for Noèle is unacceptable and incomprehensible. On the other side, her behaviour often seems incomprehensible for the people that surround her - especially at the Institute, where she studies together with Russian "maidens". To Noèle her classmates are not free, she considers them insincere in the way they have to subordinate themselves and "serve".

Even in her religious practice she emphasizes that she is not "a slave" and explains that she prays "in a desire to touch something that is full of light and has the power to make her own existence brighter and lighter". In an attempt to comprehend the reality in which she is forced to obey she asks: "Can a "slave" come and lie down at the feet of his master with complete tenderness in his heart?!" (ibid 205).

The way in which she contrasts Catholicism with Russian Orthodox church brings the reader back to the opposition of life and death which Noèle employed in the description of the family house in Kyiv, the embodied coldness, absence of colours and emotions, as opposed to the "loving South". It should be notified, that in these oppositions Noèle never refers to Ukraine, even though she creates them in Ukrainian language in the inherently Ukrainian space. It can be explained with the fact that Kyiv at that time was a city in Russian Empire, but more so, Noèle does not perceive it as Ukrainian: the space she is in does not appear to her as such.

For Noèle, faith is her expression of integrity and identity. As she finds herself in an alien culture, she respects people in their otherness but does not make any steps towards her integration in the community. She regards the society at the Institute as based on hierarchy, and acknowledges the impossibility to change it; at the same time she refuses to occupy either a dependent, or a controlling position, and thus becomes a complete outsider. "... it took a lot of courage to go against the current and save her personal views, individual character, separate thought. And before that - other upbringing and other vital principles (...) Thus, she was completely alien here. Well, a stranger is mostly a hostile figure..." (ibid 195). The lack of knowledge of the dominant (Russian) language and a different faith and, accordingly, worldview completely alienated her from the environment in which she found herself due to her family's will. Noèle's teacher of literature summarises her position unprecedentedly: "But you are thoroughly a stranger! I see that you know Dante better than Pushkin" (ibid 208). What concerns teachers, the attitudes they express are mostly political, accepted in the discourse. When Noèle responds to questions of her teacher during history class and expresses her knowledge on the certain period of Ukrainian history, she is silenced; the teacher invites her after class to talk in private, and explains why she is not allowed to voice certain things, among which are "the national motives" and mentions of Cossacks in a positive manner. Another teacher of Noèle, the classical composer of Ukrainian music, Mykola Lysenko, does not speak Ukrainian in public but



starts a friendship with Noèle, when he accidentally sees among her notes the sheets with Ukrainian folk songs and in a conversation with her discovers that she speaks Ukrainian language is much better than Russian. The Institute in "Without Roots" is thus a space of power: a structure in which language becomes one of the central tools of subordination, but also one of the ways to exercise power. In Trinh T. Min-ha's terms it can be regarded as follows: "Power... never dies out: tracked, pursued, worn out, or driven away here, it will always reappear there, where I expect it least. And language is one of the most complex forms of subjugation, being at the same time the locus of power and unconscious servility. With each sign that gives language its shape lies a stereotype of which I am both the manipulator and the manipulated" (Min-ha 52). In Noèle's case, she is subordinate to the structure and in terms of language cannot escape from it: she is obliged to speak the language, comprehensible to the authorities and speak the "truths" acceptable in the discourse of the Russian Empire's culture and history. However, she does regard it as forceful and imposed, therefore willfully searches ways to undermine the system and does it wherever she can, but because of this 'doing' finds herself in total separation. This separation is, nevertheless, at times empowering: engaging in reading, thinking and occasional conversations with other "strangers" and "outsiders" she shapes her own way to becoming a Subject - outside of system which forbids this possibility by definition.

One of the other alienated female characters in "Without Roots" is Marusya, to whom Noèle refers as "sister" in a symbolic manner. She often identifies her with herself, especially in terms of home and childhood home (the maternal, in Kristeva's terms). Marusya resides at Noèle's family's house but is neither a family member, nor a servant; she does not have any social belonging (Koroleva 10). This is how Noèle describes her first encounter with Marusia in this narrative: "Only one dark-haired girl, dressed in a magnificent embroidered shirt and a large number of colorful beads, stared at Noèle with a close look and stirred up some negligent childhood memories in Noèle's soul. Father said something to her, smiling affectionately, and she approached to Noèle, hugged her and kissed her cheeks three times. These were the first kiss at home and on the native land" (Koroleva 10).

In terms of language and Noèle's alienation in this regard, it should be mentioned that among other people at her "home" only one of the servants, Emile, was able to speak French, all the other spoke Russian and Polish languages, but Marusya did not speak either

of these. She spoke only "in her own way". And even though the character of Marusia is described with a lot of dignity and a sense of freedom, the way she is often referred to, involves a high degree of objectification. It can be observed in a dialogue between Noèle's father and stepmother which she hears during her first day's dinner:

*"Why do we need her?" - asked the stepmother.*

*"You know, why," - father said gravely, in a dry manner, and the same moment added, smiling kindly: "Marusya is here so that her necklaces sing, so that her ribbons shimmer and embroidered shirts spark with beauty. These responsibilities will suffice."*

*"That is, - he added again seriously, - genius loci, - and, turning to Noèle, explained, - folklore and romance of the local land. At most, she can embroider, sew, and stitch, because those works do not disharmonize with her "couleur locale" (ibid 12).*

This dialogue in the beginning of the nouvelle sets a specific image of the female Other and echoes with one of the penultimate scenes, in which Noèle meets another Ukrainian girl and learns from her more about what it is to be a Ukrainian in the Russian Empire. Among other things, she realizes that the key issue to Ukrainian identity is language, as her new acquaintance evinces: "First of all you should be able to speak to them *in their way*" (ibid 218). Thus, if we agree that "Without Roots" is an autobiographical nouvelle, then is also a performative manifestation of how a relationship with language creates a certain reality: a textual work, and how it moves a subject within the politics of location from the margins to a more empowered symbolic placement.

Despite the fact, that Noèle experiences a considerable alienation from her family, she follows her father's moral advice. In the scene, where Noèle's father introduces her to the ethical rules of the family, he states: "But two things remain permanent: one is a duty to the people among whom you live. Especially when these people are the oppressed, we are not free to either despise them or be indifferent to their needs" (ibid 16). Her father, the Polish count, could most certainly be the Other in the described politics of location, but this nouvelle demonstrates explicitly, that he acts as a teacher, as someone who dares to take responsibility *for* the Other, which already indicates a position of power. A female subject experiences ethnic alienation much more profoundly, for she does not occupy power placements. It signifies many more obstacles on her way of expressing herself, and thus becoming a Subject, in all her important identities: gender, ethnic, national and linguistic.

## Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I was pushed against many limits in search of how one can fully become a female subject in the complex politics of location. My work started with the inquiry of what a subject is, how can one refer to it, and how a female subject is different from the Subject as Absolute. With Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement: "He is the Subject, she is the Other" to question, I, firstly, investigated, how de Beauvoir's idea was accepted by different feminist schools of thought. I discovered that de Beauvoir was critiqued for not including women from different axes of power into her argument, however, she importantly stated that the position of the Other can be occupied by any underprivileged individual. Her idea of becoming - shifting, changing to a different position through separation from what is considered Self - has been vital to my research. Since this thesis engages with women of complex identities that involve being part of discriminated ethnicities and having unusual, dramatic relationships to their familial spaces and native languages, I seek an inclusive and complex understanding of a female identity, that considers her different placements on various intersections of power. In those placements she plays as Subject *and* as the Other: with this, I am interested in the possibilities of the integration which will allow a female Other to become a female Self, or a Subject.

By following de Beauvoir's debate with Hegel I realized that Subject in phenomenology stands for a consciousness, which perceives itself as the point of departure, from which the world unfolds, and for which everything that is not Self is the Other. Since I chose to deploy feminist phenomenology as my main philosophical framework, I attempted to understand the role of embodiment in building the subjectivity, and more so, how it can be manifested in a literary work. Since my thesis addresses the subject (as the ultimate goal of the position of the Other) in the literary works of female authors, I analysed and compared different theories of authorship: from Barthes with his idea that "the author is dead" to *écriture féminine* by Hélène Cixous. For Cixous, writing is inseparable from the body, especially for women writers, which gives an empowering

perspective on how writing is a performative act, that means for the author reintegration with her body.

Another aspect that has been of particular interest to me is language. Before writing this work I regarded language, mother tongue, as an indicator of ethnic identity and of a body's belonging to a certain geographical and political placement. In writing this work I realized, that for a female writer language is a conscious choice - both in the case when the writer chooses or refuses to choose it - of writing one's own body. There is a particular synchronization between what the language implies socially and politically, and how a subjectively constructed Self responds to it.

Both narratives that I analysed are autobiographical and focusing on the concept of home and its relation to mother tongue. While comparing this particular semantic line, of a female writer, who returns home, to "the country", that legally does not exist and where, by not being fluent in the language, she is alien, I discovered that language is a symbolic matter that plays a role in constructing a reality. In "Without Roots" the author and the protagonist emphasize, that Natalena's (Noèle's) country exists only in the language, which she barely remembers but stays persistent in choosing this language to write herself. The power dynamics are represented in these narratives quite similarly; they both concentrate on interacting with the imagined home space through language, and the female narrators and protagonists are gaining and shaping a certain subjectivity in this interaction. I regard it as the process of becoming a Subject amidst inequality, oppression and discrimination. Both authors write themselves, write their traumas and their stories: "The Country" even contains a novel within the novel. They choose the languages on the opposite sides of the power dynamics: French as the dominant language, Ukrainian as the underprivileged one, but use them ultimately for the same goal ( which is to write themselves and to become Subjects).

A very important place in my argument belongs to the approach that demands every research to be situated. Supporting Donna Haraway's perspective, in which she states that there is no disembodied objectivity, I consciously employ my own subjectivity as a theorist in writing this work. I do not argue that all my findings are true for any other reader, however, I offer my situated knowledge, acquired in the lived experience, that is not only theoretical (Appendix). Therefore, in this thesis, which I started with this question among others: "how can I, as a writer and as a female, engage in literary and academic work?" I

discovered that it is possible to do so only from the position of embodied subjectivity and using one's own subjective voice. It is inherently a position of awareness and respect: of listening to the authors' voices, those of the female narrators and protagonists, and the one of your own. In this way the engagement with a literary (or any other text) is always intersubjective. Whether it should be argued that the author is dead or not, it is impossible to deny that text is a field where different subjectivities meet and are at work.

In this thesis I have addressed language as a complex phenomenon and attempted to analyse it through the scope of identity within the politics of location. In reading the novels in the original I (re)discovered the intermediacy of the textual communication that arises between the text and the reader and the personal relationships of the authors to their languages, to the ways they encode their bodies in the text and allow them to be dismantled as the text performs. *L'écriture féminine* builds a very special relation to the reader, who attempts to follow this complex process of the female identity (re-)construction and by occupying the position of readership follows the Subject's becoming.

Whereas the writers are female and their works are the narratives of self-writing, *écriture féminine* becomes the writing of the female Subject as the writing of the female embodied Self. Thus, as an answer to the question of how can one analyse a female subject as an agent of the politics of location in a literary work, I offer the following: a female subject should be analysed within the fluid development of the many identities it represents: gender, ethnic, national, class, race etc, and also in the relation to language, in which the female author chooses to write herself. Language is probably the most performative tool one can use for asserting her own singularity, reintegrating back to her own grounds and bringing her Self from the position of the Other to the one of the full agency - the one of the Subject.

# Summary

In this Master's thesis I explore the concept of the Other in relation to Subject, and female subjectivity. The goal of this work is to examine, how one can analyse a female subject in a literary work and why issues of space, location and politics should be considered as crucial to the formation of a female subjectivity. In order to dismantle this complex question, I engage in the discussion about the relationship between the Subject and the Other in the phenomenology of Hegel and de Beauvoir, and with the use of feminist methodology, as in "Situated knowledges" by Donna Haraway, I compare the literary works of two female writers: Marie Darrieussecq and Natalena Koroleva.

The thesis is divided into two main chapters: theoretical and comparative. The theoretical part follows the Introduction in which I explain my subjective motivation in writing this thesis and why the theoretical questions that I aim to answer, alongside with the two authors, the works of which I choose to examine, matter to me as a researcher, a female writer and a female subject. I acknowledge the many differences between the two authors and their styles of writing but agree that the novels I intend to analyse are bright examples of *écriture féminine* - women's writing, in Hélène Cixous' terms (Cixous 1976). As female writers and also representatives of ethnic minorities they write "from the margins of the Symbolic" and by choosing to write their lived experiences, located in the body, they transform their positions. They cease to occupy the placement of the Other and return into the symbolic space of Self.

In order to understand, how creative work - and namely acts of speaking and writing - help a female writer to become a willful subject, I, firstly, investigate the relationship between Self and Other. For Hegel and de Beauvoir, the concept of subject (or Subject) was one of the core theoretical issues, which was discussed alongside the debate on Self and Other. I discovered that the concepts of Subject and Self are realized in the almost synonymical manner in feminist phenomenology and, consequently, can be deployed so in contemporary literary analysis.

Secondly, since my research question addresses the female subject, I investigate in the section *Subject and Author* how the issues of female subjectivity and female authorship

relate to each other. In the “Death of the Author” Roland Barthes advocates for a certain impersonality that a writer needs to achieve so that it is the text, that speaks, and not “me” (a subjectivity). Some of the feminist postmodern theorists, as Sarah Wilson in “Situated Authorship”, believe, that the death of the author is conceptually liberating and productive in the struggle for recognition of the female subject as equal, and giving space for changing the power structure. However, it might not be a favourable theory for those whose subjectivity has been denied and marginalized, as for many female writers, women of colour and underprivileged ethnicities.

Thirdly, I concentrate on *écriture féminine* as the ultimate expression of the female authorship that allows to overcome the objectified position of the Other and step into the full fledged subjectivity. For Cixous, women’s writing is often perceived as “less rational, less moral, less comprehensible” in the same way as a female maternal body is barred from the Symbolic Order (Cixous 1976). She insists that female subjectivity needs to be re-defined through writing. An essential factor in writing that can be labeled as feminine is a conscious appeal to experience of what it means to be female, which is day-to-day experience.

In the final section of the theoretical chapter, *Performativity, Other and Location*, I concentrate on how speaking, naming and writing are performative acts that play an important role in subject becoming. The concept of performativity is vital to this thesis as it explains the construction of identity and subjectivity through acting it out. The idea of performativity is rooted in the phenomenological theory of Husserl, according to which “social agents constitute social reality through language and all manner of symbolic social sign” (Husserl 2012: 54). Consequently, I argue that becoming a Subject is a process of shaping one’s own identity through speaking and being heard, through writing, naming, acknowledging oneself as a writer and other forms of social or self-representation.

Following a phenomenological idea that a human self and subjectivity are the only possible ways of cognition, I engage in the debate on how a geographical location is too 'embodied and embedded' (Braidotti: 211). For Rosi Braidotti embodiment is the means by which specific bodies become meaningful within communities of other bodies, and I claim that language is central to the production of meaning. In the analysis, that follows the theoretical part, I illustrate how language as a choice and a literary language as a tool shape the subjects’ experiences and define their positions in power structures.

The analysis chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 is the analysis of “A Brief Stay with the Living” by Marie Darrieussecq. Part 2 is the comparative analysis of “The Country” by Marie Darrieussecq and “Without Roots” by Natalena Koroleva. Following Hélène Cixous, who redefines “the feminine”, that is situated on the margins of the Symbolic Order, through reconsidering the position of “lack” and “otherness”, I analyse the positions of the female protagonists in the three novels and their performative identities. In my analysis argue, that a fictional narrative can be performative, and that it is *an act of doing*. My aim is therefore to investigate, what kind of doing it is and how reading itself is a subjective phenomenological experience.

The three narratives under analysis are the narratives of *écriture féminine* in the sense that they manifest the representation of what is believed to be non-representational. The protagonists of Marie Darrieussecq’s, all of them being subjects of migration, tell different stories of how they relate to places and to their own bodies in spaces that are either familiar or alien. Their processes of subject becoming are fluid, almost never-ending, as they constantly have to reaffirm themselves in structures of power that push them to the margins.

The narrators of “The Country” and “Without Roots” are aiming to regain their subject positions through writing, as they find themselves in spaces, that are de facto their homes, but the different lived experiences that they have gained by living previously abroad (or separately from the ethnic communities that have strong separation between Self and Other) mark them as different. The linguistic issues become political and make them struggle and experience alienation in the places that were expected to be nurturing and maternal.

The use of feminist phenomenology helps to revive the embodied agency, movements and actions of the female protagonists. As I engaged in the examination of how feminist phenomenology can be brought into dialogue with the female subjectivity in the works of Marie Darrieussecq and Natalena Koroleva, I discovered that women’s perceptions of belonging and perspectives of space have a different dynamics, because of the different perception of the female body in the discourse - the foregrounded body, prone to objectification. Female migration, therefore, means radical displacement, but writing is one way of empowerment. It can be viewed as reconnection with the position of the Self, which, as in a repetitive Darrieussecq’s trope, “brings you back into place”.



In the conclusion, as an answer to the question of how one can analyse a female subject, I propose, that a female subject can be analysed only in the complexity of her embodiment and the many identities it represents. As for a literary work, it is crucial to take the language into consideration, in which the author chooses to narrate her personal history and “write her own body”. For a female writer language is undoubtedly one of the most performative tools for regaining the position of agency and reintegrating to her own grounds.

## Kokkuvõte

Käesolevas magistritöös uurin naise subjektiivsust ja Teise kontseptsiooni seoses subjektiga. Töö eesmärgiks on uurida, kuidas on võimalik kirjanduslikus töös analüüsida naissoost subjekti ja miks on ruumi, asukoha ja poliitika küsimused subjektiivsuse kujunemise seisukohalt tähtsad. Selle keerulise küsimuse lahendamiseks käsitlen Hegeli ja de Beauvoiri teooriaid Subjekti ja Teise vahelisest suhtest. Feministliku meetodika abil, nagu Donna Haraway teoses “Situated knowledges”, võrdlen kahe naissoost kirjaniku Marie Darrieussecq ja Natalena Koroleva teoseid.

Töö koosneb kahest peatükist: teoreetilisest ja võrdlevast. Darrieussecqi ja Koroleva ja nende kirjutamisstiili vahel on nii mõningaid erinevusi, kuid olen nõus, et romaanid, mida kavatsen analüüsida, on Héléne Cixousi sõnastuses *écriture féminine* - naiste kirjutised. Naiskirjanikena ja ka rahvusvähemuste esindajatena asub nende positsioon sümboolse korra äärealadel, kuid kirjutades oma kehalistest kogemustest, lakkavad nad kirjutamast “Teise” positsioonilt ja naasevad Enese sümboolsesse ruumi.

Selleks, et mõista, kuidas loovtöö ning kõnelemise ja kirjutamise akt aitab naiskirjanikul saada tahtlikuks subjektiks, uurin esiteks Iseenese ja Teiste vahelist suhet. Hegeli ja de Beauvoiri jaoks oli subjekti (või Subjekti) mõiste üks peamisi teoreetilisi küsimusi, mida käsitleti koos Enese ja Teise suhte uurimisega. Näitan, et feministlikus fenomenoloogias realiseeritakse Subjekti ja Enese mõisted peaaegu sünonüümselt ja seega saab neid kaasaegses kirjandusanalüüsis kasutada.

Kuna minu uurimisküsimus käsitleb naissoost Subjekti, uurin peatükis „Subjekt ja autor“, kuidas on naise subjektiivsuse küsimus seotud naissoost autoritega. Raamatus „Death of the Author“ pooldab Roland Barthes, et kirjanik peab saavutama teatud isikupäratuse, et räägiks tekst, mitte “mina”. Mõned feministlikud postmodernistlikud teoreetikud, nagu Sarah Wilson, usuvad, et autori surm on kontseptuaalselt vabastav ja produktiivne võitluses naissoost teema võrdseks tunnistamiseks ning annab ruumi võimustruktuuri muutmiseks. Siiski ei pruugi see olla soodne neile, kelle subjektiivsus on piiratud ja marginaliseeritud, nagu näiteks naiskirjanikud ja vähe privilegieeritud rahvused.

Kolmandaks, keskendun *écriture féminine*'le kui naissoost autorsuse ülimale väljendusele, mis võimaldab ületada Teise objektiivse positsiooni ja astuda täieõiguslikusse subjektiivsusse. Cixousi arvates peetakse naiskirjutisi sageli „vähem ratsionaalseks, vähem moraalseks, vähem arusaadavaks” (Cixous 1976). Cixous rõhutab, et feminiinne subjektiivsus tuleb uuesti määratleda läbi kirjutamise. Oluline faktor naiskirjutamise puhul, on teadlik üleskutse kogeda, mida tähendab olla naissoost (Cixous 1976).

Teoreetilise peatüki viimases osas, *Performativity, Other ja Location*, keskendun sellele, kuidas kõnelemine, nimetamine ja kirjutamine on performatiivsed teod, mis mängivad olulist rolli subjekt loomes. Performatiivsuse mõiste on selle töö jaoks ülioluline, kuna see selgitab läbi mängides identiteedi ja subjektiivsuse ülesehitust. Performatiivsuse idee lähtub Husserli fenomenoloogilisest teooriast, mille kohaselt „sotsiaalsed agendid moodustavad sotsiaalse reaalsuse keele ja sümboolse sotsiaalse märgi kaudu” (Husserl 2012: 54). Sellest tulenevalt väidan, et Subjektiks saamine on protsess, mis kujundab enda identiteeti kõne ja kuulmise kaudu, kirjutades, nimetades, tunnustades end kirjanikuna ja muudes sotsiaalsetes või enese esindamise vormides.

Jälgides fenomenoloogilist ideed, et inimese mina ja subjektiivsus on ainsad võimalikud tunnetusviisid, arutlen selle üle, kuidas geograafiline asukoht on liiga „kehastunud ja kinnitatud” (Braidotti: 211). Rosi Braidotti jaoks on kehastus vahend, mille abil konkreetsete kehad saavad teiste kehade kogukondades tähendusrikkaks, ning ma väidan, et keel on tähenduse loomisel kesksel kohal. Anlүүsis, mis järgneb teoreetilisele osale, näitan, kuidas keel on valik ja kirjanduskeel on vahend, mis kujundab subjekti ja määratleb tema positsiooni võimustruktuuris.

Analüüsiv peatükk on jagatud kaheks osaks. Esimene osa on Marie Darrieussecq'i teose „A Brief Stay with the Living” analüüs. Teine osa on Marie Darrieussecq'i “The Country” ja Natalena Koroleva “The Roots” teoste võrdlev analüüs. Hélène Cixousi teooriate abil analüüsin naissoost peategelaste positsioone kolmes romaanis ja nende performatiivseid identiteete. Oma analüüsis väidan, et ilukirjandus võib olla performatiivne ja et tegemist on aktiga. Minu eesmärk on seega uurida, milline on see akt ja kuidas lugemine ise on subjektiivne fenomenoloogiline kogemus.

Analüüsivad kolm narratiivi on *écriture feminine* selles mõttes, et nad näitavad, mida peetakse mitte-esinduslikuks. Minu pakutav tõlgendus juhindub minu tähelepanust mitte ainult naissoost tegelaste esindatusest, nende kehalisest ja emotsionaalsest kogemusest ja intersubjektiivsetest kohtumistest, vaid autori ja jutustaja vahelise naissoost intersubjektiivsuse dünaamikast ning jutustaja ja lugeja vahel. Marie Darrieussecq'i peategelased, kes kõik on migreerunud subjektid, räägivad, kuidas nad on seotud kohtade ja oma kehadega, mis on kas tuttavad või võõrad. Nende subjektide muutumisprotsessid on muutlikud, peaaegu lõppematud, sest nad peavad pidevalt ennast kinnitama võimu struktuuridesse, mis lükkavad nad struktuuride äärealadesse.

"The Country" ja "Without Roots" jutustajad püüavad taastada oma subjekti positsioonid kirjalikult, end ruumides leides, mis on de facto nende kodud, kuid erinevad elatud kogemustest, mida nad on varem välismaal elades kogenud (või eraldi etnilistest kogukondadest, millel on tugev eraldatus Enese ja Teiste vahel). Keelelised küsimused muutuvad poliitiliseks ja panevad nad läbi elama võõrandumise kohas, mis peaks olema emalik ja hoolitsev.

Feministliku fenomenoloogia kasutamine aitab taaselustada naissoost peategelaste kehastunud esindusi, liikumisi ja tegevusi. Marie Darrieussecq'i ja Natalena Koroleva teoste uurimise käigus avastasin, et naiste arusaam kuuluvusest ja perspektiividest on erineva dünaamikaga naise keha erinevalt tajumise tõttu - naise keha on esiplaanistatud ja objektiseerimise aldis. Seega tähendab naissoost ränne radikaalset nihet, kuid kirjutamine on üks võimalus võimestamiseks. Seda võib vaadelda kui taasühinemist Iseseisva positsiooniga, mis, nagu korduvas Darrieussecq'i trossis, „toob teid tagasi paika”.

Kokkuvõtteks, vastusena küsimusele, kuidas võib naisobjekti analüüsida, pakun järgmist: naissoost subjekti saab analüüsida ainult tema kehastuse keerukuses ja identiteetide paljususes, mida need esindavad. Kirjandusliku töö jaoks on oluline arvestada

seda keelt, milles autor otsustab oma isikliku ajalugu jutustada ja “kirjutada oma enda keha”. Naiskirjaniku keel on kahtlemata üks performatiivsemaid vahendeid, et taastada oma agentsus ja enda aladele taasintegreerimiseks.

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# Appendix

Poem 1

## Language complexity

I am writing this line with a red pen  
highlighting it with a black one<sup>4</sup>  
Does it have any meaning?

What matters is you  
born in your own shell  
and the speech apparatus  
living inside its own  
cultural context.

Language is your cult, it's a cult,  
which you've made your own cult.  
It's a pot on the windowsill for nurturing  
my love, I-Choose.  
It is the greenhouse for cultivating the darkest  
fears and doubts  
*I love you despite your language.*  
*I love you despite your language.*

---

<sup>4</sup> colours of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army flag

Poem 2

**When the subject is me**

What do I have to stress  
when the subject is me  
Unproud unselfish unsuperior  
Undoing myself deconstructing myself  
deluding myself

They told me in language class  
to underline the subject with one line  
The predicate with two  
Then the object with puncture  
I have always mistaken the last one  
Confused it with a subject  
Then broke the straight line with an eraser  
It looked so ugly

In geography class  
Due to the lack of knowledge on the topic  
Each time I started to underline  
those parts of sentence  
Embarrassed to leave the classroom  
when everyone was still writing  
Embarrassed to be not writing when  
everyone was still writing

Out of embarrassment I underlined  
What I thought I knew

"I" in Ukrainian is "Я"  
A beautiful letter i learned to draw better  
than any other  
I keep drawing it with my finger  
Under the desk in the classroom on my  
knee  
Me  
Me...  
*Anxiety coming*  
*Anxiety going*

In Ukrainian "I" is "Ja"

The assertive "Yes"

*Anxiety going*

I acknowledge you

I know, you're Anxiety

And this is Me

What you are not

In syntax the subject is underlined with  
one line

In phonetics they told me to never stress  
it

Don't stress the subject they say to an  
Eastern European

Put an emphasis on the end of the  
sentence

Don't stress the subject

I, the Eastern European, tell my students  
In syntax class. In gender class. Outside  
of class - find the subject.

Underline it with one line

Assert your own singularity

But don't stress it