



HØGSKOLEN I HARSTAD

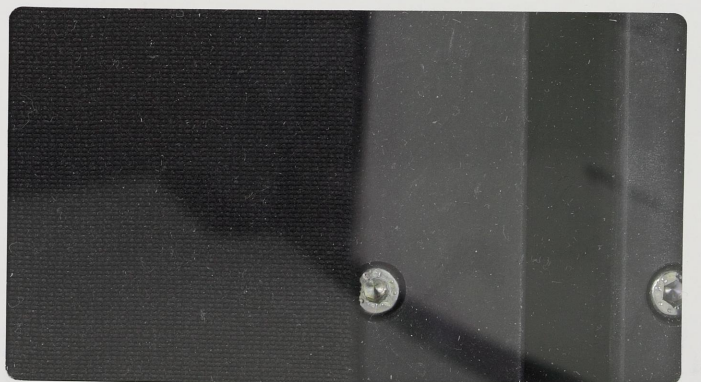
Skriftserie

Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Text:

*Intertextualities of Literature, Body, and
Nature in Jane Smiley's 'A Thousand Acres'*

Tore Høgås

HiH Skriftserie 1998/19 - Harstad College



| | | |
|---|------------------|--------------------------|
| Tittel <i>Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Text: Intertextualities of Literature, Body, and Nature in Jane Smiley's A Thousand Acres</i> | | Nummer/Number 1998/19 |
| | | Sider/Pages 145 |
| Forfatter/Author Tore Høgås | | |
| Avdeling/Department Økonomi- og satsforlag | Prosjekt/Project | |
| Sammendrag/Abstract <p>This text is an analysis of the functions of intertextuality in Jane Smiley's novel <i>A Thousand Acres</i> (1991). It is a contemporary rewrite of William Shakespeare's <i>King Lear</i>, but it also contains other intertextual references, and even the dramatization of an intertextual conflict between the power discourses of patriarchy and the subversive discourses of a feminist voice.</p> <p>This analysis attempts to work towards a theoretical approach beyond literary hermeneutic semiology, placing itself between the approaches of hermeneutics and deconstruction. <i>A Thousand Acres</i> also occupies this space as a text of postmodernist literary criticism: it is both a critique and criticism of literature.</p> <p>As such, it takes issue with misogynist traits in previous <i>Lear</i> adaptations, especially the one of the eldest daughter, Goneril. The novel casts its project in terms of a feminist critique of patriarchy in Goneril's intertextual counterpart, the narrator Ginny. She eventually initiates a process in which women and nature have been suppressed in a parallel fashion by the system of patriarchal capitalist farming in the USA. Both nature and the relationships of the novel have been poisoned (literally and metaphorically) by this system. The small farming community in which the novel is set has become an oppressive social text, molding the identities of its inhabitants.</p> <p>Ginny's solution to these problems is precisely to textualize them; to set them not as natural and unchangeable, but as texts that can be rewritten. The intertexts of nature and culture, her body, and her identity are deconstructed and reconstructed. They are destabilized; open for infinite revision.</p> <p>Thus, both Smiley's novel and my text have a philosophical, political, and ethical dimension: they mean changing the world.</p> | | |
| Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Text: <i>Intertextualities of Literature, Body, and Nature in Jane Smiley's 'A Thousand Acres'</i> | | Key Words |
| Tore Høgås 82-453-0113-2 | | ISSN 0807-2698 |
| HiH Skriftserie 1998/19 - Harstad College | | |

NB Rana
 Depotbiblioteket

18. JUNE
DEPARTMENT OF
LIBRARIES



| | | |
|--|---|----------------------|
| Tittel | | Nummer/Number |
| <i>Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Text: Intertextualities of Literature, Body, and Nature in Jane Smiley's A Thousand Acres.</i> | | 1998/19 |
| | | Sider/Pages |
| | | 145 |
| Forfatter/Author | | |
| Tore Høgås | | |
| Avdeling/Department | Prosjekt/Project | |
| Økonomi- og samfunnsfag | | |
| Sammendrag/Abstract | | |
| <p>This text is an analysis of the functions of intertextuality in Jane Smiley's novel <i>A Thousand Acres</i> (1991). It is a contemporary rewrite of William Shakespeare's <i>King Lear</i>, but it also contains other intertextual references, and even the dramatization of an intertextual conflict between the power discourses of patriarchy and the subversive discourses of a feminist voice.</p> <p>This analysis attempts to work towards a theoretical approach termed literary hermeneutic semiology, placing itself between the approaches of hermeneutics and deconstruction. <i>A Thousand Acres</i> also occupies this space as a text of postmodernist literary criticism: it is both literature and criticism of literature.</p> <p>As such, it takes issue with misogynist traits in previous <i>Lear</i>-criticism, especially the vilification of the oldest daughter, Goneril. The novel casts its project in terms of a process of awakening in Goneril's intertextual counterpart, the narrator Ginny. She eventually identifies a historical process in which women and nature have been suppressed in a parallel fashion by the system of patriarchal capitalist farming in the USA. Both nature and the relationships of the novel have been poisoned (literally and metaphorically) by this system. The small farming community in which the novel is set has become an oppressive social text, molding the identities of its inhabitants.</p> <p>Ginny's solution to these problems is precisely to textualize them; to see them not as natural and unchangeable, but as texts that can be rewritten. The intertexts of nature and culture, her body, and her identity are deconstructed and reconstructed. They are destabilized; open for infinite revision.</p> <p>Thus, both Smiley's novel and my text have a philosophical, political, and ethical dimension: Deconstructing and reconstructing texts, changing texts, may mean changing the world.</p> | | |
| Stikkord | Feminism, contemporary fiction, intertextuality, identity, deconstruction | Key Words |
| ISBN | 82-453-0113-2 | ISSN |
| | | 0807-2698 |

Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| 1. Notes Toward a Literary Hermeneutic Semiology | 8 |
| Closure and Dispersal | 10 |
| Toward a Literary Hermeneutic Semiology | 13 |
| The Politics of Foregrounding | 17 |
| 2. Textual Horizons of Gender | 21 |
| <i>King Lear</i> Reception History: Perceptions of Gender | 22 |
| Apollonian Classification | 29 |
| 3. Textualities of Nature | 37 |
| Metaphorizations of Woman and Nature | 38 |
| Capitalist Control over Body and Nature | 43 |
| The Motif of the Tiles | 49 |
| 4. Languages of the Self | 53 |
| Larry—The Father of Logos | 55 |
| The Gold of the Signifier: Language and Capitalism | 59 |
| Modes of Individual Signification—Caroline | 64 |
| Modes of Individual Signification—Rose | 68 |
| Modes of Individual Signification—Pete | 70 |
| Modes of Individual Signification—Jess | 73 |
| Modes of Individual Signification—Ty | 76 |
| 5. Ginny: Scribing the Textuality of the Self | 79 |
| Reconstructing Woman-as-Nature | 83 |
| Gaze, Sight, and Insight | 90 |
| Acts of the Body—Sexual and Maternal Desire | 97 |
| The Absent Mother | 102 |
| Writing the Body | 107 |
| 6. Ginny: From Pharmakos to Pharmakeus | 114 |
| Playing with Poison | 114 |
| Undecidability | 119 |
| The Role of the Reader | 123 |
| The Gleaming Obsidian Shard | 127 |
| In/Conclusion | 135 |
| Beyond the Text? | |

Works Cited

Introduction

Out of the negative, the positive; out of not-being, being; and out of inaction, action. Similarly, out of deconstruction, reconstruction. (Atkins 11)

What is an introduction? How should one introduce oneself, this text, and what this text is concerned with? Introductions are always necessarily incomplete, yet they should be appetizers for the main course of the text. A way of easing the reader into my analytical project would be to tell you about the two works that are most central to my discussion, William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*.

William Shakespeare needs no introduction. The author of 37 plays, he is usually considered the greatest playwright of all time. *King Lear* was first published in 1608, 2-5 years after it was written. However, it was by no means a new story. The ancient tale of a king and his three daughters has existed in many versions, with the first written version being published in the twelfth-century work *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Old and tired, King Lear decides to divide his kingdom between his three daughters: Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia (Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella in *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*). However, the two eldest daughters end up with half each because Cordelia refuses to engage in their hyperbolic flattery of their father. In Shakespeare's version of this story, a parallel plot which stems from Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590) is added. Just as Lear disowns his favorite daughter, Gloucester disowns his good son, Edgar. And, just as Lear is blind to the evil of Regan and Goneril, Gloucester is tricked by the evil bastard son, Edmund. Consequently, the tragedy of filial disobedience and social chaos is presented as universal in Shakespeare's treatment of the stories.

A Thousand Acres (1991) is Jane Smiley's fifth novel, and the most critically acclaimed in her production, which also includes several short stories and non-fiction works.

Perhaps the overwhelming success of *A Thousand Acres*, which also earned her the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the Heartland Award, has something to do with scope. Throughout her writing career, Smiley's concern has been family relations. Her stories have mostly been bittersweet narratives of tension where family members have profound conflicts and profound connections with each other at the same time. *The Greenlanders* (1988) widened the scope of this recurring theme by transposing it onto a fourteenth-century setting in Greenland. This modern Norse saga is a historical novel which «blends fact and fiction to create a modern novel with a traditional flavor» (Dear 418). At the same time, it keeps family relations in the foreground, with an epic tale spanning generations. In other words, family tensions are given a historical dimension.

It may therefore be regarded a natural development that Smiley would turn to *King Lear* for her next novel. The family tensions there occupy a central place in Western culture and literary history, which allows for a widening of scope into both general and literary history. Moreover, as we will see, the use of *King Lear* in *A Thousand Acres* opens for a more overtly political treatment of the family theme, both in terms of sociopolitical activism and politically motivated literary criticism. In *A Thousand Acres*, Larry Cook is like a king of the little Midwestern community in which the novel is set, and his kingdom of a thousand acres is the biggest farm around. He decides to turn the farm over to his three daughters, Ginny, Rose, and Caroline. The origin of their names should be clear from my presentation of *King Lear* above, and Smiley gives us more than one hint toward their intertextual forebears; Ginny remarks that her name was «taken from a book» (94). So is Caroline's. She is disowned by Larry, exiled in Des Moines, and married to Frank (i.e. the King of France). Meanwhile, Harold Clark—the Gloucester of the novel—is torn between his sympathy for the dutiful son (Loren) and the charming but calculating Jess. He is blinded in the course of the story,

although not quite in the way Gloucester is. In fact, very much is different in Smiley's rewrite of Shakespeare.

This way of introducing my article illustrates its project well, reading *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres* in juxtaposition. This approach is motivated by the postmodern idea that these works are not autonomous, but aesthetic, cultural, and ideological texts that intersect with each other and other texts in various ways. All literary works are; *A Thousand Acres* is only more explicit about its intertextual status. Thus, my approach is driven by the notion that texts are continually engaged in a dynamic play of significations and cannot be interpreted as if they represented a complex but stable structure. Instead of performing a structuralist or New Critical analysis, I therefore propose to enter the play of significations at given points to add my own significations as a reader.

In view of the sophisticated intertextuality of *A Thousand Acres*, one should think that it would spawn a lot of critical research in addition to its mainstream appeal. Curiously, there are no extensive works devoted to any of Smiley's books. Apart from reviews of *A Thousand Acres*, only half a dozen short articles have this novel as their subject. I should say *part of* their subject, rather, for two of them are comparative analyses (Kellman and Rozga). Even the ones devoted entirely to *A Thousand Acres* treat it in a fairly superficial manner, performing straightforward plot analyses with tame comparisons with Shakespeare.

Previous Smiley criticism represents a fine introduction to the project of *A Thousand Acres* for the novice reader. But I would say that this article takes the literary, philosophical, and political implications of Smiley's novel if not to their limits, then at least further than these brief excursions into the world of the novel. As my title suggests, this is a reading of the complex ways in which *A Thousand Acres* engages in a play with the intertextualities of literature (specifically *King Lear*), body and nature. In the course of this text, I will explore some theoretical concepts of literature and philosophy in relation to the novel's intertextual

and deconstructive strategies. If this seems an easy way out of doing the arduous task of close reading, that is not the case. It is in fact a reading of *A Thousand Acres* on its own premises, following the ethical code of what Jacques Derrida calls the Law of literature: «My law, the one to which I try to devote myself or to respond, is *the text of the other*, its very singularity, its idiom . . . But I can only respond to it in a responsible way . . . if I put in play, and in guarantee [*en gage*], my singularity. . . » (Derrida, *Acts of Literature* 66). In this text I will try to write not only myself, but write with some of the same textual movements as *A Thousand Acres*. The novel reads *King Lear* and analyzes the concepts of its construction, and then it rewrites those concepts. Thus it performs a «Deconstruction and Reconstruction of the Text».

This is what I will do as well. In contrast to previous Smiley-criticism, this is a text which engages in the same kind of intertextual play as *A Thousand Acres*. I will be playing with theory and texts. Play (in the deconstructive sense of the word) is not nonsensical or unimportant. Even though it is a ludic response to the liberating aspects of literature, it also has philosophical and political potential. What this article does, is simply to proclaim itself self-consciously limited, while at the same time performing a reading that «does not point out the flaws or weaknesses or stupidities of an author», but

reads backwards from what seems natural, obvious, self-evident, or universal, in order to show that these things have their history, their reasons for being the way they are, their effects on what follows from them, and that the starting point is not a (natural) given but a (cultural) construct, usually blind to itself. (Johnson xv).

This should be serious enough, and perhaps most important of all ways in which one can choose to read. The quote above shows us that a deconstructive reading can take a Shakespearean tragedy and illustrate that its pathos and moral message is not «self-evident» or «universal». *A Thousand Acres* deconstructs the play by indicating that it is written from the perspective of a long history of hierarchical thought, specifically patriarchy.

The present text will show that *A Thousand Acres* foregrounds the *textuality* of traditional «self-evident» concepts. They, too, are written from a certain cultural and ideological perspective. Ginny, the protagonist and narrator of the novel, is a textual subject whose identity has been written by dominant forces of patriarchy and capitalism in Zebulon County. Like the rest of her family, her textuality of self and even her body has in a sense been written by a social system that is ruled by the «king», Larry Cook. Nature, which is also suppressed in the novel by the system of industrial farming, is suppressed because a male-dominated culture has metaphorized it as feminine. This is also a text which *A Thousand Acres* exposes as a cultural construct. Furthermore, I will argue that the effect of these patriarchal and capitalist texts is to poison both nature and the lives of the characters in the novel. There is a conflict in the novel between the social system, which I will call a «social text», and the characters' identities, their «individual text». However, Smiley's novel does not stop there. By exposing the «natural» hierarchies of men/culture over women/nature as texts, it maintains that one can also rewrite those texts. My analysis of Ginny's role in the novel will show that she rewrites the texts of her life and stops the social poison from spreading.

Thus, *A Thousand Acres* both deconstructs and reconstructs; it performs what I call a literary hermeneutic semiology. In other words, it does not only deconstruct what has been, but interprets it to create something new. My theoretical basis is therefore also one that is both deconstructive and hermeneutic. From this perspective, I will look at important plot developments, the representation of characters, metaphors and symbols, narratorial devices, etc. in *A Thousand Acres*, and read backwards from these textual elements to find out why they have been constructed the way they have. I call this an analysis of «the politics of foregrounding», that is, an analysis of the ideologies governing text construction. In the course of this analysis, I will show that Smiley's project may be related not only to *King Lear*, but also to other critics of *King Lear*, the philosophical deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, the

ecofeminist theories of Anette Kolodny, the historical perspectives of Camille Paglia and Riane Eisler, the psychoanalytic ideas of Julia Kristeva, several feminist and Marxist theories, and many more intertextualities that concern literature, body and nature.

The issues I have outlined here in terms of theory and methodology will be elucidated in chapter 1. Thus, this introduction is supplemented with a theoretical introduction. Chapter 2 will discuss *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres* on the macrolevel of their status as literary artifacts (reception, criticism, genre), before we delve deeper into the textualities of Smiley's novel. Chapter 3 then proceeds to analyze the preoccupation of *A Thousand Acres* with nature. Chapter 4 will analyze the structure of society in the novel and how the characters therein relate to that social system. Chapters 5 and 6 will discuss Ginny as character and as narrator, respectively. Chapter 6 thus takes a step back from the world of the novel and once again looks at how the novel's language and metaphors, including its metafictional elements, facilitate the philosophical and political projects of *A Thousand Acres*. In direct continuation of that movement, I will attempt to bring a provisional closure to my argument in «In/Conclusion».

Thus, I begin and end with a discussion of two literary works as fields within a larger Text. But there may also be something beyond the Text, attesting to the potential of my analysis as both personal and sociopolitical action. First and foremost, however, William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* will be deconstructed and reconstructed in terms of a reading of intertextualities.

1. Notes Toward a Literary Hermeneutic Semiology

The fact is that the same sequence of days can arrange themselves into a number of different stories. (Smiley, *A Thousand Acres* 155)

A hermeneutic semiology would operate at the intersection of the vertical interpretive, constitutive, meaning-forming experience, and the horizontal dispersive, differential system-articulating signifying chain. At the zero degree of phenomenological meaning and semiological signification, the respective differing functions overlap and cooperate. (Silverman, *Textualities* 20)

The fact that the meaning of *A Thousand Acres* to a great extent depends on *King Lear* (and, in a certain sense, vice versa) makes it natural to question the concept of meaning and truth in literature. Many critics have read literature within a certain interpretative framework that was relatively uniform and stable. This is no longer the case, as both literature itself and the theories being developed to deal with it, have challenged the authority of older approaches. In the following, the concept of horizon will be discussed, and it will become clear that my understanding of literature is based on many different texts; literary, historical, theoretical, and so on. So, in defense of eclecticism, I have to say that it is only natural that I employ the *theoretical* texts I have in my horizon when reading, as well as all the others. Another important point in this chapter is that the objectivity that scholars have strived for in order to heighten the study of literature to the status of science is questionable. The reader, no matter how «professional», must necessarily be involved in the meaning-processes the text plays out.

As Derrida put it in *Dissemination* (1972):

There is always a surprise in store for the anatomy or physiology of any criticism that might think it had mastered the game, surveyed all the threads at once, deluding itself, too, in wanting to look at the text without touching it, without laying a hand on the 'object', without risking—which is the only chance of entering into the game, by getting a few fingers caught—the addition of some new thread. (63)

In examining the interweaving of texts that make up a work of fiction, the reader must add some new thread; not only read, but write: «One must then, in a single gesture, but doubled, read and write» (64).

A Thousand Acres involves the reader in a conflict between deconstructive dispersal on the one hand, and hermeneutic closure on the other. As a rewrite of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, it deconstructs not only this canonical play's aesthetic and ideological/cultural authority, but also its own. The text insists on its intertextual dependence on innumerable other texts by foregrounding its dependence on this one work. At the same time, simply by using Shakespeare's play, Smiley's novel maintains the validity and importance of *King Lear*. In this sense, what has been dispersed in a self-deconstruction is pulled together again to create a provisional meaning. It is therefore suitable to start my project with some notes toward a theoretical framework that can deal with these textual movements of deconstruction and reconstruction. These notes are not intended to represent a full-fledged interpretative system. It is important to avoid the trap of logocentric approaches that mask the dynamic nature of writing in its wider sense of *écriture*:

Writing . . . is a threat to the deeply traditional view that associates truth with self-presence and the 'natural' language wherein it finds expression. . . . Writing, for Derrida, is the 'free play' or element of undecidability within every system of communication. . . . Writing is the endless displacement of meaning which both governs language and places it for ever beyond the reach of a stable, self-authenticating knowledge. (Norris 28-29)

This chapter, then, is not an attempt to contain the undecidability of *écriture*, just a presentation of some ideas and approaches that will be helpful when formulating a way of reading most appropriately termed *literary hermeneutic semiology*.

The first adjective of this phrase is used to indicate that this approach is a narrowly literary version of Hugh Silverman's hermeneutic semiology, i.e. one that focuses predominantly on literary textualities. Hermeneutic semiology is a provisional term—as

indeed deconstruction was intended to be—for a more general philosophical theory of the text that Silverman formulated in *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (1994). The second adjective—*hermeneutic*—acknowledges that reading is necessarily interpretation, even in the wider sense that «text» has been given in deconstructive terms.

Closure and Dispersal

The concept of closure is not primarily hermeneutic. In accordance with Aristotelian poetics, certain schools of literary theory have promoted the study of a literary work as a closed, autonomous structure. In our century, the most influential proponents of this view have been the New Critics. Their main idea (particularly in the American version, with for example Cleanth Brooks and T.S. Eliot) was precisely that a literary text contains a closed set of objective meanings that can be brought out in the course of close reading. The «organic unity» of the text should not be broken by straying from the defined object of study. In John Crowe Ransom's words, criticism «shall be objective, shall cite the nature of the object, [recognizing] the autonomy of the work itself as existing for its own sake» (qtd. in Abrams 223). With this approach, the reader is reduced to a diligent archaeologist, digging out the meaning of the text from its complex but closed structure.

If we can characterize theories like New Criticism, Russian Formalism, and structuralism as being concerned with *structural closure* within the text itself, then an equally apt shorthand for the concerns of hermeneutics may be *closure of meaning*. Those who perform this kind of analytic work are engaged in the construction of interpretations of the text. Thus, current hermeneutics is a school of thought that is less limiting than traditional closure-theories. It is not so much concerned with the «objective truth» of the text as with the interface between the subjective mind and the objective text. The «closure» in question here is one that depends on the creative and cognitive skills of the reader. This places hermeneutics in

a position more similar to mine. In Hans-Georg Gadamer's influential *Truth and Method* (1975), the act of reading is given a philosophical foundation with the assertion that all understanding is interpretation. That is, we read the signs of the world as we read the signs of words in order to create meaning from the external reality surrounding us. The conditions for understanding are one's *prejudices*, the sum of which constitute one's *horizon*. Prejudices admittedly limit the scope of our understanding, but are nevertheless positive in Gadamer's terms as no understanding can develop without these preconditions of interpretative meaning. This is an important step toward realizing the subjectivity of understanding and a rejection of the traditional claim of «objective» science. This is not to say that Gadamer is a postmodernist. His concern is Heideggerian in the sense of reintroducing time and history into theories of interpretation: «Understanding is not to be thought of so much as an action of one's subjectivity, but as the placing of oneself within a process of tradition, in which past and present are constantly fused» (258). Reading and interpretation are the fusion of the horizons of the work and the reader, with the time-gap spanned by the bridge of tradition.

There is a need to take Gadamer's concept of horizons and move toward a postmodern formulation of hermeneutics further in order to arrive at a hermeneutic semiology. In Gadamer's theories, the negotiation of meaning inherent in the fusion of horizons generally lapses into an acceptance of classical truth, an instance of *logocentrism*: «Derrida has termed this belief in the self-presentation of meaning 'Logocentrism', from the Greek word *logos* (meaning speech, logic, reason, the Word of God)» (Johnson ix). As we will see, Smiley's novel takes issue with logocentrism on many levels. On one, it is a manifestation of a new, dynamic concept of the classical. Bridging this postmodernizing leap from German to French thought, we find Ludwig Wittgenstein and other Anglo-American philosophers who suggest that language is a conceptualizing system through which we understand the world. The creation of meaning Gadamer writes about is a *linguistic construction*. Language is a matrix

through which reality passes; and, in passing, becomes text. Our horizons, ever since we became linguistic beings, are *textual horizons*. The history that is brought to us, the foundation of our being to Gadamer, is a textual construction.¹

The fusing of horizons that Gadamer argues in the reading process, is therefore a mode of textual communication analogous to the communication between what we traditionally think of as texts; intertextuality. Any human subject is a *textual subject*, our physical being aside. In the literary event, when the reader finds meaning in a literary work, there is a moment in which a dialogue is initiated between texts that themselves consist of innumerable texts. A dialogue between textual horizons. In other words, a text is an ever-changing interplay of discourses, a fragile and restless focal point of innumerable texts. To the French theorist Roland Barthes, reading is an act that changes the textual horizon of a work just as much as it changes that of a reader. Since the full intertextuality of a given work is impossible to chart, the *truth* (the correct understanding) is suspended. Logocentrism, on the other hand, operates on the assumption that the text is a manifestation of some transcendental signifier rather than simply other texts, just as it presupposes transcendental Truth in philosophy.

In postmodern thought, the validity of a transcendental signifier called Truth is replaced by a never-ending process of meaning-production. This is done by and through language as production of *différance*, «the non-full, non-unitary ‘origin’; it is the differing/deferring [*différente*] origin of differences» (Derrida, *Speech* 141). This untranslatable term hovers between three meanings, always unwilling to be institutionalized into a self-authenticating concept in logocentric fashion:

1. To be unlike or dissimilar.
2. To delay, postpone.
3. To disperse, scatter.

¹ For an early explication of the relativity of history, see Carl Becker (1932). His definition of history is «the memory of things said and done» (223). In other words, a *subjective reconstruction* of facts which then is expressed through texts.

Words, texts, reality: they have meaning only in terms of difference from something other, so that their ultimate meaning is postponed indefinitely as the play of *différance* is modified by new texts and new readings of old texts, etc.² Words, texts, and in the last instance reality, is therefore *deconstructed*. Nothing has validity as an autonomous entity; the concept of such entities is literally exploded, dispersing any trace of meaning.

Toward a Literary Hermeneutic Semiology

Postmodern writers have criticized Western philosophy both for its logocentric strategy of representing metaphorical language as self-present and true, and for its traditional conception of literature as containing a coherent truth (as if this meaning were part of the book like ink and paper).³ Both this Platonic logocentrism in general analytical thought and the corresponding aesthetics of literary autonomy are based on the exclusion or suppression of writing (*écriture*); the irreducible «free play» of signifiers, in order to achieve a metaphysical and/or artistic closure that is essentially illusory.

Charges of a «postmodern fallacy» has been leveled at Derrida and his most avid followers. His critics argue that for human existence to make sense, some form of truth must be presupposed. If language is nothing but dispersal of unstable signifiers, human communication breaks down and takes understanding with it. Simplistically stated, in order to see anything, one must have a position from which to see. Or, in Barbara Johnson's words: «For it is impossible to show that the belief in truth is an error without implicitly believing in the notion of Truth» (x). In my opinion, this is a point well made. The defense of

² It should be noted here that there is a concept of Difference present in both hermeneutics and semiology. «In semiology, difference is deferral, a sliding off or passing on to a contiguous, subsequent, or prior sign. . . . In hermeneutics, difference is theoretically spatial and vertical—located in the in-between where interpretation occurs» (Silverman, *Textualities* 17). As we will see, hermeneutic semiology is located at the hinge of these two concepts; the difference of differences. As such, it represents a process of forming interpretations that are inevitably deferred and dispersed, before new interpretations are formed.

³ Hence Barthes' famous distinction between work and text: the former «is a fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example). The text is a methodological field» (qtd. in Silverman, *Textualities* 29).

deconstruction is usually that it is not supposed to produce a concept or abstracted idea that is truer than logocentric Truth: «It can only be a process of textual *work*, a strategy of *writing*» (xvi). But the problem remains that even if there is deconstructive dispersal, there must also be hermeneutic closure of meaning in order for us to understand anything at all. Even if reality is self-deconstructive in a play of *différance*, where even the human subject as a textual being loses its autonomous status, a position must inevitably be posited. So, in order to overcome this process of deconstruction, I see it as crucial that one *hypothesizes* a stable subject. Stability must be created through positing a transient position from which to read the world. The positing of a position is a constant process, «not because there is no ground at all but because there is no one, ultimate, totally determining ground, no ground of all grounds» (Carroll, qtd. in Cheung 13).

This written position is firm ground at least at the time when it is posited; in operation. Stanley Fish has argued a similar point in *Is There a Text in This Class?* (1980): one cannot doubt the validity of one's horizon because it is impossible to transcend that horizon:

But doubting is not something one does outside the assumptions that enable one's consciousness; rather doubting, like any other mental activity, is something that one does *within* a set of assumptions that cannot at the same time be the object of doubt. That is to say, one does not doubt in a vacuum but from a perspective, and that perspective is itself immune to doubt until it has been replaced by another which will then be similarly immune. (360)

This is not logocentrism (the «ground of all grounds»). It is my understanding of Gadamer's assertion that the human mind anticipates coherence; that understanding has to be based on a concept of unitary meaning (*Truth and Method* 259). I am fully aware of the fictional status of this unity, but it is a necessary textual construction by the subject through the act of *foregrounding*. This is my term, meaning that from the plurality of texts that form one's horizon, the subject foregrounds certain texts that are seen as crucial to the formation of its identity. Within a literary work, I see this as a better term than intertextuality (which has

become somewhat misused) because it introduces the aspect of volition. Any text, as one says, is an intertext; it is a textual characteristics like any other. But foregrounding in the process of reading/writing a literary work is self-reflexive, ostentatious intertextuality. It insists that the reader see what texts serve to mold the process toward a textual closure. The act of reading/writing is an act of bending the amorphous body of the text into shape, however transient. The result of this act is a kind of closure since it is immune from doubt at that specific point in time, but at the same time it contains the possibility of doubt or deconstruction.

Truth is therefore not completely dispersed, but is replaced by fleeting truths that arise in the process of foregrounding. These truths are subjective in the sense that every subject foregrounds different texts, but to a certain extent «objective» because we share many texts, especially within a given culture. An American, for example, will have certain texts as a central part of his horizon that a Norwegian does not have. Both the American and the Norwegian will have texts in their horizon that a non-Westerner does not have. As an answer to scholars who may assert that I propagate relativism, therefore, I hold that there is a kind of textual objectivity in shared horizons and a shared language. Again, my thinking intersects with Stanley Fish's:

[An] individual's assumptions and opinions are not «his own» in any sense that would give body to the fear of solipsism. That is, *he* is not their origin (in fact it might be more accurate to say that they are his); rather, it is their prior availability which delimits in advance the paths that his consciousness can possibly take. (320)

We are, in other words, created by the texts that make up our horizons: «This 'I' which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts» (Barthes, *S/Z* 10). We—like literary texts—are textual horizons, restricted in our individual understanding by the shared beliefs and assumptions of what Fish calls «interpretive communities».

Texts therefore make sense to us readers, despite the movement of deconstructive dispersal inherent in language. This must be the conclusion that leads us toward hermeneutic semiology. Recast in terms of foregrounding, hermeneutics is an important contribution to my theorizing; the adjective «hermeneutic» modifying the deconstructive noun of «semiology». In a literary hermeneutic semiology, both the role of the reader (as reflected in the response theories of Stanley Fish, among others), and the instability of the language that both the reader and the text depend on (as reflected in the theories of Barthes and Derrida, among others), are considered. The meaning of a literary work must arise in the interaction between reader and work, both being situated within a linguistic or textual field. In reading/writing the work, the reader foregrounds certain texts in order to make sense of its textualities. Maybe we should, with reference to Barthes, call this foregrounding subject a *scribe* (*S/Z* 152). Signifying someone who both reads and writes, this term frees the subject from the passive position of recipient of the text's «truth», as has been the reader's fate in traditional poetics. At the same time, it emphasizes the creative powers of readers and distinguishes the reading/writing subject—the scribe—from the writer of the work.

Jane Smiley is in a special position. She is a scribe in that she foregrounds some of the texts in *King Lear*, but also a writer in that she writes a new work of art out of these texts.⁴ Literary hermeneutic semiology describes the expanding and contracting movement of deconstructive dispersal and hermeneutic closure that occurs during reading. I agree with Barthes and Derrida that the elements of a given work cannot be traced to an origin. Its intertextuality is generally anonymous. Nevertheless, as chapter 2 will illustrate, Shakespeare has foregrounded certain elements in the *King Lear*-myth, and many critics of different

⁴ Then again, my position isn't all that dissimilar. I am a scribe in reading *A Thousand Acres*, but a writer in formulating the texts I have foregrounded from that novel in my thesis. It should be mentioned that, although it is a common trait in postmodern writings of literary theory to maintain a subjective, anti-authoritative style, I will not discuss my own horizon and the politics guiding my own foregroundings here. My horizon as a Norwegian is interestingly different from both the English horizon of *King Lear* and the American one of *A Thousand Acres*. However, for the sake of brevity and clarity, this relationship will not be expanded upon in my thesis.

theoretical persuasions have subsequently foregrounded different elements in *King Lear*. Though *A Thousand Acres* consists of many texts, Smiley has foregrounded those elements that mimic *King Lear* and made them more explicit. This is the work of hermeneutic semiology, or what Hugh Silverman also calls «juxtapositional deconstruction» (*Textualities* 2).

I am, in Hugh Silverman's words, placing myself in a « 'place between' as a locus of multiple textualities» (ibid.), standing on a preliminary but «undoubted ground» (Fish 320). I am ordering texts—engaging in the process of foregrounding. However, as Silverman's point in *Textualities* illustrates, I am at the same time aware that my between position is transient and that there exist many *con/texts*, texts against which my foregroundings must be seen:

A hermeneutic semiology can be formulated as the understanding of a set of signs ordered into a coherent textual complex. Such an understanding will disclose the aspects of a particular text or textualization but always in relation to (or in the context of) alternative texts and textualizations. . . . [T]he notion of a hermeneutic semiology moves toward the «place between» hermeneutics and deconstruction.⁵

There is always a «toward»; always movement; always a process of difference. Nevertheless, the *scribing* subject will always produce meaning.

The Politics of Foregrounding

In exploring the potential of placing oneself between (between hermeneutics and deconstruction, between texts, between subjectivity and objectivity), the ideological importance of literature must not be forgotten. It is important to explore the social presuppositions of hermeneutic processes. It should of course be noted in passing that this does not only apply to «literary» texts, but to all manifestations of writing. Hence Roland

⁵ Silverman 2. My pun of *con/texts* is meant to illustrate that «textuality is a differential notion and not a matter of identity» (ibid.), or even that *identity* is a differential notion. See my discussion of «hermeneutic semiology of the self» in chapters 4 and 5.

Barthes' remark in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975) that «politics, at an obscure and even improbable depth, arms and transforms the very substance of language: this is the Text . . .» (54). We have established that the scribe does not only achieve a necessary closure in reading, but also creates his or her own coherence as subject. Thus s/he is pulling together a meaning that was dispersed and is able to speak the world and itself. On a psychological level the subject's motivation for such a process can be explained in terms of both the hermeneutic principle of «anticipation of coherence» in the human mind, and a subject's need for self-authentication (as a focal point of texts that is *more* than the sum of these texts). This, however, only accounts for why foregrounding takes place; it does not elucidate why certain texts are foregrounded. That is, why does the subject foreground some texts rather than others? What is *the politics of foregrounding*? What are the ideological motives governing, in my case, Smiley's foregroundings?

On a deep-structure level, one must therefore take into consideration what any foregrounding presupposes as always already foregrounded in any human being's horizon: «The [deconstructive] critique does not ask 'what does this statement *mean*?' but 'where is it being made from? What does it presuppose?' . . .» (Johnson xv). The analysis of the politics of foregrounding is in other words parallel to Derrida's development from detecting structural instability in traditional Western philosophy, anthropology, literature etc., to discussing how closure is sought for socio-political purposes. Samuel Weber has summarized this historical and political turn of deconstruction:

Having established a certain structural instability in the most powerful attempts to provide modes of structuration, it was probably inevitable that Derrida should then begin to explore the other side of the coin, the fact that, *undecidability notwithstanding*, decisions are *in fact* taken, power *in fact* exercised, traces *in fact* instituted. It is the highly ambivalent *making* of such *facts* that has increasingly imposed itself upon and throughout the more recent writings of Derrida as well as upon the field of problems and practices associated with his work. (qtd. in Esch 378)

However, deconstruction can only function politically in conjunction with other strategies of reading. It must become «juxtapositional deconstruction» (i.e. hermeneutic semiology) in order to account for *textualities*:

A hermeneutic semiology would seek to offer a reading of the text in terms of its meaning structures as they relate to elements in the world and as they refer back not to a centered self but to the interpretive activity itself. Such a reading of meaning structures in their plurisignificational character occurs in a cultural/natural, social/individual, etc. *milieu* as a *reading* of the textuality (or textualities) of the text. (Silverman, *Textualities* 30)

The textualities or meaning structures of *King Lear* are both confirmed and subverted in *A Thousand Acres*. The ideological import of Shakespeare's play is not only one that rests in the text as it was once written; it is one endowed to it by its readers. Through reading and interpretation, through placing it in the canon, through writing scores of books about it, readers have loaded the play with meanings. The most dominant of these reproduced textualities form part of the horizon of the modern Western reader. *A Thousand Acres* is therefore not only a subversion of the play «in itself», but of the ideological power given to it by readers. Any act of reading/writing is production of ideology through construction of meaning.

A reading of the novel by way of a literary hermeneutic semiology must consider *both* the textual horizons constituting reading subjects (scribes), *and* the politics of foregrounding which governs such horizons and their production of meaning:

A great deal of deconstruction work, in fact, has sought to place texts and readers alike in their worldly and material situations, in the network, fabric, or text(ile) of historical and institutional relations that *constitute* (and not merely affect) them. That work teaches, or at least reminds, us that reasons always exist for the poses we strike, the positions we assume, and the statements we offer. (Atkins 8)

Due to the textuality of reality and the current rise of a global information society, it is more important than ever to mold and control the processes of meaning formation: «The essentially *textual* character of all social reality and the enormous power of signifying systems—that is, of representation—is not some literary discovery or humanistic insight but stems from the nature of the postindustrial societies of the West» (Rowe 202). We live in the information age, and referentiality has receded. Discourse becomes power and control over the audience. Literature as self-reflexive textual critique is therefore an important ideological and political tool. A literary hermeneutic semiology, in interplay with other theoretical textualities (not least feminist ones), results in a practical application of theory. It is a strategy of reading. Like Jane Smiley in *A Thousand Acres*, I will read both philosophically and politically.

2. Textual Horizons of Gender

Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* is, as stated in introduction, a novel that rewrites William Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Critics writing about the novel, however, have been overly simplistic and reductive when characterizing this relationship. It is certainly correct as Keppel observes, that Smiley «adopts the basic storyline and gives it new life» (105). But, as I also indicated in my introduction, *A Thousand Acres* contains a great potential for a more complex analysis of deconstruction and intertextuality than previous research on the novel has recognized. The few articles that have been published on *A Thousand Acres* merely note the relationship between the novel and the play. In Margaret Rozga's article, the connection to *King Lear* is even presented after a connection to Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* is established, as if it were less important. These articles then proceed to compare and contrast the play and the novel in terms of a limited number of themes. This is a fairly mechanical approach where, in my opinion, the richness and complexity of Smiley's novel is not fully acknowledged. The novel embodies postmodern concepts of language and text that remain unproblematized in these other approaches. They do not explore the ways in which intertextuality becomes a central part of the novel's aesthetic and political dimensions, both on the level of Ginny's creation of self and the level of the two works in question.

The former level entails an intertextual *scribing* of identity, which will be explored in chapter 6 in particular. This chapter will concentrate on the latter, arguing that *A Thousand Acres* is in fact a complex critique of *King Lear*. It is *literary criticism*, in which the term is doubly apt: it is both literature and criticism of literature. Criticism itself is creative. After all, great writing is unruly; it resists interpretation. To a certain extent, the meaning is given by the work and its innumerable intertexts. But it is the reader who must read it, interpret it, and so become a co-writer of it. Jane Smiley is a *scribe*—a reader, writer, and critic.

Therefore, although *A Thousand Acres* is written in a fairly traditional realist style, it represents a merging of postmodern literature and postmodern literary theory. The relationship between literary theory and practice, as it was conceived by pioneering postmodern writers themselves, can be described as follows: «The postmoderns showed special respect for scholarly and critical modes of writing, even when they satirized the seriousness or narrowness of academic writing».⁶ Writing a genre of literary criticism that is literary itself is a creative and intellectually liberating way of undermining one's own authority and making the reader responsible for interpreting one's interpretations: «To be sure, most influential poststructuralists—Derrida, Lacan, Foucault—wrote in profoundly *literary* styles . . .» (Rowe 190). This style, it must be remembered, is more than linguistic flourishes. If one takes the theoretical concepts of poststructuralism or deconstruction seriously, one *has* to challenge the genre of academic writing. As Norris observes,

Hartman, like Barthes, asserts the critic's freedom to exploit a style that actively transforms and questions the nature of interpretative thought. [T.S. Eliot implied] that theory, in so far as it is valid at all, is strictly a matter of placing some orderly construction upon the 'immediate' data of perception. Barthes and Hartman totally reject this careful policing of the bounds between literature and theory. . . . This is deconstruction in one of its modes: a deliberate attempt to turn the resources of interpretative style against any too rigid convention of method or language. (16-17)

Writing criticism in literary form is a specific mode of deconstruction. One might say, therefore, that Smiley takes that trend even further, writing literary criticism of *King Lear* in the form of prose fiction.

***King Lear* Reception History: Perceptions of Gender**

In addition to *King Lear* itself, then, there are almost 400 years of other responses that may be said to form a major part of Smiley's horizon when she wrote *A Thousand Acres* as her

⁶ Rowe 187. Hence, Jane Smiley, who has taught at Iowa State University, has also satirized a university strikingly similar to it in the novel subsequent to *A Thousand Acres: Moo* (1995).

response to the play. It is feasible to construct a chain of literary influence through readers for a single literary work—its reception history. Doing this for *King Lear* in any detailed sense is obviously beyond the scope of this text, and would constitute a doctoral dissertation in itself. In the following, however, I will explore some trends in the receptions—at least the published ones—the play has had since its publication. It will hopefully become clear that *A Thousand Acres* situates itself not only in relation to *King Lear*, but also in relation to other responses to the play.

A good survey of critical writing on this play is provided by Frank Kermode in his casebook *Shakespeare: King Lear* (1992). His introduction is in fact a micro-reception history which is reinforced and expanded upon by the subsequent essays. In the first part of this selection of critical essays we see that pre-20th century comments upon the play are relatively uniform. The traditional view of the play is summed up well in one of the introductory sentences of A.W. Schlegel: «The threefold dignity of a king, an old man, and a father, is dishonored by the cruel ingratitude of his unnatural daughters» (30). All the critical assessments charted below relate in some way or other to this simple assertion.

Generally, the critics of centuries past join in with Schlegel in hailing *King Lear* as a great tragedy. Its supreme pathos, it is agreed, stems from the king's debasement in what is recognized as a moral universe gone askew. Some see this as a sign of the modernity of the play, a pessimism expressed by Gloucester: «As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods, / They kill us for their sport» (IV.i. 36-37). Life is meaningless, and chaos reigns. Samuel Johnson, however, saw this as a flaw:

A play in which the wicked prosper and the virtuous miscarry may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of human life; but since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded that the observation of justice makes a play worse . . . (28)

This, then, is part of the pathos: the victory of evil over good. The virtuous are represented by Cordelia in particular. Her «heavenly beauty of soul» (Schlegel 32) earns her a place among these «reasonable beings», despite her gender. Gender myths have always cast women as emotional and irrational, and men as guided by the faculty of reason. As we will see when discussing Caroline in chapter 4, she is also counted among these «masculine» subjects.

In fact, it turns out that the moral chaos of the play is envisioned as caused by female empowerment. The empowerment of Regan and Goneril is not only perceived as unjust, but *unnatural*. This phrase is the most common characterization of the two sisters, along with «cruel». Johnson's misogyny is evident when he states that «[The] cruelty of the daughters is an historical fact, to which the poet has added little, having only drawn it into a series by dialogue and action» (28). Submission to the father as patriarch is obviously more important to Johnson than a subject's submission to her king. Citing the critic Murphy, he argues that this «cruelty» affects Lear more than does his loss of royalty.

This view is interesting when seen in relation to *A Thousand Acres*, where Larry Cook is «dethroned» in terms of parental authority *because* he loses his power of capital in transferring his farm to his daughters. As will be discussed below, his power is not natural and unquestionably just (like Lear's is, in these critics' view); it depends on patriarchal and capitalist suppression. I would like to argue that the other inhabitants of Zebulon County, Iowa, USA, take on the role of critics of the daughters in Smiley's novel. Thus they may represent the position of critical objectivity assumed by traditional *King Lear*-criticism. They are described as «the great open invisible eye of The Neighbors», viewing the lives of the Cook family as something to «judge and enjoy» (285-86). The key word here is *judge*. The attempt at reconciliation between the parties at the church potluck (chapter 28) fails because Harold Clark, who is often the voice of popular opinion in the novel, judges Rose and Ginny the way critics have judged Regan and Goneril:

Harold spoke up, as if he were making a long-awaited announcement, and said, «Look at 'em chowing down here, like they ain't done nothing. Threw a man off his own farm . . . Nobody's so much as come around to say I'm sorry or nothing. Pair of bitches. You know I'm talking about Ginny and Rose Cook.»

The minister decided to push back his chair. From across the room, Mary Livingstone's voice came, «Pipe down, Harold Clark. . . .» (218-19)

Harold is the voice of the society; other men (like the minister) are in silent agreement, while the women (like Mary Livingstone) are ignored. Again, this will be expanded on in the course of this text, but the main point here is that the misogynist subjectivity inherent in the local people's perception of these sisters is arguably related to the readings made by traditional critics of Goneril and Regan.

Both Johnson and Schlegel defend the inclusion of the subplot against charges of inconsistency, stating that Edmund is a necessary character for bringing out the feeling of universal evil in the world. Not only does he destroy his father as Regan and Goneril do, to Schlegel he even excites the «criminal passion» of female sexuality, another unnatural and evil force. Because of their strong sexuality, the sisters are perceived as *monstrous* (another recurrent word to describe them, both in the text of the play and in its reception). Also, unlike Edmund, their wickedness is outrageous and unnatural in that it is *inexplicable*; they have no reason to rebel.

King Lear-criticism proliferates in the twentieth century, with 2500 items in the period 1940-1978 alone (Thompson 9). An overview of this must necessarily be quite selective and simple. I will use Ann Thompson's *King Lear* (1988) to flesh out the skeleton provided by Kermode. This volume contains a helpful overview of the play's reception, as well as comments on potential problems with different critical approaches. Many of the trends from previous criticism of the play continue in our time, though more recent reception history sees quite a few shifts in critical paradigms. One important shift concerns the genre of *King Lear*. I

have so far written about it as a Shakespearean tragedy, which is the traditional conception. In our century, however, the play has been labeled as diversely as «comedy, tragicomedy, pastoral and romance» (Thompson 19). From the 1960s onwards, with the postmodern flair for montage or pastiche rather than unity of form, these aspects of the play have been seen as elements that in various ways bring out the tragic or even absurd quality of *King Lear*. Another popular genre placement, despite the fact that Shakespeare toned down considerably the Christian allusions of *King Lear*, is the morality play. If we are to simplify, the shift in this paradigm was also initiated in the 1960s, this time by Barbara Everett. She argued that traditional criticism over-emphasized this morality play link, stating that contemporary scholars have «so much stressed the ‘Christian’ content and method of the play, that it is sometimes a little difficult to know which of the two plays [*King Lear* or *King Lear*] is in question» (159). Her challenge to this orthodoxy resulted in a paradigm shift from a Christian reading to a more general humanistic moral reading. This new perspective interpreted the suffering of Lear as an instance of heroic humanism more than as a vehicle for Christian redemption. In the 1980s, both approaches were refuted by Dollimore as preoccupied with «essentialist subjectivity» (qtd. in Thompson 31). This decade saw new historicist, materialist, and feminist critics alike focusing more on the socio-historical aspects and the ideological workings of the play.

The Christian/moral perspectives and the more recent secular ones need not be contradictory. Western culture retains certain beliefs and assumptions from Christianity, which have been integrated into secular ideologies. In fact, I would like to argue that *King Lear*, like Christian/moral myths, represents historically powerful archetypes that are still in evidence today. And, like Christian texts, *King Lear* represents a hierarchical, dominator model of thinking. In Riane Eisler's *The Chalice and the Blade* (1988), a persuasive argument is made for the pervasive re-mything that has taken place and is still taking place to validate

current power structures. Her general thesis in this book is that previous cultures—in fact, our earliest civilizations—were based on what she terms a *partnership model*, a non-hierarchical and peaceful social organization with equality between the sexes and a holistic ecological attitude. This model was gradually replaced by a *dominator* model where societies would be hierarchical, aggressive, and practically exclusively patriarchal. These societies would see nature as subservient to man. This pivotal change in the evolution of our global cultures necessitated a rewriting of archetypal symbols and myths in order to justify the new social order. This included a shift from a benevolent Goddess (with male counterparts that were *not* subordinate to her), to a warlike God (with Goddesses either subordinated or erased from the myth). The very word *hierarchy*, in fact, establishes the «God-given, natural» status of dominator organization in its etymological root: «It derives from the Greek *hieros* (sacred) and *arkhia* (rule)» (Eisler 119).

The construction and control of people's textual horizons by dominator re-mything is not exclusively Christian in Western culture. The *Lear*-story also has a long history as «an ancient folk tale, existing in many versions» (Fraser 191)—yet another form of myth. The overtness of the political project and ideological drive of *A Thousand Acres* implies intertextually that *King Lear* also was written as an ideologically shaped use of previous texts. The play does not represent a self-present (transcendental) truth of culture and aesthetics, but one that is *constructed*. William Shakespeare took an already well known motif, made it even more assertive of a dominator logic, and—in its subsequent dissemination and placement in the Western canon—made it more influential than ever. For, as Russel Fraser has observed, Shakespeare included the Gloucester sub-plot (which none of the earlier *Lear*-versions had) in order to make the play as tragic as possible. In fact, he «darkens consistently, in manipulating his sources, whatever suggestion is latent in them» and changes the ending of the play from a resolution where «Vice is punished and virtue rewarded» (Fraser 192-93). In Shakespeare's

King Lear, the so-called vice of Regan and Goneril's refusal of parental (patriarchal) authority is represented as so vile and so fundamentally unnatural that it cannot even be remedied within the boundaries of the play.

Whereas myths in general are descriptive—attempts to understand the world—Christian myths are also normative. We can analyze the Bible as a literature of social education that tries to make people conform to a dominator mindset. In this context, the wholesale classification of Regan and Goneril as evil becomes more understandable. Since the beginning of time, the Bible tells us, disobedience to God has always been the ultimate evil. Lucifer, the best loved of Jehovah's angels, challenged his authority and was cast down into hell. Translated into social wisdom, this means that one shall not question the authority of hierarchies. Seen in this light, the tragedy of *King Lear* is that Regan and Goneril refuse to be subordinate to the patriarchal order, an order which is *not* natural but a dominator construct: «[J]ust as slaves are naturally meant to be ruled by free men, women are meant to be ruled by men. Anything else violated the observable, and therefore 'natural,' order» (Eisler 118). The sisters' filial disobedience, as Eisler's analysis of family organization points to, has grave implications: «If we look at the family as a microcosm of the larger world—and as the only world a small and pliable child knows—this 'disrespect' for the male dominated family, in which father's word is law, can be seen as a major threat to a system based on force-backed ranking» (129). This would explain the fervor with which Harold Clark condemns Rose and Ginny in *A Thousand Acres*; their «disrespect» for Larry also threatens the system he represents. In a 1961 essay, John Holloway argued that contemporaneous viewers of *King Lear* would clearly see «dissension between parents and children as the predictable counterpart of dissension in the body politic» (179).

Throughout the 1970s, such historical analyses were often phrased in Marxist terms. This approach divides the characters in two: Apart from Lear's tragic flaw in the opening

scene, all the positive characters are representative of an economic mindset which is benevolent and without any form of ruthless calculations. Goneril, Regan and Edmund, on the other hand, are seen to represent the new, quantitative thinking of capitalists. *A Thousand Acres* takes issue with this perception of characters, too. In the novel, Larry is the ultimate capitalist, whereas Ginny and Rose are not that interested in capital gains. They have other reasons to accept their father's gift, an acceptance they later have cause to regret. The farm represents «a destiny that we never asked for, that was our father's gift to us» (220), a destiny of death and destruction. Jess is the complete opposite of the capitalist farmer ideal that Larry and Harold advocate, with his ideas of organic, non-exploitative farming.

It becomes increasingly clear that the simplistic labels for the «villains» of *King Lear* represent a reception molded by ideological—mostly patriarchal—textual horizons. The «greatness» that critics see in *King Lear*, then, is due to its perpetuation of a dominator logic. Whether one chooses to emphasize its folk tale roots, or sees *King Lear* narrowly as a Christian play, or more generally as a humanist morality play, the fact remains that it is a powerful dominator myth. For if *King Lear* is Christian or moral play, then what kind of Christianity or moral is being asserted? Clearly the lesson to be learned from the play is an androcratic one: Female disobedience in the family and in society is unnatural and must be punished.

Apollonian Classification

Quite a few critics seem to equate great individualization of a character with that character's relative morality within the ideological message of the play. As early as in 1811, Coleridge stated that «Kent is the nearest to perfect goodness of all Shakespeare's characters, and yet the most *individualized*» (37). More recent critics could have substituted «yet» with «therefore». Preceding an extraordinary praise of Cordelia, for example, we find A.C. Bradley's judgment

that «no character in Shakespeare is more absolutely individual or more ineffaceably stamped on the memory of his readers» (95). Even Enid Welsford, who compares *King Lear* to a medieval morality play with the assertion that «the issue of a conflict between two sharply opposed groups of people [is] painted far more uncompromisingly in black and white than is customary in Shakespearean tragedy» (124), proceeds with an discussion of the play's positive characters that serves to individualize them and consequently (however covert) to represent them as morally superior. Goneril, Regan and Edmund, though sometimes collapsed into the one symbol of Goneril to serve a rhetoric of dichotomies, are left uniformly black, metaphorically speaking.

This is not to imply that individualization implies good and typification evil in all literature, nor that this particular dichotomy necessarily was Shakespeare's intention. The importance of this lies in the fact that the single most common trait in criticism of *King Lear* is the *non-individualization of Regan and Goneril*, a consistency even more striking when we consider that the reception history of the play is marked more by controversies than agreements. The older sisters are exclusively viewed as the evil, unnatural daughters. They are only mentioned as individuals insofar as they actually act as separate beings. In thematic importance and moral status, they are nothing more than «paradigms of evil» (Mack 66). Although Edmund is quite often included in this classification of evil, he is more individualized, more psychologically explained. Ann Thompson criticizes this view, unchanged since Coleridge:

But that is precisely where the play reveals its misogyny: Edmund's rebellion against his father, although horrific in its effects, is in a sense understandable, almost inevitable, while that of Goneril and Regan, precisely *because* they are women, is seen as deeply 'unnatural' and carries connotations of monstrosity and chaos. (72)

They are denied any display of personality beyond this fundamental fact, a classification that *in itself* underscores their moral depravity. Thus the equation of individualization and moral superiority is inscribed in horizons of reception as a convention in *Lear*-criticism.

The non-individualization of Regan and Goneril is an exercise of power through discourse that can be termed Apollonian classification, a patriarchal strategy to deny any expression of gender. Camille Paglia argues in *Sexual Personae* (1990) that Western society is Apollonian in its sky-cult religion, its emphasis on rationality, its hierarchical thinking, and its empirical orientation.⁷ The Apollonian understands by classifying, naming, confining the chaos of nature within easily identifiable boxes. An early example of this, is Adam as Apollonian label-writer: «God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof» (Gen.2.19). Indeed, as noted above, the «observable» and the «natural» is equated in this empiricist dominator logic the Old Testament works by. The science of rationalizing labeling is society's defense against nature:

Science is a method of logical analysis of nature's operations. It has lessened human anxiety about the cosmos by demonstrating the materiality of nature's forces . . . Western science is a product of the Apollonian mind; its hope is that by naming and classification, by the cold light of intellect, archaic night can be pushed back and defeated. (Paglia 5)

Since woman is seen as the representative of nature in Apollonian thinking, the science that reduces the chaos of nature to simple causalities is also a defense against woman. There are many parallels, as will become evident, between Paglia's concept of the Apollonian and Derrida's term *logocentrism*. This reductive thinking, when a becoming means of patriarchal control, has furthermore been termed *phallogocentrism*. The Apollonian classification of woman is a weapon to avoid the undefinable (in Paglia's terms, the *Dionysian*) and exercises

⁷ Paglia's use of the terms «Apollonian» and «Dionysian» is largely based on Friedrich Nietzsche's in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals* (1956).

power through definition: «The west insists on the discrete identity of objects. To name is to know; to know is to control» (5). In contrast, we have Ginny's assertion in *A Thousand Acres* that «[L]abeling [people], prevented knowing them» (305).

In *King Lear*-criticism, the Apollonian label is that woman is evil. It is therefore my contention that all the critics I have surveyed above, whether man or woman, whether consciously or not, manifest a conception of Regan and Goneril that make them a part of a patriarchal power structure: The Apollonian fallacy of unquestioned condemnation of Goneril and Regan. Before looking at how this is dealt with in *A Thousand Acres*, it is necessary to survey how other feminist critics have received *King Lear*. They have certainly been critical, for it is natural that a work hailed as Shakespeare's greatest play by critics within a patriarchal community of discourse, is now argued by feminist critics to be his most *misogynist* play.⁸ It is in this connection important to explore the issues raised by contemporary feminist interpretations.

Marilyn French's *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* (1982) is perhaps the most authoritative feminist work on Shakespeare's drama. French argues that socially formed gender principles have been naturalized in Western culture, masking the patriarchal power structures which order these principles. Throughout history, the masculine principle has created a division of the feminine principle—a new Apollonian classification. The *inlaw* feminine principle is that which supports the patriarchy (the Madonna) and the *outlaw* feminine principle is that which is outcast by it (the whore). In her analysis of *King Lear*, French says that «Edmund, Goneril, and Regan—are not only 'masculine' but are abusers of both principles» (232). Throughout her argument, however, she distinguishes—individualizes—Edmund from the two sisters, thereby adhering to the Apollonian fallacy that categorizes Regan and Goneril as non-individualized evil. She points to the fact that Goneril

⁸ See Thompson 71-72. This is true even for other fictional uses of *King Lear*. See the discussion of Naylor's *Mama Day* in Erickson, *Rewriting Shakespeare* 139. The statement made by a *Mama Day* character that the play is «Shakespeare's most sexist treatment of women» is of course left uncontested by Erickson.

carries the burden of «the rhetorical condemnation of the play» (235) by herself, and asks why she is judged so differently from the other villains. But this is an enigma she seems to prefer not to probe. In conclusion, she states that important questions that could have explained the behavior of Goneril and Regan are not permitted within the terms of the play. Nor does she permit them within the terms of her own argument; the sisters are still seen as uniformly evil.

In «The Patriarchal Bard» (1985), Kathleen McLuskie criticizes the misogynist treatment of Goneril and Regan, but does not attempt to break the consensus of Apollonian classification. However, McLuskie provides what could have been a blueprint for the project of *A Thousand Acres*:

A more fruitful point of entry for feminism is in the process of the text's reproduction. As Elizabeth Cowie and others have pointed out, sexist meanings are not fixed but depend upon constant reproduction by their audience. In the case of *King Lear* the text is tied to misogynist meaning only if it is reconstructed with its emotional power and its moral imperatives intact. Yet the text contains possibilities for subverting these meanings and the potential for reconstructing them in feminist terms. (103)

McLuskie does not take issue with the critical tradition of not individualizing the Regan and Goneril. Since this convention is consistently linked with their classification as evil, she unknowingly reproduces the sexist logic of Apollonian classification. For all the merits of her argument, this fundamental conception that I have termed the Apollonian fallacy is still part of its textualities. But her point is an important one, and with *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley has indeed taken hold of the possibilities for subversion and reconstructed them in her use of *King Lear*.

Surely it would be in the interest of feminist scholars to challenge the Apollonian fallacy of traditional criticism. If I may reappropriate Stanley Fish's concept of interpretative change here, it is reasonable to argue that their practice should be to have «the interests and tacitly understood goals of one interpretive community replace or dislodge the interests and

goals of another» (16). Feminism should dislodge the patriarchally oriented goals of traditional criticism, but does not break out of the Apollonian paradigm in this particular context. That work—of shattering old conventions and entering new ones into the interpretive mind—is left for the perspective *A Thousand Acres* represents.

Almost two centuries before Smiley's aesthetic-critical work with *King Lear*, her namesake Jane Austen seems to have noted the novel's potential for inscribing an aesthetic form onto literary criticism. For, as Gilbert and Gubar has pointed out, «when she [Austen] begins *Sense and Sensibility* with a retelling of *King Lear*, her reversals imply that male traditions need to be evaluated and reinterpreted from a female perspective». Austen, however, presents a crude reversal of hierarchies that perpetuates a dominator logic: «instead of the evil daughter castrating the old king . . . Austen represents the male heir and his wife persuading themselves to cheat their already unjustly deprived sisters of a rightful share of the patrimony» (120). This shortcoming is similar to Adrienne Rich's in our century. In the poem «After Dark», she not only conforms to the feminist version of the Apollonian fallacy—concentrating on Cordelia instead of her sisters—but maintains the dominator logic of *King Lear*: «Despite its token revisionist gestures, the poem reaffirms and perpetuates the authority of *King Lear*'s father-daughter dynamic, in which the daughter's love constitutes self-sacrifice» (Erickson 153).

Thus even feminist critics/artists uphold the Apollonian fallacy with regards to their treatment of Goneril and Regan, and focus on the safer issue of Cordelia. An important aspect of *A Thousand Acres* as a feminist novel is in my opinion that it goes further than other contemporary *Lear*-related feminist texts. It not only reformulates the role of Cordelia, but more importantly, that of Regan and Goneril. As my discussion in this chapter has shown, *King Lear* and its reception history perpetuates a dominator suppression of women. This is manifested both in its tragic function—the Apollonian fallacy of female monstrosity—and its

genre. Consequently, the critical work of *A Thousand Acres* involves both a deconstruction of Apollonian labeling and a change in genre.

These two strategies overlap in the novel. In fact, the choice of genre for *A Thousand Acres* makes possible a mode for questioning the Apollonian fallacy discussed above without creating a hierarchy where the women are better than the men. Leaving aside the obvious explanation for genre choice—that Smiley has always been a novelist—it is evident that the novel form leaves more room for individualization through characterization by the narrator. This point becomes even more clear when one considers that the characterization in question is in fact made by the Goneril of the novel, Ginny. Thus, she is not only given individuality through expression of her own thoughts, feelings, motivations; she also reveals much of herself through narratorial comments and characterizations. In individualizing Rose and Ginny so strongly, Smiley attacks the critical consensus of Apollonian definition of the two sisters as pure evil.

A Thousand Acres is an artistic endeavor that seeks to defamiliarize *King Lear*, which has been automatized in the Western canon. Like one chanting snatches of old tunes, the novel simultaneously revitalizes the aesthetic force of *King Lear*, and subverts it to form a new aesthetic field for modern literature. Kermode comments upon such an act as necessary for the play's status as a classic: it «[has] to be made to comply with the paradigmatic requirements for a classic in that time [i.e. any given time of critical reading]» (qtd. in Thompson 70). The classical is not that which is eternally true about human experience, but that which is true for us in our time. The horizon of the classic is dynamic. *A Thousand Acres* demonstrates this in contrast to a reception history that tries to put the classic in *stasis* (hence the closed structures of New Criticism). As Charles Armstrong has argued, «commentaries never end—the meaning of Kafka, of Borges, or of Shakespeare, cannot be delimited. Hence, ultimately, the possibility of a wealth of interpretative desire is the result of an inherent, and not simply

accidental, impossibility of a totalizing account» (20). This points to the fact that there is a wealth of potential meanings being excluded by the discourse of *stasis*, the logocentric fictions of criticism. Any instance of literary criticism is itself a kind of narrative of interpretation and this should be made explicit. Representing an instance of *King Lear*-criticism that is ostensibly *fictional*, *A Thousand Acres* in its very genre also criticizes the major bulk of traditional criticism.

Since horizons are textual, they can be rewritten. This remains the central issue in this chapter. *A Thousand Acres* is *King Lear* criticism in fiction form, and like other critical texts (including this one), it must situate its argument in the context of previous criticism. Since the most important critical constant has been the Apollonian classification of Regan and Goneril as pure evil, it is this perception which I have regarded as most important to discuss in this gender-oriented history of *King Lear* criticism. Similarly, the alleged Christian/morality aspects of the play are questioned in Smiley's text, as is the tragic function itself. The genre of criticism Smiley's novel has inscribed for itself is extremely multivalent. As such, it serves to penetrate the very horizons of its readers, changing the way we read *King Lear*, and potentially how we read literature in general. Obviously, the reception history I have charted does not indicate that the horizon of patriarchy is static and has remained the same for over 400 years. What it *does* indicate, is that as our societies were transformed from a feudal to an industrial/capitalist to a postindustrial/late capitalist model of organization, the Apollonian, logocentric, hierarchical, dominator mode of thinking remained an important organizing principle. To challenge and possibly change this principle, one must contest it at every level.

3. Textualities of Nature

The body repeats the landscape. They are the source of each other and create each other. We were marked by the seasonal body of earth, by the terrible migrations of people, by the swift turn of a century, verging on change never before experienced on this greening planet.⁹

The social division occurs within my body: my body itself is social. (Barthes, *RB* 124)

Horizon is a concept we in ordinary speech associate with nature, and this becomes even more relevant when we now turn to the constructions of meaning—the textualities—in *A Thousand Acres* that also concern nature. Nature is central in *King Lear* as well, as the chaos against which the standing social order must define itself and against which it is seen to crumble. Moreover, if one considers the role of Goneril and Regan as instrumental in the dissolution of the moral universe of *King Lear*, there is also a certain identification between woman and nature in Shakespeare's play. It is a revealing paradox that the two sisters are consistently seen as unnatural, whereas nature itself is seen as malevolent in traditional criticism. This illustrates one of my points from chapter 2: the abusive term «unnatural» does not refer to nature but to a naturalized patriarchal principle.

Indeed, as *A Thousand Acres* shows, «nature» is also a social construct in this context. It must be kept in mind that *A Thousand Acres* is much more than a mere re-telling of the *King Lear* story. Its reviewers unanimously stress its strong Americanness: «[It] never reads like a gloss on Shakespeare. For one thing, *A Thousand Acres* has an exact and exhilarating sense of place, a sheer Americanness that gives it its own soul and roots» (Duffy 92). It portrays the ultra-American setting of a Midwestern farming community. Both the place and its people are strikingly real, down to the peculiar manners of speech that characterize the Heartland folk. Smiley's novel, however, is not solely a modern American family epic. Now

⁹ This quote, from the Midwestern writer Meridel Le Sueur, is also the epigraph to *A Thousand Acres*.

that the USA has become very urbanized, it would perhaps have been a more fitting contemporary re-imagining of the *King Lear* plot if the story were of a Wall Street bigwig dividing his assets among his daughters, were it not for the strong cultural value that mainstream American ideology places upon the landscape. It is telling that Smiley transposes the Lear-tale onto an *agrarian* community. As we will see, Smiley's novel is also very American in the sense that it enters the culturally significant pastoral dream, but only to reconstruct it. It functions as a modern American *pastoral*, re-imagining that genre too by changing the metaphors by which Americans conceptualize nature.

This chapter will explore the textualities of nature in the novel, and argue that they are connected to patriarchal textualities of woman in general. How they affect the identity of the novel's protagonist Ginny will be dealt with in chapter 5. A major part of the discussion will concern the *textualization* of both body and nature and the concomitant struggle for textual power. This power over women and women's bodies, and over nature, is asserted in terms of both patriarchy and capitalism.

Metaphorizations of Woman and Nature

In *The Lay of the Land* (1975), Annette Kolodny analyzes the way that the American continent has been metaphorized as feminine ever since its early settlement. In the course of her book, she charts a development in which this metaphorization turned destructive. Although working within a different theoretical framework, she stresses, as I have done so far, the connections between language, thought, and external action. What Kolodny terms «the pastoral impulse» in the American mind has necessitated masculine aggression upon the feminine land. This impulse has moved from the realm of language and thought to the act of perpetuating «the rape of America»: «As soon as the land is experienced as feminine, no

masculine activity in relation to it can be both satisfying and nonabusive», so that «before the masculine, the feminine is always both vulnerable and victimized» (142-43).

It is, however, an important human trait to be able to change the conditions of our perception and consequently of our understanding of the world. We can re-write our metaphorizations; as Kolodny observes, we can «create and re-create our own images of reality» (148). It is an important part of Smiley's project in *A Thousand Acres* to construct a new American pastoral that re-creates metaphors of woman and nature. Kolodny's book provides the recipe for such a project, stating in its conclusion:

Again, the choice is ours, whether to allow our responses to this continent to continue in the service of outmoded and demonstrably dangerous image patterns, or whether to place our biologically—and psychologically—based «yearnings for paradise» at the disposal of potentially healthier (that is, survival-oriented) and alternate symbolizing or image systems. (159)

In *A Thousand Acres*, the metaphorization of women's bodies and the metaphorization of the landscape are re-invented in a parallel fashion. This kind of project, as John Carlos Rowe has argued about postmodern literature in general, is both a political and an ethical one in its «moral conviction that the more self-conscious we are about the ways we use language, the more likely we are to improve our social and human relations» (189).

Seen in this context, there is something perverse about Ty's metaphorizations of nature as exemplified in his dream of the hog operation. These are animals to be used for breeding or to be slaughtered for food, yet he likes to think of them as people:

And, let's see, how about a couple of champion boars, the kind whose breeding is so pure they can sit up to dinner with you and not spill anything on the tablecloth. . . . You get a good breeding line of your own going and you can put those babies up for adoption. Everybody wants one. You can say, 'Yeah, Jake, but you've got to feed him with your own spoon, and let him sleep on your side of the bed,' and they'll say, 'Sure, Ty, anything. I've already started his college fund.' . . . Or hers. Sows with that kind of endowment get all the benefits, too. (24)

This is not to say that Ty actually treats hogs like people or vice versa. Still, if we follow the line of thinking that metaphorizations mold our thinking and therefore our actions, it is a use of language that reveals a utilitarian, Apollonian mind. The hog operation, as becomes apparent in the course of the novel, is more important to him than his wife.

The age-old dichotomy of man and culture versus woman and nature demands not only a subtle control, but violent abuse of the latter. It is, to appropriate Derrida's phrase, a «violent hierarchy» (*Positions* 41). According to Derrida, all binary oppositions necessarily lead to a hierarchy, an imbalance in the opposition: «The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it» (Johnson viii). As undesirable «side-products» in a dominator logic, woman and nature must be controlled. In *A Thousand Acres*, Larry's power games and physical abuse are paralleled by the killing of animals and plants that seems to be inherent in the activity of all farmers (*not* in farming as such). In the novel, animals are killed without reflection, for example in the especially brutal image of using machines (i.e. industrial farming): «Once Harold was driving the cornpicker, when Jess was a boy, and there was a fawn lying in the corn, and Harold drove right over it rather than leave the row standing, or turn, or even just stop and chase it away. . . . After he drove over it, he didn't stop to kill it, either. He just let it die» (234). The killing of plants is mostly done by leveling and draining the land for farming, but it seems to be more than a necessary farming process, as the metaphorization of nature in plant names indicate: «I know shooting stars and wild carrots, and of course, bindweed and Johnsongrass and shatter cane and all that other noxious vegetation that farmers have to kill kill kill» (124). It is as if plants have to be metaphorized as dangerous («shooting», «wild», «shatter», etc.) to validate an unnecessary extermination.

This extermination in the novel therefore seems to be rooted not only in an urge to control, but in a strong *fear* of the uncontrollable; of nature and by implication of woman. Ginny unwittingly reveals this in a conversation with Jess. He starts off the discussion by professing to like snakes:

«Oh, there're lots of nice snakes around here. Milk snakes are beautiful, and racers. Rat snakes will climb into corncribs and trees.»

«Daddy's killed those.»

«I'm sure.»

«Daddy's not much for untamed nature. You know, he's deathly afraid of wasps and hornets. It's a real phobia with him. He goes all white and his face starts twitching.» (123)

That Jess would be associated with snakes does not follow the traditional logic where snakes are symbolically evil. As Riane Eisler has argued, snake symbolism was rewritten from being something positive in ancient societies, to being something negative in our Western tradition.

In fact, her best developed example of dominator re-mything concerns precisely the snakes, or serpents. Originally, in a society that appreciated our connection with all of nature, they represented the endless cycle of life because a snake «sheds its skin and is 'reborn'», thus being a «symbol of her [the Goddess'] regeneration» (18). So, as Eisler observes,

Clearly the serpent was too important, too sacred, and too ubiquitous a symbol of the power of the Goddess to be ignored. If the old mind was to be refashioned to fit the new system's requirements, the serpent would either have to be appropriated as one of the emblems of the new ruling classes or, alternately, defeated, distorted, and discredited. (87)

This process took place in the rewriting of both Greek and Judeo-Christian myths. Via Athena, the snake became a symbol of war. Also, it became one of Zeus' symbols. Thus it was appropriated by the new power. Moreover, mythical serpents were killed by male (demi) gods; Syphon by Zeus, Ladon by Hercules, etc. This was meant to illustrate the defeat of the

Goddess and her partnership ideal. Knowledge, which was as much power then as now, was similarly appropriated:

The well-known oracular shrine at Delphi also stood on a site originally identified with the worship of the Goddess. And even in classical Greek times, after it was taken over for the worship of Apollo, the oracle still spoke through the lips of a woman. She was a priestess called Pythia, who sat upon a tripod around which a snake called the python coiled. (Eisler 70)

Even though this example may be termed an intermediate stage in this development, it is clear that the power of natural (feminine) knowledge is subjugated by the power of the Apollonian mind. In fact, Apollo ends up slaying the Python (Eisler 87). In the Bible, the serpent is transformed into a symbol of satanic evil. Thus, Biblical myths perform the discrediting function Eisler pointed to above. Again, it is a warning against knowledge, from now on a masculine realm: «The ‘sin’ of Eve when she defied Jehovah and herself dared to go to the source of knowledge was in essence her refusal to give up that worship [of the Goddess]» (Eisler 89). The punishment exacted on Eve is clearly a warning against questioning the textual power of the new myths. Larry Cook’s eradication of snakes—especially snakes in trees, symbolically like the ‘evil’ snake in the Garden of Eden—is an equally powerful reminder that he will not be contradicted.

This metaphorical link Snake-Woman-Evil is one of Shakespeare’s appropriations from earlier sources. With much Old Testament dominator imagery surrounding it, King Leir’s characterization of the elder sisters’ partnership is that it is a «viperous sect» that must be «rooted out» (211). This analysis of snake symbolism also ties in with my discussion in chapter 2 of Camille Paglia’s theories of civilization and art as a defense mechanism against a nature that man fears, although Eisler continually stresses that it is not civilization *per se* that is Apollonian, but our present dominator civilization. Ginny is, by way of an intertext of larger historical proportions, linked to the snake simply because she is a woman. Also, in *King*

Lear, Goneril is characterized as *even worse* than a snake. Lear himself makes the comparison: «How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is / To have a thankless child» (I.iv. 295-96). Elsewhere, he says that Goneril «Looked black upon me, struck me with her tongue, / Most serpentlike, upon the very heart» (II.iv. 159-60). In fact, even her husband gets to call her a snake. Albany's phrase is «This gilded serpent» (V.iii. 85).

Moreover, Ginny's statement about her father's «phobia» above seems very much an echo of Paglia's observation that: «[N]ature is a festering *hornet's nest* of aggression and overkill» (28, italics mine). Larry's fright is emblematic of man's fear of nature; a fear that provides the impetus for violence. Fear and aggression are twin emotions, manifested in the projection of masculine anxiety onto the image of hornets. The image of a fearful nature-as-hornets seems to be a powerful cultural image, since such disparate authors as Smiley and Paglia both use it. Thus, the aggressiveness toward nature that such a projection of fear produces is foregrounded.

Capitalist Control over Body and Nature

We have seen that metaphorizations of woman-as-nature mold cognitive processes and therefore external action. Inherent in these metaphors, there is a «violent hierarchy». However, if «society is an artificial construction, a defense against nature's power» (Paglia 1), it is also a construct that restricts violence in order to facilitate social interaction. Violence is seen as counter-productive in a capitalist society where the major purpose is ever-increasing productivity. Therefore, the impulse to control nature that can take the form of overt violence is also transformed into another (though not completely separate) realm: that of capitalism. In Paglia's words, «Capitalism is an art form, an Apollonian fabrication to rival nature» (38). Like the pastoral impulse, the capitalist impulse is a product of basal fear and aggression that

cannot otherwise be played out. Instead, it is textualized into a cultural sign system—a social text.

Marv Carson in *A Thousand Acres* may well represent, however subtly, the Fool in *King Lear*. Just like the Fool is Lear's confidante and close companion, Marv is Larry's: his «unfeed lawyer».¹⁰ In fact, he initiated the plan of dividing the farm: «It's Marv Carson who's put this bug in his ear» (23), Ty explains to Ginny. At the very least, his toxin-shedding schemes in *A Thousand Acres* are ridiculous. But, like the Fool's speeches, his comic function also has a serious edge. His schemes are ridiculously hyperbolic in the context of his community because they are an instance of the Apollonian controlling impulse *turned onto one's own body instead of onto woman and nature*. He is a rich banker and a successful capitalist. Therefore, he should by the definition of the capitalist impulse above be able to transform and displace the aggression inherent in the dichotomy woman/nature vs. man/culture into capitalist control. He does this to a certain extent, lecturing them all that «You've got to grasp that a farm is a business first and foremost. Got to have capital improvements in a business. Economy of scale» (325). In the exploitive system of capital industrial farming, it turns out that he stands to profit the most. As Ginny observes, «I realized right then that by watching Marv . . . you could tell where the money was, and where it was going to go» (325). However, his excessive attempts at controlling his own body is a farcical displacement of purpose. It is a parody of body awareness:

«My main effort now is to be aware of toxins and try to shed them as regularly as possible. I urinate twelve to twenty times a day, now. I sweat freely. I keep a careful eye on my bowel movements.» He said this utterly without embarrassment. . . . «If I don't exercise, I feel myself getting a little crazy from the toxins in my brain.» (29)

¹⁰ *King Lear* I.iv. 132. The Fool's advice to Lear in the speech spanning lines 120-30 provides an additional hint: both Larry and Harold follow many of these maxims.

Purpose is in fact an important focal point in Paglia's representation of Apollonian processes of classification and reality-construction. In these processes, firm goals and plans become part of the cognitive strategy to exclude the chaos of nature and impose order. In a parallel fashion, Derrida's critique of phallogocentric *telos* (teleological purpose) argues that *telos* in the Western mind excludes *écriture* in order to contain reality in manageable plans. The parody of purpose in Marv Carson works as a subtle critique of the traditional patriarchal or phallogocentric purpose of controlling the bodies of women and the body of the earth on which they live. Significantly, when Ginny makes fun of Marv, Larry rebukes her with reference to capitalistic considerations: «Owns us now. . . . Marv Carson's your landlord now, girl. Best be respectful. . . . He's got money in his bank, too» (49).

The central sphere of the interconnections between patriarchy and capitalism seems to be the family. We tend to speak of both concepts in the abstract, but it should be born in mind that they are both manifested in personal interaction (hence the feminist maxim «the personal is political»); the family is the most important area of personal interaction. In its earliest form in the novel, the family seems to be both the reward for labor (or a commodity exchanged for labor) and the site for new production and reproduction: «It was pretty clear that John Cook had gained, through dint of sweat equity, a share in the Davis farm, and when Edith turned sixteen, John, thirty-three by then, married her» (15). Clearly, family is here defined simultaneously as an agrarian, patriarchal, and capitalist entity. This rumination upon the origin of Ginny's family comes right after her statement about the present confusing situation where their farm kingdom is to be divided: «There were no clues» (13), thus providing *the reader* with clues to how to understand the social system of the Cook family.

In her critique of traditional Marxism Juliet Mitchell has asserted that the oppression of women cannot be stopped only by changing the mode of production. Women's situation in a capitalist society depends on their suppression within three additional social structures, all of

which must be overturned: «The liberation of women can only be achieved if *all four* structures in which they are integrated are transformed—Production, Reproduction, Sexuality and Socialization [of children]» (312). In her analysis, a change in only some of these structures would merely result in a permutation (and consequent perpetuation) of the total system. It should be clear that the politics of reproduction, sexuality, and socialization of children are all most important within the familial realm, as illustrated by Larry's power over his daughters' fertility (through poisoned water), sexuality (through incest), and their training to become obedient to him. In fact, the oppression of women in *A Thousand Acres* is foregrounded within all four structures. As Heidi Hartmann has pointed out in her seminal essay «The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Toward a More Progressive Union» (1979), the production structure is also controlled through the family (that is, the father): «The family, supported by the family wage, thus allows the control of women's labor by men both within and without the family» (327).

Feminist Marxists are careful to avoid conflating patriarchy and capitalism, arguing that a revolution that ends capitalism does not necessarily end patriarchy. As my concluding remarks in chapter 2 indicated, it may be more precise to characterize capitalism as a *subset* of patriarchy, a modern Western structure that shapes the controlling impulse of the patriarchy, which in turn is the product of a dominator ideology. The tensions and contradictions between the social constructions of patriarchy and capitalism have this kind of ideology as their structuring principle: «Just as women's work serves the dual purpose of perpetuating male domination and capitalist production, so sexist ideology serves the dual purpose of glorifying male characteristics/capitalist values, and denigrating [sic] female characteristics/social need».¹¹ The insights of feminist Marxists provide a position from which one can read the community of Zebulon County.

¹¹ Hartmann 330. The quote manifests an essentialist type of thinking concerning «male characteristics» and «female characteristics»; thus it performs a kind of Apollonian classification that is restrictive for both sexes and

Important in this connection are the textually constructed social systems that work both within the specific microcosm of Zebulon County and Western culture in general. *A Thousand Acres* seeks to counter those restrictive systems with processes of signification that stress one's subject position as grounded in one's body. Mainly, I will argue, this writing of identity is done by dramatizing Ginny's process of rediscovering her body's potential, which is also a process of knowledge and empowerment. As we will see, Ginny's project of awareness is displaced to *nature*, a displacement or projection that arguably plays into the hands of the patriarchal metaphorizations of woman-as-nature that Kolodny has criticized. Just as deconstruction of a Truth has to presuppose some kind of truth (cf. my chapter 1), a subversion of metaphors in a sense serves to validate them at the same time. The central issue is then—why would Smiley do that?

As the deconstructive aspects of the novel illustrate, a possible reason may be Smiley's desire to make this connection of woman-nature «over-emphasized», insisting so strongly on the connection that it cannot be ignored or suppressed by logocentric discourse that masks its own ideological mechanisms. In this deconstructive project, structural processes are made ostensible and therefore open to critique. This is the novel's real Americanness; it reveals that the metaphorization of nature is not the rhetorical or poetic device it was in European pastoral, but a mode of thought translated into everyday life and actions:

What happened with the discovery of America was the revival of that linguistic habit [of gendering the physical world] *on the level of personal experience*; that is, what had by then degenerated into the dead conventions of self-consciously «literary language» . . . became the vocabulary of everyday reality.¹²

the formation of identity. Nevertheless, this binary logic is a symptom of the same form of classification in the system that her essay seeks to criticize.

¹² Kolodny 8 (italics mine). In Kolodny's argument, it is presupposed that the pastoral impulse was purely rhetorical in pre-Columbus Europe. For an opposing view, see Carolyn Merchant *The Death of Nature* (1982).

In this way, the pastoral impulse of control becomes a *lived metaphor*. The text that is nature is related intertextually to a social text, written by the dominant ideas and values of a patriarchal and capitalist community.

The social text of Zebulon County is strong and pervasive, invading people's individual cognition. Ideological metaphorizations of both women's bodies and nature are so much a part of the characters' lived experience that they do not reflect upon the motivations of language formation. Only Ginny will eventually realize the power of language. The epigraph to *A Thousand Acres*, which I have also made an epigraph to this chapter, is concerned with this idea. Human bodies, as well as the «body of earth», are subject to both seasonal and social change. Likewise, one might argue that both body and nature are concepts that are continually changing because they are textual. They are concepts *en procès*. Julia Kristeva introduced the idea of a subject being *en procès*, a pun that means that one's identity is *both* in a continual process of formation and re-formation, *and* «on trial», questioned, put under pressure from social forces. The many problems the novel brings up concerning identity and the subject will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5. For the time being, suffice it to say that our bodies lie somewhere in the gray area between the physical and the intellectual realm (in itself testifying to the falsity of such dichotomies). On the one hand, they are biological; genetically programmed flesh. On the other, they are continuous sites of signification; embodying the essentially *textual* quality of a human subject's identity.

This is why the metaphorization of women's bodies is so powerful; it partakes in the textual «writing» of subjectivity. Bodies in general are always being written and rewritten: «The body itself, its biology, and nature are always already representational effects . . . Production, reproduction, and representation occupied the same 'body', at once a physically discrete and textual body» (Rowe 199). If one considers that women's bodies are perceived as more «natural» by the Apollonian mind, it makes sense to speak of them in particular as

textual constructions into which patriarchal or even misogynist cultural values are continually inscribed. This, as will become apparent, is well brought out in the construction of the female characters in *A Thousand Acres*, who have had the patriarchal discourse system of their little community internalized into their own thinking, paralleling the internalization of nature metaphors in the American mind.

The Motif of the Tiles

Smiley's novel is a textual battleground where a social text structured upon a dominator ideology has influenced the textual significance of both woman and nature. Like other texts, patriarchal metaphorizations of woman and nature can be changed. It is particularly the multiple meanings of the motif of the tiles in *A Thousand Acres* that bring this out more directly.

When Ginny's ancestors arrived, their land was marshy, wet, impossible to farm. The laying down of a complex system of ceramic tubes—tiles—drained the water and became the basis for their wealth: «magically, tile produced prosperity» (15). This process of forcing a wetlands into an orderly grid of tiles signifies the control that capitalist industrial farming exerts over nature. Smiley's description of this transformation and Kolodny's argument form an interesting intertextuality. Kolodny argues that marshy lands are especially feminine in the American mind—wet, amorphous, teeming with fertility—and quotes Richard Hakluyt: «If...places be found marshie and boggie, [...] then men skilful in draining are to be caried thither» (25). As early as in 1578, when Hakluyt wrote this, the wetness of feminine landscape caused fear and disgust, which in turn necessitated control. This link, therefore, expands the historical dimension of *A Thousand Acres*, showing us that the work Sam Davis and John Cook do to eliminate the marshes is just another link in the chain of destructive metaphorizations. For, although draining is beneficial to farming, even a precondition for

living on the land, the psychological metaphor that motivated it in this case was (and is) one of culturizing the wildly feminine. It creates a set of ecological morals in which the use of the land exceeds its mandate of necessity and becomes representative for excessive control within the patriarchal system. It becomes *ab*-use, utilizing heavy machines that damage the top soil and chemical bug sprays and fertilizers that poison the earth from within. As Jess tells Ginny, the way in which Larry farms has poisoned the land and its people: «People have known for ten years or more that nitrates in well water cause miscarriages and death of infants. Don't *you* know that the fertilizer runoff drains into the aquifer?» (165).

The tiles have become a system for conveying poisonous water. Ginny seems innocent of its implications, but it is a telling statement that «The grass is gone now, and the marshes, 'the big wet prairie', but the sea is still beneath our feet, and we walk on it» (16). On the one hand, an obvious intertextuality here points to the practically *divine* nature of this transformation (they, like Jesus, walk on the water). More than once in the novel, Larry Cook is described as a deity of this particular earth (this point will be discussed in chapter 4). On the other hand, the wealth of farming has its price: the wetness of the land has been suppressed, trodden upon by the feet of industrial farming, and therefore turned into poison. Surface richness with treacherous, wet poison hidden underneath also works as a metaphor for human interaction in *A Thousand Acres*. Every feeling, every motive, every thought, is suppressed in order to keep up the facade of prosperity and happiness. This motif emphasizes my point that capitalism and patriarchy do not represent a faceless system, but work through individuals, even family: «Once revealed by those precious tile lines, the soil yielded a treasure of schemes and plots, as well. Each acre was something to covet, something hard to get that enough of could not be gotten» (132). The capitalist impulse of excess and greed is part of the social poison.

So, just as the water of the landscape has been suppressed and poisoned by this system, so has the fluidity of interior life turned poisonous precisely *because* of its suppression. All of it comes back to the overlapping systems of patriarchy and capitalist industrial farming, embodied by Larry. Ginny and Rose are «trying to figure out how to understand him better. I [Ginny] feel like there's treacherous undercurrents all the time. I think I'm standing on solid ground, but then I discover that there's something moving underneath it, shifting from place to place. There's always some mystery» (104). From Larry, it spreads to all the other characters. It is a part of Ginny and Ty's marriage: «We had spent our life together practicing courtesy, putting the best face on things, harboring secrets» (260). About the virtues of Ty, Ginny says: «Daddy didn't get along as well with Pete, and Ty spent a fair amount of time smoothing things over between them» (12). In fact, Ty's own desires have had to be «camouflaged with smiles and hopes and patience» until he *becomes* his own mask; «casting no shadow, radiating no heat» (306). The social text suppresses and dehumanizes. Jess is a «bastard» in the eyes of his family because he left for Canada to avoid the draft, and «everything about him slipped into the category of the unmentionable» (6).

The recurrence of motif of the tiles (more connections will be played out as we enter the play of significations at other points) and its many metaphoric implications foreground the ways in which the entire community (not only the Cook family) is ruled by a network of masks concealing the real motivations of people. The motif foregrounds the difference between appearance and reality; that is, between the constructed facade of Zebulon County and the forces that governed its construction. These forces can be collectively characterized as capitalistic and patriarchal drives manifested in signs that form what I have termed a social text. With Larry Cook as the «biggest farmer», the social text that continually weaves a facade also suppresses individual thoughts or even changes them fundamentally. As Ginny indicates:

«The biggest farm farmed by the biggest farmer. That fit, *or maybe formed*, my own sense of the order of things» (20, italics mine).

We have seen that the most successful farmer is the one following the pastoral and capitalist impulse. As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Kolodny stresses that the processes of metaphorizations become internalized into people's minds, governing thought, expression, and action. There is, in other words, a strong connection between the way Americans think about bodies and about landscapes, a connection that was socially constructed as America developed into a mixture of a frontier nation and an agrarian nation. In both cases, the metaphorization was one of male culture conquering female nature. Nature is a text written by society, therefore it is impossible to discuss one without the other. As my analysis of the textualities of nature has shown, Ty, Larry, and Harold participate in phallogocentric processes where woman and nature are suppressed both on the level of restrictive conceptualizations and on the level of physical violence. Women are metaphorized as natural, and nature as feminine, and both are regarded subversive to patriarchal control. Therefore daughters are abused and animals and plants killed, in order to maintain the current power structure. Larry's aggression toward snakes is particularly resonant when read in juxtaposition with Eisler's historical perspective, illustrating that these processes are part of a dominator tradition of which capitalist farming is merely a modern manifestation.

The laying of tiles as an instrument of such dominator processes symbolizes the power that the metaphorizations of the social text has over one's thoughts. It becomes difficult to *scribe* an individual text—a textuality of the Self—in opposition to the powerful social text. The next chapter will look at how different characters in *A Thousand Acres* try to deal with the interrelationship between the social and the personal.

4. Languages of the Self

A central point in my discussion of the «social text» represented by the motif of the tiles in *A Thousand Acres*, is that Larry's control over the people in Zebulon County represents textual power insofar as they all are «textual nodes» in a signifiatory structure that is both patriarchal and capitalist. This social and textual «poison» (a word that takes on many meanings in my chapter 6) influences people because they are being constructed in and of it.

This idea requires additional clarifications and definitions before I discuss this signifiatory structure and the characters that inhabit it. First, we need to separate the concept of social text from that of intertextuality on a larger scale: *A Thousand Acres* rewrites a canonical misogynist text—*King Lear*—in order to challenge the «truths» it contains. These two works contain a multitude of texts that are foregrounded into textualities, including signifiatory systems that are not so-called art (like novels and plays), but cultural and social discourse of all kinds (religious, historical, academic, political, journalistic etc. texts). Thus it is reasonable to posit that Zebulon County as a fictional universe in *A Thousand Acres* is a parallel *microcosm* of the USA.

As such, albeit in a simplified manner, Zebulon County brings out more clearly the conflicts of discourse that are apparent in any social organization. For, once we have established that there is a relationship between texts as manifested in actual works of art (intertextuality), *and* a parallel between the microcosm of Zebulon County and the USA, we can also posit for the moment that *within* that microcosm there is a conflict between «social text» and «individual text» that is symbolic of the same kind of conflict in modern America.

I have coined the terms «social text» and «individual text» in an attempt to develop the literary hermeneutic semiology sketched in chapter 1 into a practical analytic methodology. It is particularly rewarding to do so in relation to *A Thousand Acres*, for this novel dramatizes an

important aspect of human understanding: all understanding is interpretation. This kind of cognitive hermeneutics of the world and the self is what makes the essentially decentered self of a textual subject coherent. In the novel, Ginny's construction of such an interpretation is precisely what enables her to posit a subject position. The concept of «social text» is by and large synonymous with «ideology», when that concept is used to designate both a society's ideas and values *and* the resulting productions of meaning: «[I]deology designates the indispensable practice—including the 'systems of representation' that are its products and supports—through which individuals of different class, race, and sex are worked into a particular 'lived relation' to a sociohistorical project» (Kavanagh 318). I have simply chosen the term «social text» to emphasize the constructedness or «writtleness» of ideological power. In Smiley's novel, the social text can be described as a signifying system of patriarchal and capitalist imperatives that serve to advocate conformity to a modern dominator project. This signification is not only linguistic in the verbal sense, but performed in every action of the county's inhabitants. Speech acts as well as body language become signs in this social text.

Therefore, the social text and the individual text are interconnected. No man or woman is an island. What, then, is a self? What is a subject? What, exactly, is an «individual text»? The question of the subject is a complex philosophical issue that I would not purport to be able to resolve here. However, some clarifications on this issue are needed. For, thus far in my argument, the reader may have gotten the impression that I am reducing the status of the subject to a mere collection of texts, on a level with a novel as a field of other texts. After all, they are both designated «textual horizons». This, however, is only partly so. As Hugh Silverman argues in the last chapter of *Inscriptions*, «For A Hermeneutic Semiology of the Self», the self would be lost if it were semiologically based only. With a theoretical basis in Barthes and Lacan, he argues that

the self articulates and activates (*parole*) its own formed level of actualization and discourse (*langage*). Together, this forming self and formed self constitute what has been called, in connection with Lacan and Beckett, the «language of the self»—language here in the sense of *langue*. (340)

This *langue* is a semiological system separate from other texts in the sense that the self must be posited as coherent for a questioning of it to take place: «The language of the self establishes a framework in which the inquiry can take place. Thus the language of the self is distinguished from the language of fashion and of fictional worlds». What separates one self from another is *interpretation*: «But the particular manner in which this self is distinguishable from that one is dependent upon an interpretational system» (340). In the constitution of the subject, there must be *both* the semiological system *and* its interpretation. Hence we may speak of a «*hermeneutic semiology* of the self». In other words, for the self to reach some kind of autonomy, one must perform an interpretation of one's self and the world—a writing of one's subject position.¹³ This chapter will be a discussion of the language of the self, as it is influenced by the social text of Larry Cook. It will also concern the ways in which some of the characters in *A Thousand Acres* try to write their individual texts from that semiological basis.

Larry—The Father of Logos

Let us begin with a crucial scene and analyze the operation of the social text in the dividing up of the farm. The opening scene of *King Lear* has been subject to much critical debate, focusing mainly on the nature and degree of Lear's mistake here, and how to interpret Cordelia's response. There is general agreement concerning the role of Regan and Goneril: they are self-serving flatterers who participate in Lear's childish language- and love-game with absurd protestations of love. The crux of the matter, then, is the *rhetorical* level of this

¹³ This presupposes a faculty of volition, or at least a force of signification, preceding and molding the individual text as it writes itself. Exactly what this faculty entails, is difficult—maybe impossible—to determine.

scene. Lear not only confuses love and quantifiable economics, but also love and language. In other words, his demands are for *professions of love*. He is blind to the difference between language and reality; the fact that language can be used and abused to serve one's interests.

The intertextual effect of *A Thousand Acres* is very striking here because of the surface contrast between King Lear and Larry Cook. While Lear blindly believes in the truth of spoken language, Larry seems to not depend upon language at all. This is only seemingly so, however, as Larry's power is dependent on the *internalization* of the social text—its inscription into people's individual texts. People's actions and body language carry much of the communicative load within this system, and the meanings of these signs are determined by Larry as the novel's main patriarch and capitalist. An early example of linguistic/corporeal signs Larry employs while avoiding direct speech is seen in the contrast between him and fellow farmer Bob Stanley:

Bob always had more to say . . . but it was true also that the other farmers always glanced at Daddy when Bob made some pronouncement, as if Daddy should have the last word, and Daddy liked to exude skepticism, which he could do with an assortment of heavings and grunts that made Bob seem loquacious and shallow. (18)

Larry knows his power, and gets the last word without even pronouncing it. Reading the scene of «kingdom»-division in *A Thousand Acres*, we see that the so-called rhetoric of the sisters is strikingly understated:

In spite of that inner clang, I tried to sound agreeable. «It's a good idea.»
Rose said, «It's a great idea.»
Caroline said, «I don't know.» (19)

These sparse lines subvert the rhetorical import of the sisters' lines in *King Lear*. Feminist critics have made much of Cordelia's «Nothing», exploring her silence in terms of women being denied a voice. Here, the novel makes all three daughters be *equally* brief in their

responses, thereby subverting the traditional dichotomy between Goneril and Regan on the one hand and Cordelia on the other.

Moreover, this sparse quality of the dialogue in *A Thousand Acres* is not only a realistic device, recreating Midwestern manners of speech (Midwesterners are said to speak volumes in a sentence, like Larry does). Nor is its only function to be a stylistic foil to the highly wrought rhetorical style of Elizabethan drama; it also has more profound implications. It is explained by the paragraphs that follow, in which Larry is described almost like a deity to Ginny: «Trying to understand my father had always felt something like going to church week after week and listening to the minister we had, Dr. Fremont, marshal the evidence for God's goodness, or omniscience, or whatever» (20). It is as inconceivable to Ginny and Rose to go against their father as it is to go against God, although their brief remarks bear the quality of answers elicited from unwilling subjects. Ginny's and Rose's responses are conditioned responses of the type «Father knows best». They are neither instances of gross flattery nor professions of love, but acknowledgments of filial duty (these are, of course, confused in patriarchal ideology).

The sisters' desire to avoid rocking the boat and provoking the wrath of Larry Cook is caused by a naturalized semiological system where Larry himself is the transcendental signifier. As Jacques Derrida has argued in his critique of Western logocentrism, traditional philosophy rests on the belief in self-present Truth. Derrida argues that Truth can only be provisionally constituted, and that a notion of ultimate Truth necessitates the exclusion of the *écriture* on which this truth is dependent. Also, it requires the positing of a transcendental signifier, that is, an entity from which signification emanates. Thus it would be a truth that exists by signifying only and does not need external signification. For Descartes, for example, the ego was a self-present entity; an unquestionable and indivisible basis for understanding (*cogito ergo sum*). Husserl speaks of a *transcendental ego*. For some, this transcendental

signifier is God, an entity that cannot be doubted. On the contrary, God guarantees order in a seemingly chaotic universe.

A Thousand Acres contains a wealth of links between the concepts of Father, King, and God inscribed into its very language. As the transcendental signifier of Zebulon County, Larry is its self-begetting entity, its God. He has the power of self-signification, as Ginny observes: «He shouts 'I-I-I-' roaring and glorying in his self-definition» (306). For it is in terms of signification that the Greek concept of *Logos* reaches its most important expression: as divine transcendence: «In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God» (St. John 1.1-2). When Ginny complains to Rose that she does not understand Larry, Rose replies: «You're not supposed to, don't you get it? Where's the fun in being understood? Laurence Cook, the great I AM. . . . Anyway, I understand him perfectly. You're making it too complicated. It's as simple as a child's book. I want, I take, I do» (211). Rose may joke about Larry's god-like status, by alluding to God's self-definition to Moses: «And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you» (Exod.3.14). But she does not really understand him, she does not know how apt her characterization of him really is; how powerful he is. The simplicity of his rule in Rose's analysis also suggests that Larry defines his own brand of dominator morality. Eisler's description of the Hebrew warrior tribes and their social system fits Larry's equally well: «a social system in which male dominance, male violence, and a generally hierarchic and authoritarian social structure was the norm» (45). As Ginny, submerged in Larry's system, says to Caroline: «You're making up your mind about right and wrong, aren't you? This isn't a question of right and wrong, it's a question of what he wants to do» (35).

There are many signs of Larry's overwhelming power. At one point, Larry tells Ginny a story of children's duty under paternal rule. His conclusion is that children need to be forced

into submission; that it is for their own good. Emboldened by her gradual empowerment, Ginny ventures to question this wisdom: «How do you know?» The answer is rage, expressed as much bodily as through speech: « 'I saw it!' He was beginning to huff and puff» (175). His signification completely overrides other people's, which Ginny's conclusion to this situation reflects: «Of course it was silly to talk about 'my point of view.' When my father asserted his point of view, mine vanished. Not even I could remember it» (176). Toward the end of the novel, she offers the following examples of her father's signs:

The flesh of his lower jaw tightens as he grits his teeth. He blows out a sharp, impatient breath. His face reddens, his eyes seek yours. He says, «You look me in the eye, girly.» . . . His voice rises. . . . His fists clench. . . . His forearms and biceps buckle into deeply defined and powerful chords. (306)

Clearly, the significations here are overwhelming. As we will see in the course of my argument, even the masculinist gaze is a means of both signification and control.

Larry's status as transcendental signifier opens up the interpretative field to the question of Lear's power and what its relation to language is. As Hugh Silverman put it in *Inscriptions*, «An idea, a gesture, a movement, an act—each is a sign which also serves as an index of meaning» (344). Larry's words and gestures are the index of meaning for the social text. The fact that this significatory connection is not natural but constructed is gone, just as «truths», according to Nietzsche, «are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions» (qtd. in Norris 58). Smiley has created Larry's social text as a parallel to logocentric discourse in general and *King Lear* in particular. Thus, *A Thousand Acres* is able to deconstruct both.

The Gold of the Signifier: Language and Capitalism

The «division of kingdom»-scene that we have already discussed is situated in a chapter of the novel that starts on a curious note. It is an important part of the scene's background that

Harold Clark has bought a new tractor with a tape deck without divulging how he had been able to do it. Ginny's initial analysis is that Larry is annoyed because of this secrecy, but the text hints at a second alternative: Harold may have bought the tractor with last year's profits, in which case he is doing better than Larry. Consequently, Larry feels his position as the biggest and most prosperous farmer in Zebulon County threatened, and must find something that will top anything Harold might do. And what will show everyone that he is the most successful farmer better than being able to turn it all over to his daughters? The implication is that they cannot possibly be as successful as him, being women, but that his kingdom is so great that it does not matter; it will more or less run itself. We see that Harold has been goading him on from the way in which Larry goes directly from the business proposition to this seemingly unrelated statement: «Hell, I'm too old for this. You wouldn't catch me buying a new tractor at my age. If I want to listen to some singer, I'll listen in my own house» (19). In the juxtaposition of these utterances, Larry's real motivation shines through. The new tractor irks him so much that he is willing to risk anything to show Harold his place in the capitalist hierarchy.

In *King Lear*, legal and fiscal metaphors proliferate, and this is foregrounded in *A Thousand Acres*. This hierarchy of capital is part of the structure in the social text, a constant awareness in their cognitive processes: «Acreage and financing were facts as basic as name and gender in Zebulon County» (4). In this novel it is also significant that capital status and gender are not only basic facts, but determining factors for the construction of identity. Harold knows this, and is grinning. If his plan is to topple King Larry from his throne, it is working. The operations of the hierarchy more or less guarantees female failure. Willfully or not, he even sabotages Ginny's attempt to hinder Caroline's expulsion: «Harold turned on the porch light. . . . In the sudden light of the porch, there was no way to signal her to shut up» (20-21). Larry's tragic plan is implemented.

It is characteristic of Larry's status as Logos in this system that he does not try to wheedle Caroline into compliance, as Lear does with Cordelia. Lear is at the mercy of language, therefore he needs to play by what he perceives as its rules. Thus he states that «Nothing will come of nothing» (I.i. 92), which indicates that language is commodified into a capitalist measure equal to that of property and wealth. This attitude is underscored by his next wheedling utterance: «Mend your speech a little, / Lest you may mar your fortunes» (I.i. 96-97). Terry Eagleton provides an insightful analysis of this capitalist trait in Lear. He argues that, if the rhetoric of Regan and Goneril represents inflation of linguistic value, then «nothing *but* nothing, a drastic reduction of signs to cyphers, will be enough to restabilize the verbal coinage» (77). Cordelia's undercutting of the language game becomes a way for her to rectify the negative effects of Lear's utilitarian capitalism. Lear represents the exploitive superabundance of the capitalist impulse in humankind, as when he defends his many knights:

O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars
 Are in the poorest thing superfluous.
 Allow not nature more than nature needs,
 Man's life is cheap as beasts. (II.iv. 263-6)

The capitalist impulse is not based on reason, but the need for excess. Still, this need is presented in the play as the «humanizing» factor, separating us from the animals. This impulse extends to a belief in the excess of language: «Language is the edge we have over biology» (Eagleton 82). Regan and Goneril, on the other hand, are bodily bound to their language. As Eagleton argues: «To be purely bodily, like the non-linguistic animals, is to be essentially passive, a prey to the biological determinations of one's nature. Goneril and Regan . . . are fundamentally passive in this sense . . . » (80). That the elder sisters would be «non-linguistic» does not fit well with their inflated rhetoric of love. Eagleton's thesis is that «Goneril and Regan's speech is rigorously exact, pared to the purely functional» (82); this

rhetoric is no more or less than what is needed to get the portion of land they want, and it is this pre-determined use of language is what makes them inhuman. They are trapped biologically and linguistically. This becomes Eagleton's defense of the Apollonian stereotyping that I criticized in chapter 2.

For Eagleton, Cordelia's linguistic role is to balance Lear's destructive capitalist excess of language, and the elder sisters' destructive «body language»: «Language . . . has a problem pitching itself at the elusive point between too much and too little—except, perhaps, in the formally precise yet generously affectionate discourse of Cordelia» (Eagleton 83). As we will see in the next sub-chapter, there is an important deconstructive reversal in that Caroline in *A Thousand Acres* is not a balancing nexus between the discourses of her father and her sisters. She is the one person that does not understand the signifying system governed by Larry. Smiley's text indicates that Cordelia's response, too, is shaped by her being excluded from the rhetorical system Lear uses to measure love and capital.

Larry is even more of a capitalist than Lear (who can be termed a metaphorical capitalist, a capitalist before the term was coined), partly because of his socio-historical status as an American industrial farmer. A telling example of a modern American development of the capitalist impulse is Larry's scorn for the Ericsons:

We knew in our very sinews that the Ericsons' inevitable failure must result from the way they followed their whims. . . . I was uncomfortably aware that my father always sought impossibility, and taught us, using the Ericsons as his example, to do the same—to discipline the farm and ourselves to a life and order transcending many things, but especially mere whim. (46)

The intertextualities here point to Puritan formulations of the Work Ethic. In view of the vast importance of this ideology in the building of the U.S. economy, this allusion foregrounds the cultural relevance of Larry's kingdom and underscores the ecopolitical project of *A Thousand*

*Acre*s.¹⁴ In the USA, as in Zebulon County, the capitalist impulse of impossible transcendence and superabundance is internalized into the very body—«sinews»—of people, creating power structures that not only discipline people, but the land itself. Ginny mentions Larry's seemingly unrelated distaste for uncontrolled nature—«gigantic gallinippers, snakes everywhere, cattails, leeches, mud puppies, malaria» (46)—in the same paragraph, illustrating that the «many things» that capitalist farming must transcend include the natural environment.

Most importantly, Larry is a more powerful capitalist than Lear because he is the Logos of the non-verbal signifying system, and therefore able to dictate its rules. With his position as origin of the logos, Larry's power as capitalist is ensured by way of representation. As Derrida observes: «Logos *represents* what it is indebted to: the father who is also chief, capital, and good(s). Or rather *the* chief, *the* capital, *the* good(s). *Pater* in Greek means all that at once» (*Dissemination* 81). Derrida's etymological analyses here strengthen the chain of significations the present text is devoted to exploring. Even Larry's occupation as a farmer has importance beyond those analyzed in my last chapter: «*Tokos* . . . signifies production and the product, birth and the child, etc. This word functions with this meaning in the domains of agriculture, of kinship relations, and of fiduciary operations. None of these domains . . . lies outside the investment and possibility of a *logos*» (82). Nor do these domains lie outside of the control of Larry as a capitalist farmer. Larry's Law is Truth. In the scene of language and love, Larry states this Law to Caroline in a brief utterance that has profound implications of power and exclusion: «You don't want it, my girl, you're out. It's as simple as that» (21). Later, when she tries to be conciliatory, he wordlessly slams the door in her face. This is a climactic moment in establishing the power of non-verbal signification.

Larry's capital power reinforces his signifying power. He controls the social text through the control of *value* (meaning both capital and patriarchal values): «Since

¹⁴ See for example Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930).

signification is also associated with value, the special importance of certain signs within a system is achieved through the comparative value of particular signs and their signification. A sign does not hold signification on its own» (Silverman, *Inscriptions* 341). But this social text is only the *basis* of people's self—their language of the self—and it is open for interpretation. «The system of signs is the ground for what I am. What the self *is* establishes itself through interpretation . . .» (343). The question is: are the characters in *A Thousand Acres* able to perform a self-interpretation? Can they read/write their textual identities in the con/text of the social text? This is the main subject of the rest of this chapter.

Modes of Individual Signification—Caroline

Caroline's response to her father's plans is, like Cordelia's, the honest one. Ginny summarizes their differences thus:

My father was easily offended, but normally he was easily mollified, too, if you spoke your prescribed part with a proper appearance of remorse. This was a ritual that hardly bothered me, I was so used to it. For all her remarks and eye rolling, Rose could perform her part . . . Caroline, though, was perennially innocent, or stubborn, or maybe just plain dumb about this sort of thing. She was always looking for the rights and wrongs of every argument. (33)

But whereas Cordelia refuses to participate in a rhetorical game that confuses love and wealth, Caroline does not acknowledge the social text and its required rituals of appearance at all. This is not because her love is more true than Ginny's and Rose's, but because she has never needed to acknowledge the system. Even as a child, she was a favorite of her father's, exempt in many ways from the imperatives that controlled her sisters' lives. While they had to conform to expectations of filial duty, she was able to get away to college and work in Des Moines. Apparently, she has used those outside influences to *scribe* her own identity as a grown woman independent of her father, and this conditions her response:

I saw that maybe Caroline had mistaken what we were talking about, and spoken as a lawyer when she should have spoken as a daughter. On the other hand, perhaps she hadn't mistaken anything at all, and had simply spoken as a woman rather than as a daughter. That was something, I realized in a flash, that Rose and I were pretty careful never to do. (21)

In the naturalized semiological system, each individual is defined in relation to the transcendental signifier. In the case of Rose and Ginny, the restrictive patriarchal definition of their identities as daughters is an instance of how this social text writes the textuality of their selves.

It seems, then, that Caroline is a positive character in the novel, as in the play. She has achieved some sort of individual signification. But Ginny's reflections upon Caroline's conditions of speech are ultimately very problematic. She admires Caroline's independence, thinking that Caroline is not restricted by this semiological system. Her freedom and empowerment are definitely positive. However, it seems that this freedom is achieved by becoming an accomplice in the perpetuation of the patriarchal system. Metaphorically, this is signaled by Caroline's «unbodied» character, striking in a novel in which bodies of people and bodies of land (and, intertextually, *bodies of text*) are so central. While her sisters' bodies are thoroughly described, Caroline is always described in terms of her business-like « 'take-me-seriously-or-I'll-sue-you' demeanor» (13), her expensive clothes and assertive actions. The representation of Caroline as unbodied is in keeping with patriarchal interpretations of Cordelia as a paragon of purity and transcendence. In Shakespeare's play, she is favored because she is «pure» of sexuality; hence, of «bodiness». Regan and Goneril are «monstrous» precisely because of their strong bodily presence. In Marilyn French's analysis: «They [Goneril and Regan] do not arouse fear of tyranny or execution or defeat in battle. Rather they emit a hideous stink of sexual pollution that is felt to be contaminating, soul-destroying, and overwhelmingly powerful *for men*» (235). With Smiley's intertextual re-imagining of them, it

becomes increasingly clear that their semiological restriction is not due to their «bodiness», but the social text's invasion of their bodies. The climax of this is the incest. Moreover, it is the Apollonian misogynist mind that insists on seeing everything that these sisters do in terms of a degrading concept of the female body: «In the Shakespearean text [*Lear*] . . . the narrative, language and dramatic organization all define the sisters' resistance to their father in terms of their gender, sexuality and position within the family» (McLuskie 98).

Caroline's unbodied characteristics do not only play along with the traditional conceptions of the sisters in *King Lear*. It also serves to metaphorize her as a masculine subject. Her complicity with patriarchal hierarchies is first signaled when Caroline as a child says that she's not going to be a farmwife when she grows up, but a farmer (61). When Ginny has her moment of insight toward the end, she offers this interpretation of Caroline's role: «her eyes darting from one face to another, calculating, always calculating. . . . She climbs into Daddy's lap, and her gaze slithers around the room, looking to see if we have noticed how he prefers her» (306). Caroline is still fairly unbodied here, described in terms of eyes and mind. This is metaphorically a masculine domain; in Western thought, the gaze is traditionally male, categorizing external reality in order to have power over it by utilizing reason. In Paglia's terms, this visual power performs an Apollonian classification that stereotypes women. This visual power of the patriarchy will be discussed further below.

It is not incidental that Caroline is the educated daughter, emphasizing further her belonging to the «masculine» realm of reason. Caroline's complicity with the patriarchy is based on cold calculation, therefore she is more successful at it than Rose. I will come back to Rose's strategy later. The central point here is that Caroline is able to use the system because she has been shielded from its negative side and has utilized its power. As Ginny tells us: «Rose and I always thought we'd done well with her, guiding her between the pitfalls and sending her out to success» (243). Caroline's big sisters have always protected her from

Larry's anger, incest, and complete suppression of identity. While Larry signifies so many things to the elder sisters, not least the horribly intimate—familiar—memories of incest, Caroline can say about him that he looks «as familiar as a father should look, no more, no less». In this, as Ginny replies, she is lucky (362). This statement by Caroline is of course an intertextual echo of Cordelia's «I love your Majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less» (I.i. 94-95). The intertextuality plays with the perversion of the words «familiar» and «familial» in speaking of incest. The familial turns sexually familiar.

The problem with bodiness in Smiley's novel is that it suggests that to be a woman is to be bodied, and thus it tries to turn this into something not-monstrous: Ginny's relationship to her body is transformed from suppressed passivity to creative activity (cf. my chapter 5). But it suggests at the same time that to be bodied is necessarily to have one's body abused (directly and/or indirectly). This can be seen in the different treatment of the daughters' bodies. Thus, the difference between the sisters that was pondered upon by Kent in *King Lear* (IV.iii. 33-36) is explained. There is a pessimist strand in the novel, seen by the fact that Caroline's autonomy is dependent on a dissociation from her body in favor of her mind (maintaining these false dichotomies), and on being innocent of the dark side of the patriarchy.

Seen in this light, Caroline's resistance to Larry is not so admirable. Her role remains unresolved in the novel. Even the autonomy I argued above can be qualified by an argument of perceived power only. She is not so powerful and assertive as it seems. The image of her sitting in Larry's lap illustrates this: she is powerful only because he lets her be. Dutifully kissing Larry on the cheek, she is even transiently bodied, leaving even her pure transcendence ambiguous. In this context, *A Thousand Acres* does not deconstruct the major dichotomy that was established by *King Lear*: with monstrous, bodied women (Regan and Goneril) opposed to the unbodied and virtuous Cordelia. Does this mean that it is ultimately

reinforcing such a patriarchal paradigm? Between the bodied, but abused womanness of Ginny and Rose, and the masculine, disembodied, and (questionable) empowerment of Caroline, one might say that there is not much room for an exploration of alternative *scribings* of female identity. Subversive inscriptions, however, do not need much room.

Modes of Individual Signification—Rose

While Caroline is unbodied in the textualities of the novel, Rose's body is destroyed to evoke metaphorically what she does emotionally. As we will see, Pete represents male rage in the novel and has a history of abusing Rose. This culminates in his breaking of her arm. Rose's plot follows a terrible logic: since male rage hurts her body, so does her own rage. Ginny's description of Pete fits Rose equally well, with an anger that «would be quiet, but corrosive, erupting at odd times» (31). It is understandable that she would be angry, considering what she has been through. The text, however, portrays a sister pair with similar experiences but different strategies to deal with those experiences.

Rose's briskness, which extends even to her daughters and sisters is presented as a destructive strategy, a foil to Ginny's constructive one: «Sometimes I just hate him [Larry]. Sometimes waves of hatred just roll through me, and I just want him to die, and go to hell and stay there forever, just roasting! . . . Sometimes, I hate you, too» (151). Thus, Rose's breast cancer symbolizes the way she is literally consumed with anger (the cancer eats at her flesh, consuming her body), an ultimately impotent anger that does not help anybody. Rage is the only way she knows to deal with her father, her husband, and the system they represent: «We're not going to be sad. We're going to be angry until we die. It's the only hope» (354).

As we will see when discussing Ginny's poisoning and consequent infertility, there is a strong parallel between the literal poisoning by farming chemicals and the metaphoric poisoning by the social text. In Rose's case, the former is manifested in hints that her cancer

may be caused by the drinking water, the latter in her relentless anger. Rose does not see this until she is on her death bed, and Ginny confesses that she tried to kill her: «I guess I think if you'd really wanted to kill me, you would have shot me or something. . . . Anyway, you didn't have to bother. All that well water we drank did the trick» (355). Rose is continually reminded of the toll her anger takes on her body, as her arm unconsciously strays to the lost muscles under her other arm, by the lost breast. Nevertheless, she ignores the signs. Anger has become so much a part of her body that it replaces or at least overshadows the signification that her body projects. She is cut off from the understanding that Ginny achieves, because she is cut off from «reading» her own body. The fact that her gesture resembles one where she attempts to contain her heart—her overflowing anger—suggests that her rage is blocking bodily understanding, as does the fact that she especially does this when she is angry: «She pushed her hair back with her hand, then put her fist on her hip, defiant. Except that on the way down, her fingers fluttered over the vanished breast, the vanished muscles» (151).

Her body enacts her strategy: All her life, the textual site that is her body has been invaded physically and ideologically by Larry, the signifier of the patriarchal social text. Thus, her strategy is «if you can't beat them, join them». If the system is based on egocentricity, cruelty, coldness, and rage, then those will be her weapons. We are told by Ginny that she has always been that way: «She would stand at the foot of the hill, her fists on her hips; her own stare roaring up to meet his. Neither would acknowledge the other. They were two of a kind, that was for sure» (68). When Jess backs out of farming on their land, Rose says: «When it came right down to building on something that we had, it scared him to build on death and bad luck and anger and destruction» (352). The underlying assumption of her statement is that it is impossible to challenge the system of cruel machinations for capital power, so one might as well turn it to one's own advantage. Larry would always exploit misfortunes, for example when buying the farms from Mel Scott (133-35) and Cal Ericson.

About the latter purchase, Ginny says: «The death of my mother coincided with the departure of the Ericson family, and our purchase of that farm» (135). The actual events may have been a coincidence, but the portrayal of a man who buys land during his wife's funeral is a powerful one. Rose tries to be like her father, funneling her anger into ruthlessness.

This strategy of emulation resembles Caroline's, but where Caroline could deny her own body and favor the metaphorically masculine realms of reason and visual power, Rose's strategy is a result of the incest as physical power asserted by Larry. This has caused a rage that cannot be anything *but* bodily. Ironically, this turns her into a grotesque parody of Caroline's successful «masculinisation», an inhuman half-man. This is of course the characterization that the patriarchal critical tradition has given Rose's and Ginny's intertextual counterparts, without analyzing the origin of this perception.¹⁵ When she reigns supreme over the thousand acres, Rose has turned into her own worst nightmare: her father. She has simply replaced the King with an equally cold-hearted Queen. As Ty reports to Ginny, in exile in St. Paul: «Rose swears she's going to keep it [the farm] together. She's grim as death about it, and she goes around like some queen. . . . You should see her. Frankly, she's your dad all over» (340). In trying to emulate the power that almost destroyed her, she destroys herself. The cancer resurges; this time it is lethal. In the end, the rage that has blocked her self-understanding has in fact split her in two, «she [is] so apart from her body that [Ginny has] to address the two halves of her separately» (351). In other words, she tries to conform to the age-old dichotomy of Man, mind, and reason separated from Woman, body, and feeling.

Modes of Individual Signification—Pete

While Ty and Ginny form the pacifying couple, Pete and Rose is the confrontational one. The system works differently on Pete than on any of the others, however, because he is an

¹⁵ In Valerie Miner's *A Walking Fire* (1994)—another novelistic rewriting of *King Lear*, this time from Cordelia's perspective—this perception is manifested by turning Goneril and Regan into men; George and Ron.

outsider. A musician with a college degree, he was urbanized and ambitious, good-humored and good-looking. Faced with the implacable skepticism of Larry, though, he is not strong enough to maintain selfhood. His ambitions are overwhelmed by Larry's system: «It took me years to understand the depth of Pete's disappointment when his enthusiasms met with my father's inevitable skepticism» (31). It is as if the disappointment goes to the core of Pete's being, transforming his ambition and his identity. Thus, Smiley's depiction of Pete reads backwards from the self-evident bad temper of Cornwall, the «fiery Duke» (II.iv 102) in order to explain it. From the language of self Larry's social text has established, it becomes increasingly difficult to scribe an individual text. Consequently, Pete is always silently angry, trying to find some way to rebel against Larry. In this rage that he is unable to release, he is «losing himself more and more bitterly in contemplating the target» (306).

As Pete's plot unfolds, the only time he comes close to being his old self is in the complete abstraction of a Monopoly game. Ginny then realizes «what fun he was» and «that he had certain powers» (79). The stylized setting of a game—especially Monopoly, where one can play the capitalist, but has no more money when the game is over—shows how inept these powers have turned out to be. Pete cannot be a capitalist like Larry in real life, and suffers from trying. The Monopoly game itself is a strange phenomenon where they all turn to an abstracted form of capitalism in the midst of a crisis that is both filial and fiduciary. It is a kind of misguided attempt at escape. It should be noted in this context that writing—which in a sense is what the novel is all about—is closely affiliated with *play*, but play is smothered if rule-bound in a game: «Play is always lost when it seeks salvation in games» (Derrida, *Dissemination* 158).

Larry as signifier is overpowering, and the requirements of his social text that people act according to certain rituals of obedience serve to strengthen the surface of social facades in

Zebulon County. Consequently, Pete's corrupted ambition turns destructive: He indirectly blinds Harold by trying to blind Larry. Ginny finds this out from Rose:

He emptied the water tank on Harold's fertilizer tank. . . . He was thinking Daddy might be doing some farm work. He said he saw Daddy on Harold's tractor in the morning . . . He always said he was afraid he might kill Daddy in a rage, but I actually think he couldn't have—Daddy was too strong. (301)

The tile motif that was discussed in chapter 3 returns here in the metaphor of surface vs. hiddenness. Having failed to blind Larry, it seems that Pete's only solution is to project this metaphor of their lives onto the water-filled quarry where he meets Ginny. Talking about the quarry and throwing stones in, he says: «You hate to see that surface go unbroken» (249). Then it is as if he contemplates the only way out: «Pete stared past me. A breeze had come up, shattering the surface of the water into shards of light» (251). Later that summer, he takes the way he has envisioned: «he drove his own silver truck into the quarry and drowned, and nobody knew whether it was an accident» (286). The surface of the water was the only one he could break, acting upon the transposed sign rather than its source: Larry. Pete's death by entering the watery and possibly poisonous depths under the surface is symbolic of his failure of self creation—of a suppressed selfhood turned poisonous.

Pete's death seems to be the inevitable end product of a process that had already gone on for years, marked on his body: «his face was lined and wrinkled from the sun, his hair was bleached pale, his body was knotted and stiff with tension. That laughing, musical boy, the impossible merry James Dean, had been stolen away» (32). Pete's metaphoric poisoning reveals that this system is one that produces nothing but victims. In fact, as Riane Eisler points out, patriarchy is a dominator ideology which is fundamentally destructive for all: «The underlying problem is not men as a sex. The root of the problem lies in a social system in which . . . both men and women are taught to equate true masculinity with violence and

dominance and to see men who do not conform to this ideal as ‘too soft’ or ‘effeminate’» (xviii). The difference between men and women as victims of dominator ideals in the novel seems to be that they deal differently with the suffering these ideals inevitably produce: «[T]here seemed to be a dumb, unknowing quality to the way the men had suffered, as if, like animals, it was not possible for them to gain perspective on their suffering» (113). Ginny is able to understand her own suffering in the end, as well as the men’s. The tragedy of these men—most specifically Pete—is their lack of comprehension. When trying to interpret their selves, they have taken patriarchal concepts for granted. Like Miller’s Willy Loman, they firmly believe in the system that crushes them. Loman-like, Pete tries to fit into the system and be something he cannot be: a ruthless capitalist.

Modes of Individual Signification—Jess

Jess, like Edmund in *King Lear*, is in a sense an isolated character. He is not a part of the social text that rules Zebulon County since he has lived elsewhere for so long, yet his positing of self seems not completely separated from it. As most critics of the novel have pointed out, he is the «catalyst for Ginny’s awakening, both physical and psychological» (Keppel 113). The physical and psychological are interrelated everywhere in this novel because of the semiological restrictions the social text imposes in both realms. Jess is aware of this, which explains why he does not take issue with Harold’s materialism: «I saw the handwriting on the wall. . . . It said, ‘Keep your mouth shut’» (38).

Edmund’s soliloquy in *King Lear*, where he questions his label as a «bastard», has branded him as a villain in the play precisely *because* he asks «Why brand they us / With base?» (I.ii. 9-10). He questions the authority of tradition, which we have seen is the greatest taboo from the perspective of the dominator ideology. Jess asks similar questions to Ginny when he finds out that his mother was sick with breast cancer and did not try to contact him:

«Can you believe how they've fucked us over, Ginny? Living and dying! I was her child! What ideal did she sacrifice me to? Patriotism? Keeping up appearances in the neighborhood? Peace with Harold? . . . Don't you realize they've destroyed us at every turn?» (55). The destructive aspect of the social text, informing even a mother's relationship with her children, is one Jess also exposes in terms of the connections between industrial farming and a dangerous social system. The novel sets up a choice between patriarchy, capitalism and industrial farming (Larry and the system of Zebulon County) on the one hand, and Zen philosophy and vegetarian organic farming (Jess) on the other.

As Steven G. Kellman has argued, this choice even extends to food: Jess is a hero figure precisely *because* he is a «bastard». He is a «traitor» to the Midwestern rural patriarchy, not only as a deserter, but more importantly as a vegetarian. This may seem strange, but Kellman points out the importance of food in the social text I have been discussing: «the characters in *A Thousand Acres* are almost always either cooking or eating; food is the language by which they communicate among themselves and by which the author divulges mysteries of character, plot, and theme» (436). Food is also an index of meaning and a means of expressing power. It should be noted in this context that logocentrism is identified by Charles Armstrong as being carnivorous also: «This *discrimination* [logocentric exclusion] always has political consequences and implications: usually, in the history of Western Philosophy, a privileging of the Western, white, and meat-eating male» (15).

The social text of *A Thousand Acres* is based on a carnivorous ethic, manifested in Ty's dreams of an expanded hog operation as well as the Ericsons' failure because they, as Kellman points out, lack «the cruel efficiency of Larry Cook» (438). This ethic is

symptomatic of a certain human arrogance. Her [Smiley's] men in particular are often overbearing egotists oblivious to the damage they cause to others. Larry Cook pursues his ambition to become lord of a thousand acres even when the price means antagonizing his neighbors, ravaging his family, and poisoning the land. His sexual depredations against at least two of his own adolescent daughters are an extension of the plowman's imperialistic presumption. So,

too, is Cook's rabid carnivorousness, his insistence on meat three times a day.
(439)

Jess does not participate in a patriarchal system in which capitalism, power games, industrial farming, incest, and meat eating are linked. This is his attraction; he believes in a harmonious relationship to the earth and all its inhabitants. He is a vegetarian, he used to run a natural foods co-op in Seattle, and he wants to farm organically. He might just as well have said, with quite different implications, what Edmund says: «Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law / my services are bound» (I.ii. 1-2).

However, the textualities of Jess' character indicate that they are not so different after all. In this quote, Edmund is advocating a kind of cynical egotism as the «law of the jungle», and Jess turns out to be as big an egotist as the other men in this society. He has no qualms about sexually exploiting both Ginny and Rose, as well as leaving them when things did not turn out the way he wanted. As Rose says on her death bed: «Jess Clark wasn't the way you thought he was, Ginny. He was more self-centered and calculating than you gave him credit for» (351). Likewise, although organic farming is regarded by some as a viable alternative to industrialized exploitation of nature in real life, it is not a genuine solution in the novel. The outsider hero and his alternative farming plans simply disappear, while the remaining characters return to the initial status of meat eating. It turns out that the children had been eating meat in secret all along (348), and Rose's wish that Ginny take care of her daughters is accompanied by a strange request: «Go home and make them some dinner. Make them fried chicken» (346). While even Larry Cook falls victim to his ways, having a heart attack that is probably brought on by a lifetime of meat eating, the survivors—Ginny, Pammy and Linda—are carnivores again. Furthermore, they are in urban exile, as if unable to deal with the problems of farming the novel has set up. Finally, the farm is sold: «The Iowa soil continues to be saturated with the chemicals that poisoned Ginny's barren womb. And the family's

thousand acres are finally sold to an agribusiness conglomerate, the Heartland Corporation, which uses them to harvest five thousand sows» (Kellman 445-46).

Thus Jess' plot indicates that it was inevitable that the people of the novel would end up repudiating the vegetarianism and organic farming that were supposed to be a non-exploitive alternative. His status as an outsider may have helped him perform the kind of self-interpretation necessary to inscribe a self, possibly the most successful inscription in the novel next to Ginny's. However, his is a self that ends up being as negative as the others within the social text of Zebulon County. Edmund receives a less harsh treatment than Goneril and Regan in *King Lear*, and Smiley's revision of his character as Jess indicates why: «what he wants more and more is to fit in and be a good boy» (352). Jess is charming and witty and voices some needed criticism of the system, but his morality is highly questionable and he ends up conforming to that same system.

Modes of Individual Signification—Ty

Ty is the character who is least able to form a self, in contrast to Jess. And, whereas Pete has become pure rage, Ty has become pure surface. Throughout the novel, it becomes increasingly clear that he is so submerged by the overwhelming signification of the social text that he is a mere shadow of a man. This is signaled as early as his introduction in the novel:

He'd been farming for six years, and his farm was doing well. A hundred and sixty acres, no mortgage. Its size was fine with my father, because it showed a proper history . . . When Ty was twenty-two and had been farming long enough to know what he was doing, his father died of a heart attack, which he suffered out in the hog pen. To my father, this was the ultimate expression of the right order of things, so when Ty started visiting us the year after that, my father was perfectly happy to see him. (12)

This is hardly the romantic flashback one expects when a woman starts reminiscing about how she met her husband. Ty's positive qualities are consistently described in terms of their

effect on Larry, not Ginny. At the end of this elaborate introduction in terms of Ty's successful socialization into the dominator structure of Zebulon County, she finally lets her own signification shine through: «Over the years, it became clear that Tyler and I were good together, especially by contrast to Rose and Pete . . .» (12). It must have taken some time for her to accept him. It therefore seems to be a lie to maintain appearances when Ginny tells Mary Livingstone that «Daddy didn't make me marry Ty. I wanted to» (92).

Ty's lack of selfhood is, by intertextual implication, what Goneril means when she says to Albany:

Milk-livered man!
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
Thine honor from thy suffering . . . (IV.ii. 50-53)

This is not an evil woman's cynical taunting of a man's lack of courage. She simply points out that Albany—like Ty—is too submissive for his own good. He is unable to distinguish between necessary suffering and suffering that denigrates his self. Criticizing Rose and Ginny, Ty says: «You could handle him [Larry] better. You don't always have to take issue. You ought to let a lot of things slide» (104).

Ty can serve as the ultimate example for my conclusion to this chapter. All the characters I have discussed fail in their own different ways to achieve a valid and positive self-interpretation. Through an analysis of their failure, the reader can identify a consistent dependence on—condemnation to—the structure of the social text. We have seen that this signifiatory system, a metaphoric microcosm of the USA, is ruled by Larry as a transcendental signifier. His social text is informed by a dominator ideology and sustained by his capital power, and the restrictive language of self he has created hampers any kind of scribing of individual texts: «The self's decentered character identifies its condemnation to

structure—the structure that forms the ground of a system of self-signs» (Silverman, *Inscriptions* 343).

Initially, Ginny's self is also grounded in this system. After all, as my discussion of Ty indicates, that is why she married him in the first place. In addition, as victim of an Apollonian classification because she is a woman, *her* self-signs are perhaps the ones that are most determined of all. Silverman's concluding remarks to the hermeneutic semiology of the self seem fitting to describe her difference from the other characters:

dispersion, disorder, chaos seem to characterize the self. The self is left helpless. . . . Its vitality is gone, because its hermeneutic has been forgotten in favor of its signs. . . . The interpretive act is the presence and actualization of the self's sign system and it yearns to be recovered—through interpretation itself. (*Inscriptions* 345)

Ginny does not have much vitality in the beginning of the novel; she is the most timid of them all. However, there are indications that she yearns for self-discovery. She has already figured prominently in my discussion, and now we are moving toward a more thorough exploration of her role in chapters 5 and 6. It is a complex one, but a process can be identified in which she is able to interpret the textualities of her body and mind, thereby *scribing* the actualization of her self's sign system.

5. Ginny: Scribing the Textuality of the Self

If she live long,
And in the end meet the old course of death,
Women will all turn monsters.

(*King Lear*, III.vii 101-103)

The describer is already embodied and involved—incorporated—in the perceptual or experiential field. The meaning or content of experience is already corporeal. (Silverman, *Textualities* 10)

As chapters 3 and 4 have indicated, the textualities of nature and the textualities of the social text are ideologically motivated constructs which determine to a great extent the textuality of the self. In this chapter, we will try to answer the questions: in what way is Ginny formed by the social text, and how does she change the course of this signifiatory process that writes her? How does she manage to transform and control this process; to *scribe* herself by foregrounding radically different texts, constructing a text that does not classify her as «monstrous»? In what ways will she draw upon the textualities of nature and culture? In what ways are these textualities corporeal—of the body?

To answer these questions, we must go beyond the arguments made and the theories referred to above. I introduced Silverman's concept of a hermeneutic semiology of the self in the previous chapter. Now that we go on to discuss Ginny as the most psychologically complex of all the characters, it makes sense to modify this concept from a psychoanalytic perspective. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974), Julia Kristeva provides precisely this kind of modification. Although she has criticized Derrida's deconstructive project, she works within the same interpretative community. Therefore I do not think it farfetched to characterize her ideas as a kind of psychoanalytically oriented version of hermeneutic semiology, a hermeneutic semiology of the self if there ever was one. As Toril Moi stated in her introduction to *The Kristeva Reader* (1986), in which parts of *Revolution* are reprinted:

The Kristevan subject is a subject-in-process . . . but a subject nevertheless. We find her carrying out once again a difficult balancing act between a position which would deconstruct subjectivity and identity altogether, and one that would try to capture these entities in an essentialist or humanist mould. (13)

This balancing act necessitates interpretation: «The psychoanalytic interpretation, then, is precisely one that is poised in the space suspended between One Meaning and the deconstructive rejection of all truth, however tentative» (15). In other words, as I understand Kristeva, identity formation is very much dependent on the kind of self-interpretation that Silverman also prescribes.

My reading of Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* so far has indicated that Ginny is, in a large portion of the novel, *scribed* in relation to the social text of her father. Kristeva asks at one point: «Daughter of the father? Or daughter of the mother?» (*Reader* 149). Nowhere is the question more pertinent than in the discussion of *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, where the mother is conspicuously absent. In the course of this chapter, the implications of this striking characteristics will be expanded upon. However, Ginny is the one character who—against all odds—is able to scribe a textuality of her self. She realizes that her status as her father's daughter was one forced upon her: «It was easy to see, all of a sudden, that my life until now had been, at least, predictable, well-known. What I had had to do, I knew I could do, whether I actually preferred to do it or not» (186). Once she realizes that, she can also try to change the conditions of her being and enter this scribing.

This activity is a never-ending text in process. Therefore the concept of «subject» above must not be taken to mean a patriarchally enclosed and static subject. Any concept of self may become «a trap of 'Western male humanism' . . . that makes 'subject' a central concept» (Devine 99). Maureen Devine asserts in her work *Woman and Nature—Literary Reconceptualizations* (1992) that

If we consider identity and subjectivity as a plot of the phallogos and accept the idea that the concept of the «self» is a complex of structures and manifestations

that inevitably diminishes sexual identities, then this «I» that announces the female sentence is caught in a dead-end. (110)

I agree with this conclusion, but I believe that the intertextual construction of a «self» like Ginny strongly refutes the humanist concept of subjectivity. First, she is the novel's narrator, a textual subject that exists by virtue of the narration itself. She does not write only herself, but the story. And vice versa. Second, since the reader's perception of her must inevitably have an intertextual level where s/he is aware that Ginny is a new Goneril, her self is announced as *not* a self-present but a textual entity. Hers is not phallogocentric «I», but an overtly constructed one.

In her critique of Derrida, Kristeva has insisted that he does not acknowledge the *reality* or *materiality* of the body of the speaking subject (Moi, Introduction 16-17). We will see in *A Thousand Acres* that the body is both undeniably real and undeniably textual at the same time. Indeed, Ginny's production of an individual text depends on both these aspects of her body. Kristeva's theory of the positing of a subject as «always *both* semiotic *and* symbolic» (93) is relevant here. The symbolic order of verbalized language is, according to Kristeva, always associated with the father. In Ginny's case, this association is made quite explicit in that the symbolic order is governed by Larry as the Father of Logos. The semiotic—associated with the mother—can only come to expression through the language of the symbolic order, but Kristeva theorizes its space in the *chora*:

Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and . . . are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body—always already involved in a semiotic process—by family and social structures. In this way the drives . . . articulate what we call the *chora*. (93)

Since Ginny is not a child in the narrative time of the novel, our use of the concept of the *chora* in describing her must necessarily be metaphoric. Nevertheless, this is precisely the

way to theorize it; the chora «exists in practice only within the symbolic and requires the symbolic break to obtain the complex articulation we associate with it in musical and poetic practices».¹⁶ Ginny's articulation of self *within the symbolic*, her textual reconstruction of her own body, is crucial in this context. She conceptualizes it as *layered with meaning*:

I seemed, on the surface, to be continually talking to myself, giving myself instructions or admonishments, asking myself what I really wanted, making comparisons, busily working my rational faculties over every aspect of Jess and my feelings for him as if there were actually something to decide. Beneath this voice, flowing more sweetly, was the story: what he did and what I did and what he then did and what I did after that, seductive, dreamy, mostly wordless, renewing itself ceaselessly, then projecting itself into impossible futures that wore me out. And beneath this was an animal, a dog living in me, shaking itself, jumping, barking, attacking, gobbling at things the way a dog gulps its food. (172)

The *chora*, represented symbolically by Ginny as a wordless flow of signification, is an amorphous space of non-linguistic drives which cannot be put in stasis. According to Kristeva, it is fluid, cyclic, ceaselessly *en procès*. However, as Kristeva has indicated, even the *chora* is regulated by family and society—Larry as Transcendental Signifier. Thus, the foundation of the *chora* (metaphorically beneath it) is always already governed by a disturbing metaphorization of Ginny as a dog. It is the valuation of rationality and the repression of the *chora* that allows a phallogocentric social text to operate, in stark contrast to Kristeva's warning that one «should not repress the semiotic, for such a repression is what sets up a meta-language and a 'pure signifier'» (104).

In short, since her introduction into her family, Ginny must have had her semiotic processes suppressed by the imperatives—the instructions and admonishments—of the social text. Her *chora* is being formed by a patriarchal symbolic order. Ginny's articulation of self here, however, represents a step toward liberation. If she cannot change the continuous

¹⁶ Kristeva 118. It should be noted in this context that Kristeva's concept of poetic language or practice includes mimesis in the (post)modern novel, under which paradigm *A Thousand Acres* also operates.

signification that makes up the social text, at least she can influence her own textuality by re-reading/inscribing herself. For Kristeva, the solution to the problem of self in a repressive symbolic order is to have the semiotic of the *chora* break through the permeable «border» of the thetic and into the symbolic. On a textual level, we might reformulate this as the need to bring in the *écriture* that has been suppressed by a phallogocentric social text and re-formulate it within that text. In the rest of this chapter, we will see how Ginny's process of self-inscription is portrayed in the novel in five different but parallel realms: Reinterpreting nature, subverting the power of the gaze, realizing the power of sexual and maternal drives, re-imagining the role of the absent mother, and reconnecting with and re-imagining her own body. In all realms there are heavy obstacles she may or may not be said to overcome.

Reconstructing Woman-as-Nature

In chapter 3, we saw how the textualities of nature participate in a suppression of the semiotic and an Apollonian classification of women. The patriarchal identification of woman with nature inevitably results in control and even aggression. I would like to argue here that Ginny is able to re-inscribe that identification in more positive terms.

The textualization of nature was what opened it up for a critical reading of the preconditions of its construction. For Ginny, too, nature is a text that she can read. This is first seen when Ginny uses nature as embodied in the landscape by the Zebulon County Scenic Highway to process her situation. Her reflections are motivated by the return of Jess; she thinks that «The real treat would be watching Jess Clark break through the surface of everything that hadn't been said about him over the years. I felt a quickening of interest, a small eagerness that seemed a happy omen» (7). As it turns out, she must have felt some longing to break through the surface of all that is unsaid in *her* life, too. Thus the natural scene forms a signifying system, a way to metaphorically internalize the problems she is faced with.

In this early scene where Ginny can observe nature in its hybrid form between farms as culturized nature and ancient wilderness, the place becomes a symbol of female liberation because the uncontrollable in nature breaks through the surface that is under the control of culture and therefore man: «My walk along the riverbank carried me to where the river spread out into a little marsh, or where, you could also say, where the surface of the earth dipped below the surface of the sea within it. . .» (9).

Wonderfully incorporated into her reading of nature is also the body of intertextuality created by *A Thousand Acres* and *King Lear*. In the storm scene, Lear calls Regan and Goneril «those pelican daughters» (III.iv.75), meaning that they feed on the parent's blood. By the Scenic Highway, Ginny sees pelicans she thought were annihilated by her farmer ancestors. This event foreshadows the emergence of semiotic drives into the symbolic articulation of her self. Though this knowledge is hidden to her at first, as is the intertextual connection, it indicates that she can read nature like a text about her own suppression and the suppression of what is actually going on between the characters in this novel.

Ginny can read both the little marsh and the reemerging pelicans in terms of their social significance. Through these two readings we see that nature forms a textual matrix that shapes hermeneutic processes and results in understanding: «The view along the Scenic, I thought, taught me a lesson about what is below the level of the visible» (9). The lesson she learns from reading this place has at least two important meanings. One implication is that there is a sharp division between what is visible and what lies beneath the surface (one cannot trust appearances); the other is that whatever is suppressed beneath the cultural or social surface, will be poisoned unless one tries to break through the facades. It cannot be over-emphasized that the facades that are written by the social text hamper Ginny's hermeneutic reading of nature. When all the conflicts are out in the open later in the novel, making her

equally estranged from her father, husband, and lover, she tries again to utilize nature as a text of her own situation:

I have to say that we all avoided each other these few days, though for me, the urge to keep to myself was accompanied by a strange longing . . . I walked across the fields in the opposite direction from the dump that now represented Jess to me, toward Mel's corner. I scouted around, looking for signs of the old pond, but I couldn't even tell where it might have been—the rows of corn marched straight across black soil as uniform as asphalt. . . . I did not find even the telltale dampness of an old pothole to orient myself. (205-06)

Like at the Scenic, she turns to nature to find answers to social problems. But the signs have been obliterated, the wetness of wild nature has been suppressed by a militant («marching», «uniform») culturizing force. She cannot orient herself, because the Apollonian structuring of nature has also structured the signs that might have helped her. The text of nature has been rewritten.

One of these textualities is problematic: for us to see the pelicans as symbolic of the reemerging of Ginny's self, it is necessary that we, too, identify her as a «pelican daughter» feeding on Larry's blood. In other words, Ginny's reading of the emerging marsh and the pelicans as metaphors of rebirth and liberation depends in part on complicity with the patriarchal labeling of Goneril and Regan. On the one hand, this may be symptomatic of a certain philosophical entrapment; the novel attempts to re-metaphorize woman and nature, but is unable to break free from the paradigm of essentialist thinking. On the other hand, *A Thousand Acres* is a slippery text which is difficult to pin down and evaluate. Its significations are multiple and dynamic, and the course of my argument will move from negative to more positive readings of Smiley's re-metaphorizations.

Nature, for Ginny, is understood by way of the intertwining of its and her body's past, emphasizing further the interconnections of these on a *textual* level. This concept of the textual body is central in uncovering what is hidden beneath the social facade of her

community and her family, and even beneath the surface of her own body. These connections are for instance foregrounded by the text in making «the cattails green and *fleshy-looking*» (7, italics mine) like bodies. In one of her readings of cultivated nature, she seems to see a link to her own situation as suppressed—«cultivated»—by the social text: «Something that has always amazed me is the resilience of plants. . . . I didn't touch anything, certainly didn't tread among the rows, but I stood off to the side and took it all in as if it were a distant promise» (197-98). Careful not to hurt the plants, she reads their strength as a promise that she too will be resilient. Moreover, she «was always aware . . . of the water in the soil, the way it travels from particle to particle» (16). This awareness has evolved into an understanding of, and identification with, nature. She reflects upon the millions of years and billions of «leaves, seeds, feathers, scales, flesh, bones, petals, pollen» (131) that constitute the soil they live on. It seems that her hope is that this is a large-scale development of corporeal transformation that transcends the petty exploitative farming of a patriarchal society, and that she is a part of this greater and mystical project. She realizes in the end that her body is not only a part of the soil, and vice versa, but that both are poisoned:

My inheritance is with me, sitting in my chair. Lodged in my every cell, along with the DNA, are molecules of topsoil and atrazine and paraquat and anhydrous ammonia and diesel fuel and plant dust, and also molecules of memory: . . . All of it is present now, here; each particle weighs some fraction of the hundred and thirty-six pounds that attaches me to the earth, perhaps as much as the print weighs in other sorts of histories. (369)

The «molecules of memory» point to the inextricable link between the body, cognition, and linguistic expression that was suppressed in the patriarchal signification of bodies in *King Lear*, a link that will be reinstated in terms of body and nature as sites of signification. Ginny is inextricably attached to the earth, because her body is a historical text written with the print of dirt and chemicals.

The text of the novel, however, displays a certain ambiguity toward the identification of body and nature. This is perhaps most obvious in tropes of farm animals. Tim Keppel has pointed out that in *King Lear*, «the women are often described with bestial imagery. In *A Thousand Acres*, the women initially regard themselves in such terms» (112). This is certainly true of the passage Keppel quotes, where Ginny feels a tied-up horse inside her, one that «wears itself out, and accepts the restraints that moments before had been an unendurable goad» (198). Likewise, the narrator's identification with a sow is problematic: «A sure sign of trouble in Ginny's marriage is that on the night she is most sexually aroused with her husband, she cannot help but think of herself as 'a sow' (164)» (Rozga 25). Even her sexuality, not surprisingly, is infused with a patriarchal rhetoric of the identification between woman and nature. It is, after all, the same kind of metaphorization that Ty made while being in bed with Ginny and talking about his plans for the hog operation. The only difference is that he compared a sow to a person, not the other way around.

Nevertheless, as I will show, the powerful sexual experience referred to here is one Ginny has when she feels very powerful. Just as the pelican and dog imagery is both constructive and destructive (self-deconstructive), the sow image is a re-metaphorization by Ginny that can be viewed in both positive and negative terms. The strongest sign of redemption from traditional metaphorical power is when Ginny appropriates the dog metaphor for her own use. She describes herself and Rose: «she affected me that barking dog way, never resting for all the alarms there were to sound. And the dog in me was one of those other, less alert but still excitable animals . . .» (244). Seeing the sisters as dogs here is in no way derogatory. It is a *mise-en-abyme* of Smiley's reappropriation of traditional male discourse as manifested in *King Lear*, which she turns to her own use. For example, the metaphorizations of women as dogs and as serpents in Shakespeare's play come together in one of Kent's condemning images. Because of them, Lear

... gave her [Cordelia's] dear rights
To his dog-hearted daughters: these things sting
His mind so venomously that burning shame
Detains him from Cordelia. (IV.iv. 45-48)

Ginny's re-definitions of misogynist metaphors parallels the novel's re-definition of Regan and Goneril.

The reappropriation of patriarchal discourse, even if its outcome is positive, is nevertheless a movement back to the identification between woman and nature. Ginny's empowerment is in part dependent on this identification; a dual thinking that more sophisticated ecofeminist theories try to challenge. Devine emphasizes the inseparability of language and thought within ecofeminist work, stating that

Woman's relationship to language in ecofeminist discourse revolves around the means and usages of metaphor that reinforce the woman/nature, man/culture dualism on the lexical, semantic, and narrative levels. Such reinforcement of dualism through language is symptomatic of a «phallogocentrism» that sustains the hegemony of male culture through its very use. (93)

Language is both power and meaning; it is what forms the construction of gender and identity. One might argue, therefore, that there is a form of naive essentialism in Smiley's use of metaphors, because they serve to reinforce a phallogocentrism that contains women within restrictive linguistic boundaries. This is, in curious contrast to the sophisticated intertextual and deconstructive project of *A Thousand Acres*, an old-fashioned form of ecofeminism reminiscent of the early seventies. This type of ecofeminism «emphasizes the virtuous, good, and thus the morally superior character of woman and nature in relation to the patriarchal culture that dominates them».¹⁷ Some of the novels Devine discusses comes «dangerously

¹⁷ Devine 3. Specifically, Mary Daly, Susan Griffin and Adrienne Rich are cited as advocates of this naivist ecofeminist position. Devine cites Ynestra King and Carolyn Merchant as theorists who criticized the underlying dual thinking even as early as in the 1970's.

close to casting woman and nature in the role of the helpless, but morally pure, victim» (3). So does Smiley's novel, although it avoids the temptation to cast women as purely good and men as purely evil. In addition to the problem of maintaining a classification that is inherently patriarchal, this victim-role is problematic because it seems to presuppose that resistance is futile, that woman and nature are condemned to be victims to patriarchal exploitation forever.

On the other hand, the novel charts alternative routes to a more positive and empowering role for woman. It might be argued that even if Smiley *does* rely on patriarchal images, it is done in order to subvert their patriarchal significations, just as deconstruction can only work within the logocentric discourse it seeks to deconstruct. *A Thousand Acres* uses the metaphors of woman-and-nature deconstructively, letting Ginny define herself and her own body rather than succumbing to the social text's definition of her. This form of strategic essentialism is one that, in Devine's words, «genderizes itself in order to free itself from being genderized», thereby « 'defining' itself to avoid being defined by others. But as a process, it continually reviews, reconceptualizes, and develops itself» (6).

Therefore, if I should venture a preliminary conclusion to this sub-section, it seems that the novel's solution to the problems of identifying woman and nature is to recast both concepts in terms of a textuality theory. This is an insight that opens for a *scribing* of them that is non-exploitative. This is hinted at when Ginny performs yet another reading of cultivated nature, significantly while she is discussing their father with Rose:

The corn, which grows with mechanical uniformity that can seem a little surreal if you think about it, had put forth six or eight pennant-shaped leaves that floated in smooth jointless arcing opposite pairs, one above the other, and were large enough now to shade out most of the black soil of the field. Corn plants are oddly manlike—the leaves always reminded me of shoulders, the tassels of heads. (152)

At this point, she does not use the traditional binary opposition of woman/nature vs. man/culture, but reads both genders in terms of nature. The corn represents the men of

Zebulon County—uniform in their adherence to the social text—and the black soil represents women. The latter connection is less overt than the former, precisely because the women of Zebulon County are overshadowed by the men. Also, I characterized both the pelican symbol and the dog-imagery as self-deconstructive. It might be more enlightening to see these textualities as products of a literary hermeneutic semiology performed by Jane Smiley, a deconstructing and reconstructing of the bodies of land and of women. For her scribing allows for a *dynamic* understanding of woman and nature. It is dynamic because, at the same time as these concepts are established as a «truth», they are opened up to their own deconstruction and embrace the possibilities for new scribings.

Gaze, Sight, and Insight

The power that the phallogos exerts depends on a suppression of these textual processes of *écriture*. I have argued that the patriarchal power of Larry's «kingdom» operates by way of a silently signifying social text. Another important manifestation of this power works through the visibility of woman and nature. As we saw in chapter 2, Apollonian empiricism is a defense against the chaos of nature, and the masculine gaze is a tool to conceptualize reality. But, like an ax, the gaze can also be used as a weapon. Issues of seeing in the novel do not only concern matters of epistemology or ontology («This is what we see; therefore, this is what exists»), but dramatize concrete power relations in a phallogocentric social system. Furthermore, my concept of textual horizons implies that perception is always interpretive, always a process of creating meaning out of sensory impressions by relating them to one's horizon. Even visual perception can therefore be subjected to deconstruction: what is seen depends on the ideological input that formed one's textual horizon. Thus one can read back from perception to find its ideological drives.

To be visible is to be vulnerable. My discussion of sexual abuse and the fetishist objectification of the female body will make this apparent. In *A Thousand Acres*, the pervasive power of the gaze is even projected onto the land, which is so flat that the gaze can encompass it all. This is established on the very first page: «A mile to the east, you could see three silos that marked the northeastern corner [of their farm], and if you raked your gaze from the silos to the house and barn, then back again, you would take in the immensity of the piece of land my father owned» (3-4). It is no coincidence that the novel opens with what can be *seen* of the kingdom, as well as what you cannot see: «The Zebulon River had cut down through the topsoil and limestone, and made its pretty course a valley below the level of the surrounding farmlands» (4). The beauty of untamed nature is not visible. It is hidden below the tamed nature of the farms.

Larry has complete control of his little kingdom and its subjects (pun entirely intended), and one of his enforcement mechanisms is dependent on the visibility of the land and of the body.¹⁸ In his social text, as my previous discussion of the motif of the tiles indicated, appearance is crucial: «Most issues on a farm return to the issue of keeping up appearances. . . . We knew our roles without hesitation and without consultation» (199). Everybody knows everybody else's status in the system from visual signifiers such as well-kept fields, newly painted barns, clean houses, new equipment etc. Some of this is a particular rural version of what Veblen called «conspicuous consumption» in analyzing American culture as it moved from a predominantly production-oriented society to a consumerist society:

Just as the farmers cast measuring glances at each other's buildings, judging states of repair and ages of paint jobs, their wives never fail to give the house a

¹⁸ Hence the comment by Jocelyn Moorehouse, the director of the movie *A Thousand Acres*, that «They [the people in Zebulon County] can see into each other's houses, into each other's lives and Daddy can see them all. I'm interested in that because he has a certain level of control over them if he can see them» (*Movieweb* 3). A whole separate thesis could have been written on the issues raised by such a visuality in the movie version of Smiley's novel.

close inspection for dustballs, cobwebs, dirty windows. And just as farmers love new, more efficient equipment, farmwives are real connoisseurs of household appliances . . . None of us had everything we could wish for.¹⁹

The measuring gaze is a function of both sexes within the social text. The fact that the setting of conspicuous consumption here is the site of the most basic productions of all—farming—serves to underscore the pervasiveness of this particular development in American capitalism. The trial of the novel is the climax of this preoccupation with appearance of both order and wealth, emphasizing the capitalist function of visibility in Zebulon County and its connection with all the other power systems that we have discussed. As the elder sisters' lawyer, Mr. Cartier, points out, «appearances are everything» (284). For Ginny, keeping up appearances is a going back to the deceptive safety of suppression, her old role as obedient daughter and disempowered woman: «I was so remarkably comfortable with the discipline of making a good appearance! It was like going back to school or church after a long absence. It had ritual and measure»(285).

Indeed, that is what she has done all her life. When Ginny and Rose compare recurring nightmares, Rose's are about her grabbing things that consequently hurt her (like «a jar of some poison»), while Ginny's are about being naked in front of people (62). The former dream foreshadows Ginny's attempt at poisoning Rose, the latter foreshadows a very poignant scene of the power of the gaze. That scene is introduced by an exchange that attests to the way in which Ginny must constantly read Larry's complex semiological system: «He met me at the back door. 'It's bright day.' His tone was accusing. It meant, I'm hungry, you've made me wait, and also, you're behind, late, slow» (114). The power of his system becomes clear when she discovers she has forgotten to bring him eggs for breakfast and must run home to get them: «The whole way I was conscious of my body—graceless and hurrying, unfit, panting,

¹⁹ Smiley, *A Thousand Acres* 120. For an in-depth discussion of this phenomenon, see Brøgger, *Image-making Discourse* (1995). (The phrase «conspicuous consumption» is from Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* [1899].)

ridiculous in its very femininity. It seemed like my father could just look out of his big front window and see me naked, chest heaving, breasts, thighs, and buttocks jiggling, dignity irretrievable» (114-15). She has internalized the connection between her body (by definition graceless and powerless, without dignity) and her father's exertion of power and control by sight. Her nightmare about being naked in front of a crowd only serves to enhance the identification between her father and the society of which he is the most prominent member. While she is running, he can strip her of clothes and dignity, and her dream illustrates that the community can do the same, simply because she is a woman. Harold is the one who most often represents the community as a whole, and he keeps stripping Ginny of her dignity. He dismisses her opinions about family («Well, you ain't got any kids, so you don't know what it's like» [159]) and farming («If you'd have been sons, you'd understand that [a farm is more important than its individual people]. Women don't understand that»[204]).

If the scene where Ginny has to run for the eggs is the most important manifestation of Larry's overt power games, the most important enforcement of power overall is the incest. The Apollonian eye works by objectifying, and that is what happens to young Ginny when her father abuses her. She turns into an object that he can use; whose only form of resistance is «desperate limp inertia» (280). By making herself thing-like, she gets dissociated from her body. Her self-definition shifts away from a body that reminds her of powerlessness, and she becomes a subject whose body is simultaneously her own (subject position) and a separate thing (object position). The result is a deeply felt but hidden body-alienation. The textualities of Ginny's identity construction and re-construction operate on the assumption that her identity is corpo-real; inseparable from her body. So, when her body is invaded by Larry and all the social texts he embodies, it results in a painful split.

This explains the «contradictory little rituals» of sex with Ty: «There had to be some light in the room, if only from the hall. Daytime was better than nighttime, and no surprises. I

always wore a nightgown. When he pushed it up, I closed my eyes. . . . I hated for him to turn away or look down» (279). As an alienated subject that still is anchored in a body that is visible and therefore vulnerable, Ginny has an ambiguous attitude towards seeing and being seen; she wavers between positions. If Ty looked away, that would mean a dismissal of her body, confirming its status as a worthless object. Then again, if he looked down at her body, that would mean the exertion of an objectifying gaze, *also* confirming its object status. Similarly, light, especially daylight, hinders associations of her father's nightly visits. It seems that Ginny has internalized the power of her father's gaze to such an extent that she feels it even in the dark. It might even be worse in the dark because it excludes any «corrective» sight that can challenge Larry, especially her own vision. In the dark, only the omniscient and omnipotent Larry can see. On the other hand, light means visibility and therefore the dispersal of Larry's visual power. Therefore, making love with «some light in the room», Ginny can't stand Ty or herself to see her body; that would mean that they, too, would exert the kind of visual power that her father has perfected. It would imply their being complicit in this power mechanism.

Ironically, a process in the novel's plot that helps Ginny in her liberation is initiated by Larry himself. My discussions of Larry's capitalist status above have indicated that his status as transcendental signifier is dependent on capital. Once he has signed over his farm, his signifier status becomes emptied. He is still the nexus of the social semiological system, but since his power is linguistic only, purely self-reflective in the sense that it lacks a signified of capital power, the system is starting to shift. His power needs to be re-validated through visual power. He starts watching over his kingdom, silently forcing people to do his bidding with his gaze. Ginny discovers this without really understanding it: «I could see him through the front window, sitting bolt upright in his La-Z-Boy, staring out. There was something in this sight that drove all other thoughts out of my mind». Inside the house, she sees better the meaning of

her father's gaze: «I followed his gaze and saw Ty cultivating far off to the west» (65). Rose, who at this point has a better understanding of the way the system and her father work, identifies the transformation of the system into an even greater reliance on the gaze: «This is what his retirement is going to be, him eyeballing Pete or Ty, second-guessing whatever they do. . . . Perfecting that death's-head stare will be his lifework from now on, so we'd better get used to it» (67).

Ginny's visual empowerment also comes on a personal level. In one-on-one situations she has always been manipulated by men's gazes. Larry's is the most obvious example. An angry glare signifies his power better than anything else, obliterating resistance: «Now the glare was for me. It shone into me like a hot beam of sunlight. I couldn't think of anything to say» (103). The sun simile confirms his status, with the connotations that the sun has of male, divine power. Larry is the *pater* that blinds his subjects:

Now, about this father, this capital, this good, this origin of value and of appearing beings, it is not possible to speak simply or directly. First of all because it is no more possible to look them in the face than to stare at the sun. . . . [He] is thus the hidden illuminating, blinding source of *logos*. And since one cannot speak of that which enables one to speak . . . one will speak only of that which speaks. . . (Derrida, *Dissemination* 82-83)

Not only is it impossible for Ginny to assert her own position, but in viewing Larry as a godlike entity, she cannot even look at him: «My earliest memories of him are of being afraid to look him in the eye, to look at him at all» (19). She cannot really talk about him either as long as she is within his language of self. Once she realizes her own visual power, however, she can speak and write of Larry.

Jess, as we saw in the sub-section of chapter 4 dedicated to him, is not such a hero character as one might initially think. One signal of this is that he also uses his gaze to control Ginny: «Jess caught my gaze and held it» (22), and «He fixed me with his gaze, serious, more serious than I'd thought he was capable of» (37). Jess not only uses his gaze, but in a sense

also guides Ginny's gaze (her perception of him) too. He uses his charm to mask the power of the gaze: «Jess stared me down, that audacious twinkle again» (71). After one of their conversations, in which he has done both, we can see the result: she is falling in love with him. The *visuality* of her feelings is foregrounded when they part: «We smiled at each other. I couldn't believe that I had ever found his smile merely charming. Another lesson in that lifelong course of study about the tricks of appearance» (56).

In view of the power that has been exerted on Ginny, it is significant that the best intercourse she has ever had follows the first time she ever stands up to her father (leaving aside her problematic identification with a sow). Her first step towards empowerment is immediately conceptualized as a visual empowerment. She is not a disempowered object under the cold invisible eye of the capitalistic patriarchy, but a subject that can take control of the gaze. Thus, she is able to see her body again: «Every so often, I lifted the sheet and looked under it, at my blue-white skin, my breasts, with their dark nipples, the foreshortened, rounded triangles of my legs, my jutting feet. I looked at myself while I thought of having sex with Jess Clark . . .» (161). When she does have sex with him, it is decidedly awkward, and she is still not comfortable with seeing her own body, but it seems that this would not have been possible at all were it not for her visual reappropriation of her body.

The best example of this reappropriation is the way she receives the news about Rose from Ty—in the scene in St. Paul already discussed in chapter 4. At this point in her development, Ginny utilizes her body for understanding and expression: «I felt my face get hot» (340)—a bodily processing of the news. She controls her responses perfectly because of her new interpretive power:

I was tempted to nod, not because I agreed, but because I recognized how all these things sorted themselves out in his mind, and I realized that with the best will in the world, we could never see them in the same way . . . But the Ty I'd known was always on the lookout for agreement, reconciliation, so I didn't nod, knowing how he'd take it. (340)

This control of appearances disarms any visual power a man can have over her. Thus, the novel dramatizes a movement from Ginny's body as visible object to be abused, to a subject which can perform a healthy, constructive, and empowering use of her own body and her own gaze.

Acts of the Body—Sexual and Maternal Desire

The visual reappropriation of Ginny's body is paralleled in a writing or *scribing* of her own body, using her textual body to achieve understanding. One important instance of this is her bodily urge to have children. The sight of Rose's daughters contrasted with her own miscarriages, Ginny says, «affected me like a poison. All my tissues hurt when I saw them, when I saw Rose with them, as if my capillaries were carrying acid into the furthest reaches of my system» (8). The language here foregrounds the connections between her body, the land, and the poison affecting both. She sees her body as a «system» of «capillaries», carrying poison just like the system of draining capillaries or tiles in the ground. Her gaze conveys this poison, just like the masculine Apollonian Eye does. This physical and mental poison is manifested as the problematic belief that having children somehow is a universal marker of human worth. The irony here is that this patriarchally imbedded belief is part of the poison she carries into the deepest part of her body (i.e. her womb), the very same poison that leaves her barren. Even fairly late in the novel, she sees her own body as a failure both biologically and socially; her body «had failed to sustain Jess Clark's interest, to sustain a pregnancy» (307). This view signals that she is still within the confines of a patriarchal system that denigrates a childless woman, especially when she is «old for a breeder» (13).

Marxist feminism, for instance, has criticized the traditional concept of maternity and presented a potential re-definition of it: «Once child-bearing becomes totally voluntary . . . its

significance is fundamentally different. It need no longer be the sole or ultimate vocation of woman; it becomes one option among others» (Mitchell 303). It seems that pregnancy, for Ginny, is different from its traditional definition because she is in control. She has taken the whole issue of trying to become pregnant from the social and patriarchal realm and situated it within her own individual sphere. It is her choice, her way of beginning to bring her semiotic desires into symbolic realization: «One of the many benefits of this private [pregnancy] project . . . was that it showed me a whole secret world, a way to have two lives, to be two selves. I felt larger and more various than I had in years, full of unknowns, and also of untapped possibilities» (26). Surely her maternal yearnings here signal just as much her longings for scribing a self, although she is so caught up in the social text at this point that the only way she can envision such a creation of an individual text, is in secret.

Furthermore, these yearnings may be seen as a part of the overall ecofeminist project of *A Thousand Acres*; maternity as an empowering strategy because of its valuation of the female as life-giver. But, as Lynn M. Stearney has argued, the use of the maternal archetype in ecofeminism is a rhetorical device fraught with dangers. This idea conflates womanhood with motherhood, restricting women's access to other self-definitions: «Feminist theorists between 1963 and the early 1980's defined and developed the idea that motherhood is a 'myth' which, as constructed by patriarchy, has functioned to romanticize and idealize the experience of motherhood and to make motherhood a compulsory role» (Stearney 148). *A Thousand Acres* neither wholly advocates, nor rejects, this myth. There is a certain ambiguity in the text here. On the one hand, this principle is criticized as a patriarchal construction; on the other, it is advocated as a way for Ginny to reclaim the control over her body, affirm her subject position, and be free from the imperatives of Larry's social text.

It is telling that Ginny's reflections upon her «secret world» of pregnancy projects, ripe with «secret, passionate wishes» (27), are interrupted by a sudden reminder that her past

and present life are dominated by her father's world and her father's wishes: «Beyond Rose's house, my father's windows, too, were dark. I realized that I hadn't thought to ask if I needed to go over and get his breakfast in the morning» (26-27). This secret world and these secret wishes are thwarted; in fact it turns out that they have always been illusions because nitrates in the water have caused her infertility. When Ty confronts her with the fact that she is still trying to become pregnant, she retaliates with this newfound knowledge. She also tries to keep the issue to her right to control over her own body: «I didn't ever want to draw the line. I wanted to keep trying forever» (258). But her body is the locus of many issues, as this important passage illustrates. Infused with their argument about her last miscarriages are all the secretive goings-on in this family (Ty's suspicions about Ginny and Rose «plotting something» [258], his own secret conversations with Caroline), not to mention the relative nature of truth and lies («Everybody knows that! Well water's the best you can drink» [259]). Finally, there is Ty's loyalty to Larry and his capitalist dream of the hog operation. Both override his loyalty to his wife.

In short, the body is always social. *A Thousand Acres* foregrounds the inseparability of the social text and the textual body and opens these fields for deconstruction. This may be the solution to the novel's ambiguous attitude to the maternal principle: Ginny's pregnancy projects *had to* be thwarted to open for other modes of empowerment and understanding. As Margaret Rozga has pointed out: «Ginny's own secret life, too, became poisoned and awaits a cleansing and reemergence. The British story transplanted to American soil requires revision» (28). Also, in reviewing the reception history of *King Lear*, I found a striking critical constant I called the Apollonian Fallacy: Goneril and Regan were unanimously seen as pure evil. This was noted by Smiley, too: «Even the most radical [feminists] rejected Shakespeare's terrible twosome: 'A remark condemning Goneril and Regan was de rigueur'» (Duffy 92). But there

is a slight difference in the perception of the sisters: Goneril is seen as the most evil one.²⁰ However, there is nothing on the surface level of the play itself, nor in subsequent criticism of it, to suggest *why* she should be seen as more monstrous and unnatural than her evil partner.

A Thousand Acres suggests that the subtle reason for despising Goneril more than Regan is a patriarchal construction of maternity ideals; an «assumption that women are ‘natural’ mothers and that women who are not mothers are ‘unnatural’» (Stearney 150). Thus *A Thousand Acres* points to the patriarchal condemnation of Goneril simply because she is infertile. Ginny’s infertility is indeed a curse from her father, a bodily curse:

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

This makes clear the ideological—patriarchal—import of the parallel statement in *King Lear*:

Into her womb convey sterility,
Dry up in her the organs of increase,
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honor her.²¹

Larry’s curse makes the patriarchal identification of maternity as a feminine principle clear.

In addition, the language he uses highlights the connections between knowledge, power, and sexuality that his logos works by. There is a complex pattern of seeming contradictions here; he says both «I know all about you» and «I don’t know what you are». Larry’s knowledge of Ginny is in the Biblical sense that to know someone is to have had sex with that person. This explains why words like «whore» and «slut» come into play,

²⁰ For an analysis of the different treatments of Edmund, Regan, and Goneril on the rhetorical level of the play, see French 234.

²¹ I.iv. 285-88. He repeats his curse elsewhere. For example, the phrase «Strike her young bones» (II.iv. 162) may refer to both Goneril herself and to her unborn children.

expressions of a masculinist hatred of female sexuality (even though—or precisely because?—Ginny as sexual being was initiated by himself). Psychoanalysts have argued that this hatred is grounded in fear of female sexuality, and, as Camille Paglia says, fear results in aggression. Moreover, as Kristeva has pointed out in an analysis of serpent symbolism partly similar to and partly in opposition to Riane Eisler's (cf. my chapter 3), Eve's rebellion by eating from the tree of knowledge is met with a threat:

Yahweh says to the serpent, 'I will put enmity between thee and woman, and between they [sic] seed (*zera*) and her seed . . .' Yahweh formulates the code of eroticism between the two seeds as if it were a code of war. An endless war, where *he* will lose his head . . . and *she* her trace, her limit, her succession (the threat, perhaps, to deprive her of descendants, if she takes herself to be all-powerful, and phallic?). It is a strange goal at all events . . . (143)

This perspective makes even clearer the curse of Lear and Larry, more so because the reference in *King Lear* to a «general curse / Which twain have brought . . .» (IV.vi. 209-10) may be a condemnation of both Adam and Eve and Goneril and Regan. Eve, Goneril, Regan and Ginny are threatening to the system Lear and Larry represent. Ginny is beginning to gain (self-) knowledge and question her father's authority over her, which we have seen is taboo in a dominator ideology such as modern patriarchy. Consequently, she must be punished.

One of the more subtle acts of aggression and punishment is the Apollonian categorization of woman, gaining control over her by labeling her. Larry's statement is a self-deconstructive one in this respect: «I don't know what you are, just a bitch». It shows us that the masculinist does not really know what woman is, she escapes definition. But that makes it all the more important to impose labels upon her, labels that indicate her place in the patriarchal hierarchy, her status as a «bitch». This is also an echo of Lear's condemnation of female sexuality (IV.vi. 109-33). At this point in the novel, Ginny is still influenced enough by the social text of patriarchy to think of Larry's words as true, something anyone in the community (even Ty) would agree to:

I felt an irresistible temptation to imagine that Daddy was talking for Ty as well as himself . . . Perhaps this was where the story of my father flowed into the story of Jess Clark. Certainly a child raised with an understanding of her father's power like mine could not be surprised that even without any apparent source of information he would know her dearest secret. Hadn't he always? (185)

Larry's power and knowledge is one of Apollonian classification; Ginny thinks that he knows everything because that is the role he has constructed for himself as the core of her world. However, even if Ginny's pregnancy projects are thwarted and her sexuality besmeared by her father, there are other ways for her to take control of her body and her self-inscription in order to withstand the social signification of the patriarchy. One is a re-interpretation of her mother.

The Absent Mother

In *The Chalice and the Blade* (1987), Riane Eisler argued that the shift from a partnership model to dominator model of social organization resulted in a shift from a matrilinear to patrilinear norm of status and inheritance. This norm was subsequently used to justify that shift as a part of the overall devaluation of all things female. Her example of how this became part of the larger re-mything project described above, is also taken from canonical drama. In the *Oresteia*, Athena is made a witness to the correctness of this dominator logic: «Only fathers are related to their children. 'There is no mother anywhere who gave me birth,' she [Athena] asserts» (78).

Like Aeschylus' play, Shakespeare's *King Lear* can be read as a literature of social education to perpetuate a dominator mindset. I have already argued this in other respects, and made the connection with Shakespeare's intertextual use of *King Lear* and other Lear tales. Here, too, we see that Lear at least acknowledges matrilinearity and puts the mother in a brief but favorable light: «I am a Briton born, / and had three daughters by one loving wife» (208).

In *King Lear*, the mother has disappeared completely, and this statement is replaced by Cordelia's support of patrilinearity: «Good my lord, / You have begot me, bred me, loved me» (I.i. 97-98). The mother is only mentioned in the context of adultery.

In *A Thousand Acres*, Ginny's characterization of Larry as «the living source of it all, of us all» (176) is reminiscent of Cordelia's statement above. He is the source of them, not only in the sense that he is their biological father, but more importantly because he is the Logos of a social text that defines the languages of the self for the entire family. As her father's daughter, she has had this social text internalized, and part of this text is that the mother is not important: «In my recollections, Daddy's presence in any scene had the effect of dimming the surroundings, and I didn't have many recollections at all of our life before her [Ginny's mother's] death» (48). However, this is early in the novel, and Smiley's inclusion of Ginny's reflections upon the past and her knowledge of her mother serves to make her an important figure.

The most important thing about her is her absence, in *A Thousand Acres* as in *King Lear*. On the level of social text and individual text, it seems initially that she would have opened up the social text for plurisignification. As it is, she died too soon: «My mother died before she could present him [Larry] as only a man . . . before she could diminish him in our eyes enough for us to understand him. I wish we had understood him. That, I see now, was our only hope» (20). Kristeva emphasizes the necessity within the phallogocentric mind to maintain a clear distinction between the sexes and devalue «the second sex»:

For without this gap between the sexes, without this localization of the polymorphic, orgasmic body, desiring and laughing, in the *other* sex, it would have been impossible in the *symbolic realm*, to isolate the principle of One Law—the One, Sublimating, Transcendent Guarantor of the ideal interests of the community. (141)

In *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, the mother is not only separate from the father—the transcendental signifier and law-giver of the social text—but *removed*. Thus, Caroline is too young to remember her mother, while Rose only has scorn for her submissiveness. This accounts for their similar appropriation of masculinist values (see my chapter 4), including Rose's opinion that anger, not understanding, is their only hope (354).

With regard to Ginny however, we discern a different project. She attempts to reinscribe the role of her mother. The textualities of motherhood, like those of her own attempted motherhood, are connected with nature. This is foregrounded in the swimming episodes, as in Ginny's remembrance of childhood swimming and its swift end: «When we were children, Rose and I used to swim in the farm pond down toward Mel's corner. . . . Not long before the death of our mother, Daddy drained the pond and took out the trees and stumps around it so he could work that field more efficiently» (85). Water and swimming are connected with the mother and the *in utero*; on a psychoanalytic/textual level with the fluidity of the semiotic/écriture. Here we see how Larry's removal of a pond—a female textuality of nature—coincides with the removal of the mother from the daughters' languages of self. These natural waters are insufficiently substituted by a harsh, flat, concrete construction with bathhouse and pool at the Pike township.

It makes sense, therefore, that the first important exploration of the role of Ginny's mother should happen at this pool. She is approached by Mary Livingstone, who apologizes for not taking care of Ginny and Rose after her mother's death, and says: «She was afraid for you. For the life you would lead after she died. . . . She knew what your father was like, even though I think she loved him» (91). There is even a hint that her mother knew, or at least suspected, the incest. This is still unmentionable: «'There was another thing, too—' She eyed me. I said, 'What was that?' Our gazes locked. Finally, she said, 'Oh, I don't know. Nothing really'» (92). This initiates a long line of reflections upon her mother while Ginny is

swimming: «The water was chilly and refreshing, and I felt the pressure of my mother and her fears for me like a ballooning, impinging presence» (93). Later in the novel, we see that Ginny needs water to soothe her: «it seemed only water, only total, refreshing immersion, could clear my mind» (246). This is simultaneously a longing for her mother and for nature, for she spurns the hard concrete pool and prefers the waterfilled quarry: «It existed, manmade but natural, too, the one place where the sea within the earth lay open to sight. Except that when I got there, the water that filled it was brown and murky. . . . Now I saw the place with a new darkened vision. No telling what was in there» (247). As we saw in chapter 3, this sea represents the repressed female as well as the semiotic of her psyche. Also, both are poisoned by the system her father represents. The quarry is filled with junk and farm chemicals. Similarly, Ginny's hopes for reconnecting with her mother are in vain. She envisions and rejects a solution while swimming in the Pike pool:

There could be a quest . . . I could ask my father about her. I could become her biographer, be drawn into her life, and into excuses for her or blame of her, but that seemed like an impractical, laborious, and failing substitute for what I had missed in the last twenty-two years. I was, after all, my father's daughter, and I automatically did believe in the unbroken surface of the unsaid. (94)

She recognizes both her mother's powerlessness with her father (93), and her own. She has internalized the social text's facade of self-evident Truth and always avoided questioning it.

Book Four starts with the other main event in Ginny's exploration of her mother: now that she has taken a stand against her father, she might understand more about her mother, her father, and her self. She reminisces about her mother's pre-marriage history, as it was signified to her by the clothes in her mother's closet. Then she goes over to the now empty house:

As I neared the house, it seemed like Daddy's departure had opened up the possibility of finding my mother. . . . She would be there if anywhere, her handwriting, the remains of her work and her habits, even, perhaps, her scent. .

. . . Wasn't there something to know about him that she had known that would come to me if I found something of her in his house? The hope was enough to quicken my steps. (225)

However, she found nothing. That is, nothing material, conscious. The realization that her mother did not only die young but was obliterated from her consciousness is what finally triggers the realization that the incest actually happened. Lying down on her old bed, Ginny remembers:

Lying here, I knew that he had been in there to me, that my father had lain with me on that bed . . . It was a memory associated with the memory of my mother's things going to the poor people of Mason City, with the sight of the church ladies in their cars with my mother's dresses in the back seats, with the sight of Mary Livingstone's face turned toward me with sober concern, asking me if I wanted to keep anything, and I said no. (228)

It seems that, while the mother is no role model in *King Lear*, she is a negative one in *A Thousand Acres*. Not because there was something wrong with her, as Rose thinks, but because she was completely trapped within the system and could not have made any other signification than that of Larry as Logos. It is this recognition, and her newfound will to avoid the kind of life her mother had to lead, that enables Ginny to support Rose against Larry in the storm scene. Recalling a childhood incident, she sees how her mother was forced to comply with his imperatives. Larry then said to her mother: «There's only one side here, and you'd better be on it» (183). Her mother's reluctant siding with Larry serves as a powerful warning against the life Ginny has been leading. It is this knowledge that leads to Ginny's «new life» (229); one where she is determined to write her individual text in contrast to her mother as well as her father. Identity construction is differential and conflictual, as this exchange between Rose and Ginny illustrates:

«I won't be satisfied until he [Larry] knows what *he* is.»
«Do we know what we are?»

«We know we aren't him. We know that to that degree we don't yet deserve the lowest circle of Hell». (216)

Ginny knows she is not her father, nor her mother. The absent mother makes the Cook sisters' situation a sublimated version of the dilemma every girl faces: «either she identifies with the mother, or she raises herself to the symbolic stature of the father» (Kristeva 148). Ginny chooses neither. Instead, she will inscribe the textuality of her self with both her mother and father as con/texts. She will not try to reach her father's power nor succumb to her mother's role of powerless victim.

Writing the Body

Neither Ginny's interpretation of her mother, nor her own attempts at motherhood, represent a genuine solution. In fact, since both strategies are examples of negativity, it seems that the novel sees motherhood as a patriarchal marker of female identity and rejects it as a restrictive category of self. Nevertheless, in both cases the female textual body is important for Ginny's empowerment. Traditionally, the concept of the body as a site of continuous signification has been understood in terms of cultural inscription of ideology *onto* the female body.

In *A Thousand Acres*, however, Smiley turns this around. Just as the novel emphasizes that nature is a text which can be read and rewritten, it also foregrounds the body as a textual matrix through which the subject can understand herself and the world.²² Thus, yet another way in which Ginny develops in the course of the novel is that she begins to process information bodily. Thinking of Caroline's snubbing of her sisters when she got married, Ginny «realized that [she] felt the insult physically, an internal injury» (139). Later, shame,

²² This positive use of the body is also dramatized in a short story Smiley must have been working on while writing *A Thousand Acres*: «The Life of the Body» (1990). Dance as wordless body signification by the female protagonist seems to be an overall motif here.

one of the feelings most often arising in Ginny, is thoroughly described in terms of bodily reading:

Shame is a distinct feeling. . . . I was uncomfortably conscious of my whole body, from the awkward way that the shafts of my hair were thrusting out of my scalp to my feet, which felt dirty as well as cold. Everywhere, I seemed to feel my skin from the inside, as if it now stood away from my flesh, separated by a millimeter of mortified space. (195)

The shame that the social text induces in her is simultaneously a separation of the self from one's body and a body awareness that will turn out to be positive. This rather passive use of the body is in the course of the novel turned into a more active use of the corporeal as a vehicle for understanding.²³ Ginny's gradual empowerment is understood physically, not mentally. The first time ever that she stands up to her father, she describes afterwards as learning «something physical, not just in my mind. Not just a lesson» (149). This something seems to be a powerful anchoring in her body. Consequently, when she hears of the blinding of Harold, she ascribes imaginative primacy to the physical: «The imagination runs first to the physical, doesn't it, so that no matter what, you recoil from the pain, imagine yourself blind . . .» (233).

The most crucial step toward this bodily empowerment is made through the revelation at the center of the novel: the storm scene. Tim Keppel has pointed out not only that «Smiley's major departure . . . is her decision to tell the story from the viewpoint of Ginny and explore the inner lives of the so-called 'evil' sisters», but that «Smiley makes her most dramatic re-vision of Shakespeare» in the storm scene (105,109). This has traditionally been the scene where the audience forms a bond of sympathy with King Lear because of his pathetic insanity. In *A Thousand Acres*, the focus of the narrative stays with the sisters and

²³ The very language I have used here testifies to the problems of characterizing bodily cognition and expression—two forms of bodily signification. The expression «body as vehicle for understanding» is not meant to imply that the body and the understanding are separate. Rather, it shows us that language is always already infused with metaphors that uphold the patriarchal dichotomy between body and mind.

gives us a strong reason to form a bond of sympathy with them instead: Rose tells Ginny about the incest they both underwent, but which Ginny has suppressed from memory (189-90). This becomes an important event in Ginny's development. She says about that time: «I tried to stop crying, but it was like I had been shaken to a jelly and I didn't know how to reconstitute myself» (192). She still does not remember the incest, but she will. And in the course of her development, she will reconstitute herself by rewriting the textuality of her self.

The act of incest seems initially to be a stable, if hidden, point in the fluidity of language. There is something stubbornly *literal* about the incest in the text, insisting that this is an unspoken truth that is never metaphorized or otherwise textualized. Bodily experience and violence seemingly contradict postmodern ideas of textuality—it is *there*, painful beyond language. At first, this is because the daughters are passive; Larry controls language. But women can take control of language while still being bodied. Once Ginny is able to «read» her body; that is, translate the pain of incest into her individual text, it becomes an evident truth. In other words, the incest *is* a corporeal truth that is not simply a mechanics of metaphors. Nevertheless, it needs to be filtered through the textual horizon of Ginny, interpreted and textualized. Then she can move on.

Part of this hermeneutic process is to see the incest in a larger context. The incest is a perverted assertion of power, one of the links between women and nature: they are objects of property. «You were as much his as I was,» Rose says. «There was no reason for him to assert his possession of me more than his possession of you. We were just his, to do with as he pleased, like the pond or the houses or the hogs or the crops» (191). Thus, this horrendous act is given a more general relevance in the overall political project of the novel, transcending the workings of one malfunctional family. Indeed, Rose's characterization of their situation in Larry's social text illustrates many of Riane Eisler's points about dominator ideology. The God that the Hebrews worshipped was a patriarchal god of war which reduced women to the

status of property: «In Numbers 31:32-35 . . . we read that among the spoils of war taken by the invaders [i.e. the Hebrews] in their battle against the Midianites, there were, in this order, sheep, cattle, asses, and thirty-two thousand girls who had had no intercourse with a man» (49). This is the kind of ideology underlying the social text of Zebulon County. As Ginny observes, Larry follows a long line of patriarchal power structures working against both woman and nature. He is not, as Edmund Fuller asserts, assigned the role of unexplained evil—the role Goneril and Regan had in *King Lear* (qtd. in Keppel 110).

At one point, Ginny remembers her father positively from a childhood incident and wonders about his (and her) transformation: «I closed my eyes and felt tears sparking under the eyelids. Now that I remembered that little girl and that young, running man, I couldn't imagine what had happened to them» (106). What happened was that they entered the patriarchal system on different sides, her father being taught how to control it:

You [Ty, but by implication everybody in this system] see this grand history, but I see blows. I see taking what you want because you want it, then making something up that justifies what you did. I see getting others to pay the price, then covering up and forgetting what the price was. Do I think Daddy came up with beating and fucking us on his own? . . . No. I think he had lessons, and those lessons were part of the package, along with the land and the lust to run things exactly the way he wanted to no matter what, poisoning the water and destroying the topsoil and buying bigger and bigger machinery . . . (342-43)

In other words, there is a link between Larry's personal actions and the larger historical perspective of a dominator tradition. What is more, he is only the most powerful of the many people that ensure the perpetuation of this system. The society they live in is based on the rape of young girls and the land: «However many of them have fucked their daughters or their stepdaughters or their nieces or not, the fact is that they all accept beating as a way of life. . . . This person who beats and fucks his own daughters can go out into the community and get respect and power» (302). The connection between incest and power and between patriarchal

abuse of women and capitalist farming is given a wider validity, both diachronically and synchronically.

As mentioned above, Ginny has her powerful *anagnorisis* in her old room, searching in vain for her mother. That is the negative part; the positive is that she now uses her body in order to both understand and deal with that understanding: «I screamed in a way that I had never screamed before, full out, throat-wrenching, unafraid-of-making-a-fuss-and-drawing-attention-to-myself sorts of screams that I made myself concentrate on, becoming all mouth, all tongue, all vibration» (229). It is as if she casts away all external social texts and becomes all *body*, completely autonomous in her wordless expression of bodily horror. In other words, she brings the inexpressible semiotic into symbolic actualization through the corporeal. In being completely bodily, she reaches an understanding of suffering. By not being afraid of drawing attention to herself, she again refuses to submit to the power of the gaze and its inherent social text of acceptable behavior. Instead, she draws any potential gaze to her on her own terms, not on the terms of the gaze itself. To gain this self-knowledge is to reclaim both the vision and the memory of her body. Consequently, Ginny's new life starts with her delineation of the history of her body (chapter 35). Now, as in her childhood, she feels «the immediacy of one's every physical sensation» (277). She knows now how it felt before the incest, before feeling unutterable and incomprehensible shame because of her body.

Her body is thus pointed to, made overt, impossible to dismiss. The text insists that it be considered as part of cognition and expression, thought and language. In *King Lear*, the text presents Cordelia's dead body as if self-evidently signifying the tragedy that has befallen the family and kingdom, but what Smiley's novel does is to move the status of the body from a static and passive—dead—position to an actively signifying position. The signification of Cordelia's dead body as well as those of her elder sisters is not a signification originating in the bodies themselves, but one imposed upon them by the patriarchal text. They are objects, as

indicated when Albany points to the dead bodies of Regan and Goneril and says: «Seest thou this object, Kent?» (V.iii. 240). By foregrounding this important status of the body, *A Thousand Acres* states by implication that these bodies have traditionally been denied subjective expression, and that their subject positions are being reinstated here. Therefore, too, Ginny can reclaim a self-reflexive view of her body and its signification, a memory of her body as subject position that was long lost: «One thing Daddy took from me when he came to me in my room at night was the memory of my body» (280).

Once her body is reclaimed, she can achieve some understanding. When she towards the end explicates her understanding of the people close to her, she knows Rose because she knows her body: «It was amazing how minutely I knew Rose, possibly as a result of nursing her after her surgery. I had sponge-bathed her everywhere—the arches of her feet, the pale insides of her elbows, the back of her neck . . .» (307). The knowledge she has of Rose's body is a knowledge of nurturing, set up in contrast to Larry's sexual knowledge of it (cf. again the Biblical pun of «knowledge»). When Ginny realizes this, she is all present in her own body, and therefore able to recognize the constructive potential of nurturing body knowledge.

The potential of such self-inscription of the corporeal is great. It brings together the constitution of a textual subject and the subject's inescapable corpo-reality. Like Kristeva, Barthes also asserts the importance of body signification: «The repetition that comes from the body is good, is right. *Doxa* [public opinion] is the wrong object because it is a dead repetition, because it comes from *no one's* body . . .» (RB, 71). In other words, signification is dead if one does not relate it to the Text of the body. This inscription can be characterized as incorporating into the textuality of her self two realms of «intertextuality»: *both* the *écriture* suppressed by the phallogos *and* the semiotic suppressed by the symbolic order. These two are parallel areas of self-inscription, as Silverman's characterization of Kristeva's subject indicates: «For Kristeva, a speaking subject is already dispersed into an intersubjective world.

This world is understood in terms of an intertextuality in which the text of the speaking subject inscribes itself with significance both semiotically and symbolically» (*Textualities* 181-82). As mentioned above, Ginny must have had the semiotic in her completely repressed when she entered the symbolic order as a child, for Larry's social text is even more repressive than the symbolic order *per se* is (as characterized by Kristeva). Then, in the narrative time of the novel, a «second-degree thetic» has evolved as a psychological survival mechanism.

Through Ginny's newly acquired interpretation of the social text and her self, the semiotic is brought into the symbolic. In this way

drive attacks against the thetic will not give way to fantasy or to psychosis but will instead lead to a 'second-degree thetic', i.e., a resumption of the functioning characteristic of the semiotic *chora* within the signifying device of language. This is precisely what artistic practices, and notably poetic language, demonstrate. (Kristeva 103)

This passage indicates that the turning of interpretation into a verbalized actualization is also a part of such a survival mechanism. This will happen through narration. Like meaning-creation in the interpretation of literature, identity creation as self-interpretation is a matter of reading/writing one's textualities against other texts; in the intertextual sphere of con/texts. This chapter has foregrounded the ways in which identity is *scribed* by Ginny, and these ways indicate that identity is differential—Ginny is not her father, not her mother, not her sister etc., but a part of all of them. They also indicate that identity is textual and corporeal, in both ways *en procès*.

On a metafictional level, Ginny's narration and therefore the existence of the text of *A Thousand Acres* is an implementation of Ginny's corporeal self. This aspect of the text will be expanded on in the next chapter.

6. Ginny: From Pharmakos to Pharmakeus

After closing the pharmacy, Plato went to retire, to get out of the sun. He took a few steps in the darkness toward the back of his reserves, found himself leaning over the *pharmakon*, decided to analyze.

Within the thick, cloudy liquid, trembling deep inside the drug, the whole pharmacy stood reflected, repeating the abyss of the Platonic phantasm.

The analyst cocks his ears, tries to distinguish between two repetitions.

He would like to isolate the good from the bad, the true from the false.

He leans over further: they repeat each other. (Derrida, *Dissemination* 169)

Reactive formations: a *Doxa* . . . is posited, intolerable; to free myself from it, I postulate a paradox; then this paradox turns bad, becomes a new concretion, itself becomes a new *Doxa*, and I must seek further for a new paradox. (Barthes, *RB* 71)

In the previous chapter, we discussed Ginny's role in the microcosm of the novel. However, the scribing of self she performs indicates that she is also an important figure in terms of her status as narrator and as the intertextual counterpart of Goneril. We have already seen in other contexts how her textual importance is played out. In this chapter, I will discuss how Ginny as a textual entity in *A Thousand Acres* is designated certain roles by the very language used in the novel. Specifically, I will look at the manifestation of intertexts in the symbol of the poison jar and the final metaphor of the obsidian shard.

Playing with Poison

In «Plato's Pharmacy», Derrida analyzes the rhetoric Plato uses in denouncing writing.²⁴ In his reading, Plato tried to devalue writing while he at the same time used metaphors that expose his logic as rhetoric—as writing. Specifically—and most importantly—Plato has Socrates call writing a poison: *pharmakon*. This, as Derrida has argued, is a logocentric strategy where the larger signification of writing (*écriture*) is designated an evil role: «Socrates compares the written texts Phaedrus has brought along to a drug (*pharmakon*).

²⁴ This text is published in, and will henceforth be cited in the text as, *Dissemination* (1972).

This *pharmakon*, this 'medicine', this philter, which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence» (70). The metaphor «body of discourse» is interesting, defining writing as something that can potentially both poison and heal the *body*. Chapters 4 and 5 have shown us that texts can be poisonous, but that the way to personal redemption is to write an individual text that also considers the *corpo-real*. Following Ginny's development in *A Thousand Acres*, we will explore further the many meanings of the word *pharmakon* and its relation to Ginny and Goneril. They might be said to move from a *pharmakos* (poisoner/scapegoat) position toward the role of the *pharmakeus* (poisoner/healer) This is not to suggest that Smiley has read *Dissemination* (or Plato, for that matter) and consciously incorporated its ideas into her novel. They are in any case *there*, inscribed into the lexicon with which the novel is written.

The textualities of the *pharmakon* are overt in the novel. The symbol of the poison jar that Ginny gives to Rose is connected to the water that Pete crashes into, with its blank, shining, glass-like surface. It is also the link between the tiles and the water/poison, a kind of sublimated version of this symbol. The most obvious and central meaning of the jar both as a symbol and as a function of the plot is that it represents the social poison of greed, corruption, suppression, betrayal, and rage. Concentrated within the closed space of poisoned wetness, this symbol is also the extension of the tile motif as a metaphor of Ginny's womb. Like the landscape, she seems healthy and fertile enough, but her internal system is poisoned. There is therefore a kind of logic to her weapon against Rose, a jar of poisonous sausage and kraut. This jar has a shining, hard surface, but its contents, wet and venomous, resembling both intestines and the system of tiles under the earth, represent a way to turn the destructive forces to her advantage.

An important difference that makes explicit both the novel's ecofeminist project and the Platonic connection, is that her poison is not chemical, but natural. It is the root of water

hemlock: «I went to the Pike library, and found a pamphlet, 'Twenty-five Poisonous Common Plants to Beware Of' . . . The most poisonous, mentioned in passing but not pictured, was water hemlock» (311). It will be remembered that hemlock was the poison (*pharmakon*) that killed Socrates, and this may be more significant than is immediately apparent. We have seen that Ginny is connected to nature, in particular to the swamplands by the Scenic, and that is where she finds her poison: «I stopped along the Scenic, just where the Zebulon River opened out into a little slough, and where, in the spring, I had seen that flock of pelicans and thought they portended something good. I wore yellow dishwashing gloves, and I picked a tall, erect plant . . .» (312). Even if her action is vengeful and representative of her poisonous heritage from her father, Ginny refuses to participate in a use of chemicals that endangers nature, as if she instinctively knows the strength of her textual identification with the land. When she reflects upon the poisoning of Rose's body, she sees it as the inevitable result of Larry's abuse: «I thought . . . of that cell dividing in the dark and then living rather than dying, subdividing, multiplying, growing, Rose's real third child. . . . Her dark child, the child of her union with Daddy» (323). However, it is just as much a result of the abuse of *Ginny* herself, of the destructive suppression of desire and emotion she continually undergoes. Like all the other characters, Ginny is a part of the poison in the novel.

The *pharmakon* seems to be evil, as Plato said. But Ginny's status is in the novel is very complex. In being a constructed parallel to Goneril, she is contaminated by the stigma attached to her: she is a monster, a witch, supremely evil. Or, from a non-patriarchal perspective: She is a scapegoat. As my analysis of *King Lear* has shown, both Goneril and Regan have to be scapegoated for order to be restored within the logocentric universe of Shakespeare's play. Significantly, this term is not among the many «pharmaceutical» words Plato uses:

The word in question is *pharmakos* (wizard, magician, poisoner), a synonym [and almost homonym] of *pharmakeus* (which Plato uses), but with the unique feature of having been overdetermined, overlaid by Greek culture with another function. Another *role*, and a formidable one.

The character of the *pharmakos* has been compared to a scapegoat. The *evil* and the *outside*, the expulsion of the evil, its exclusion out of the body (and out) of the city—these are the major senses of the character and of the ritual. (*Dissemination* 130)

The stigma of the «evil» *pharmakon* follows etymological paths into other realms. Interesting metaphorizations are at play here: while the *pharmakeus* is a magician or medicine man, the person who is a *pharmakos* is seen as a poison affecting the body of the city, as well as the remedy for this poison (in being sacrificed). Even though the *pharmakos* in the ancient Greek ritual was male, there are certain connections to women here. I have argued elsewhere that women escape the inherent misogyny of Apollonian binary logic. Therefore, they must be ostracized:

In the person of the ostracized, the city expels what in it is too elevated, what incarnates the evil which can come to it from above. In the evil of the *pharmakos*, it expels what is the vilest in itself, what incarnates the evil that menaces it from below. By this double and complementary rejection it delimits itself in relation to what is not yet known and what transcends the known: it takes the proper measure of the human in opposition on one side to the divine and heroic, on the other to the bestial and monstrous. (J.P. Vernant, qtd. in Derrida *Dissemination* 131)

This is obvious in *King Lear*, where woman has to be divine and unbodied (Cordelia is ostracized and killed by the text), or bodied monsters (Regan and Goneril, both *pharmakos*-figures, poisoners of the social order and its remedy through death). As Linda Bamber put it: «In *King Lear*, the women are either more or less than human. Goneril and Regan are too bad to live, much less represent us, and Cordelia is perfect» (292).

In the same discussion of Vernant, Derrida also mentions etymological links between women and the *pharmakos*. One will suffice here: the connection between the words «venom» and «Venus». Moreover, as we have seen, Goneril is consistently seen as the most evil one—

the ultimate *pharmakos*—because of her curse of infertility. In both *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, she is dealt a blow to her reproductive organs by the patriarchy as represented by her father. This was a part of the *pharmakos* ritual in ancient Greece, but in *A Thousand Acres* this blow comes in the form of farming chemicals. In other words, the sacrifice of the *pharmakos* is done with artificial substances, themselves termed *pharmaka* in Greek (Derrida, *Dissemination* 129). And here we are at a central point: just as the Platonic rhetoric against writing is itself writing, so is the patriarchal truth that can condemn women as *pharmakos* a constructed truth. It is not a natural principle, but a logocentric writing—*pharmakon*. Any subversive writing that may expose the «writtenness» of logocentric truth is dangerous and must be stopped. Kristeva has argued that the break of the semiotic (represented precisely by women and poetic practice) into the symbolic (or phallogocentric) has been socially formulated as ritualistic murder. Therefore the artist is seen as a kind of scapegoat: «In this sense, the artist is comparable to all other figures of the ‘scapegoat’». The artist is a *pharmakos* because of the subversive potential of writing: «Through themes, ideologies and social meanings, the artist introduces into the social order an asocial drive, one not yet harnessed by the thetic» (120).

In short, both women and writers are scapegoats of the patriarchal order. But I want to argue that *A Thousand Acres* follows a plot where Ginny moves from this *pharmakos* status to a more liberating *pharmakeus* role. We have seen that Ginny, maddened by jealousy, turned to both books (the library) and to nature (the swamp) for her weapon against Rose. Plato tells us that «real medical science» is above «book knowledge», and asserts that a belief in the latter

springs out of *mania*: «I expect they would say, ‘the man is mad; he thinks he has made himself a doctor by picking up something out of a book (*ek bibliou*), or coming across a couple of ordinary drugs (*pharmakiois*), without any real knowledge of medicine’». (Derrida, *Dissemination* 73)

Ginny's «mania» (the misogynist term «hysteria»—also from Greek—also springs to mind) points to this part of Platonic rhetoric. As poisoner and narrator of a novel, she is connected to both the significations of medicine and writing here. The links between writing and poison as *pharmakon* also shed an interesting light on Ginny's self-diagnosis. She reflects upon her state of mind when she found out that Rose stole Jess from her thus: «Since then, I might have declared that I was 'not myself' or 'out of my mind', or 'beside myself' . . .» (305). All these terms are valid translations of the Platonic concept of *entusiasmos*—poetic inspiration. For Plato, this is a dangerous state of mind because it distracts from reason. But for us, valuing a plurisignificational creativity, this «mania» is positive. It points to the positive potential of the *pharmakon*: writing might be a healing process.

Undecidability

The phallogos maintains Ginny's status as *pharmakos*. But if her scapegoat status is a misogynist labeling, at least she becomes a *pharmakeus* in *A Thousand Acres*. The attempted poisoning of Rose confirms Ginny's status as a poisoner, a sorcerer of natural poison. It also confirms her partial complicity in the system, subverting any simple notion of opposition the reader may have entertained thus far. As a textual element, the poison jar can be read as a self-reflexive *undecidable*: «unities of simulacrum, 'false' verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, *without ever* constituting a third term . . .» (Derrida, *Positions* 43). Such «undecidable» units simultaneously signify all and none of their possible meanings. The poison jar is an «undecidable»; its meaning is impossible to fix. It represents both the destructive heritage of the Cook patriarchal system (simultaneously signifying the poisoning of the subterranean waters and of Ginny's womb) and Ginny's natural weapon. The jar contains the roots of water hemlock, which are obviously

essential for the life of the plant, while at the same time extremely poisonous for living creatures. The jar, then, represents both advocacy of and opposition to life; it is both positive and negative, creative and destructive.²⁵ Therefore, in a sense, it is neither. Like the undecidable elements of a text, it is impossible to say which of the two metaphysical classifications can embrace it.

As I have argued above, the political project of *A Thousand Acres* does not rest on a phallogocentric binary logic that perpetuates the opposition between men and women, and this is the most sophisticated textual signal of that. The jar and its metaphoric textualities of the *pharmakon* are the undecidables of the patriarchal system; they are inside of the system and its language, but nevertheless representative of an unresolved point—a cracked beam, if you will—in its structure. In Greek, «the *pharmakon* is neither remedy nor poison, neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing» (Derrida, *Positions* 43). This undecidable status of the *pharmakon* is transferred to *A Thousand Acres* via *King Lear*. When Goneril reveals to the audience that she has poisoned Regan (who exclaims: «Sick, O, Sick!»), she says: «If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine» (V.iii 97). Here, too, the *pharmakon* is undecidable.

The construction of Ginny in *A Thousand Acres* indicates that the «monstrosity» of Goneril can be explained in many ways: because she is a bodied woman, because she is infertile, because she seeks empowerment and questions the authority of the patriarchy, etc. A case could be made for undecidability itself to be monstrous for an empirical, logocentric, patriarchal mind. If the male paradigm of reason is the conceptualizing tool to order reality, then whatever resists such ordering must be condemned. We have seen that in Larry's curse of Ginny («I don't know what you are, just a bitch» [181]), discussed in chapter 5. We see this in *King Lear* as well, where Albany acknowledges Goneril's undecidable status and condemns

²⁵ According to Derrida, the hemlock that Socrates takes is also undecidable: it kills him, but also has a kind of ontological cathartic effect. See *Dissemination* 126-27.

her for it. He addresses her «Thou worse than any name» (V.iii 158). Christina Sandhaug has illustrated the Apollonian tendency to term that which cannot be defined a within logocentric binary grid «monstrous»:

We label «it» monstrous, because it poses a threat to our Modern Constitution by which we make and dominate Others. «Monster» becomes a metaphor for all that doesn't fit our categories. Their monstrosity lies in that they both invite and resist purification [into clearly defined categories]. (Sandhaug 38)

It is, then, a defense mechanism of the Apollonian order to condemn Regan and Goneril because they transcend phallogocentric gender categories. This explains the consistent labeling of the sisters as «unnatural»: «a woman who refuses to conform can be labelled both *unfeminine* and *unnatural*»; the solution becomes a deconstruction of such binary oppositions: «[women] will be neither inside nor outside, neither known nor unknown» (Moi, «Feminist Literary Criticism» 209; 213). Women will be undecidable.

Therefore, I see an irony in the fact that the undecidable jar of poison can also be seen as a symbol of the text's ultimate failure, both on the personal level of Ginny (*pharmakeus*) and the level of *A Thousand Acres* as a whole (*pharmakon*). At the end of the novel, Ginny gets hold of the jar and empties it of its poisonous contents. It is the only remaining object of her past life and the metaphoric container of that life's destructive path, and she tries to stop the spreading of social and filial poison it represents. There is certainly a bitter irony in Ginny's reliance on the city's sewage system to take care of it; as the site of an urban capitalistic economy, the city should be seen as the pinnacle of capitalist prosperity and poison: «I relied, as I always did now that I lived in the city, on the sewage treatment plant that I had never seen» (366-67). It was this kind of blind faith that led to her fate in the first place.

The text tells us that Ginny has gotten rid of the poison, but not what happened to the jar itself. If we assume that she did not destroy the jar (and that is a valid interpretation, as one would expect such an important event to be noted in the narrative), it can be seen as a symbol of the political failure of the novel: The intertextual deconstruction of *King Lear* metaphorically empties the text of its poisonous contents. However, if Ginny lets the shiny, hard surface of the jar be, the critical interpretation of *A Thousand Acres* could be that the novel lets the poison-producing structure of logocentric discourse be. The *container* of poison/the logocentric *structure* remains. Ginny's «solution» to the problem of woman and nature is escapism, she escapes from the land and hides in the city: «I saw this as my afterlife, and for a long time it didn't occur to me that it contained a future. That it didn't, in fact, was what I liked about it. I felt a semisubmerged conviction that I had entered upon the changeless eternal» (334). This limp ending may be said to undercut the importance of Ginny's process of empowerment.

On the other hand, she may have destroyed the jar and ended the regime of Larry's social and signifatory poison. Whether she did or not is undecidable. But within that undecidability lies potential liberation. Again, the textual movement of liberation in *A Thousand Acres* is toward a linguistic and therefore cognitive empowerment: the power of definition lies no longer with the male Logos and thus women are no longer monsters. Undecidables are re-imagined in positive terms: plurisignification as liberation. Writing about undecidables in *Textualities*, Hugh Silverman stresses the strategic inscribing of the deconstructor's textual presence at this point of metaphysical instability, opening up the text for creative intervention. «Indecidables [sic] have a double character. They seem to raise the possibility of turning in either direction within a whole variety of philosophical oppositions, yet they do not assume the position of either side of such oppositions» (66).

The undecidables we can trace in *A Thousand Acres* have thus provided Smiley with some creative potential; the liberating play of *différance*. In the exchange between the novel's potential for both victory and defeat, in the space of tension between these two main significations, the reader must inscribe his or her interpretations. In the spirit of hermeneutic semiology s/he must inhabit the space between undecidable polarities.

The Role of the Reader

Earlier in my reading of this novel, I have pointed to areas of textual indeterminacy, of undecidables: the idea of being bodied (whether it means to be an empowered woman or a vulnerable monster)(chapter 4); the idea of vegetarianism (chapter 4); the pelican symbol and Ginny's identification with a sow (chapter 5); and the patriarchal identification of woman and nature that underlies Ginny's self-inscription (chapter 5), etc. Like the poison jar, these are all unresolved paradoxes, and there are at least three ways to deal with them.

First, one's reading may be very critical. Along the lines of the critical reading of the poison jar above, this first way would be to assert that *A Thousand Acres* is indeed trapped within the paradigm that it sought to overthrow. It re-validates patriarchal concepts of woman and nature as well as other misogynist metaphors. To substantiate one's argument beyond the points made above, one could cite the fact that Ginny's empowerment only earns her a job as a waitress (serving instead of producing food) in St.Paul. She may have been able to save herself and Rose's children, but the novel does not give any indirect or direct alternative to capitalism, patriarchy, and industrial farming. Their liberation from this system is dependent on selling the farm to a suppressive entity that is not even human (The Heartland Corporation). The triumph of pollution and butchery signified by their return to meat-eating, for example, also signals the perpetuation of the dominator system.

I have avoided the idea of the «intentional fallacy» throughout my discussions. And yet, the novel's failure to live up to its apparent political aspirations is striking in view of Smiley's insistence that *A Thousand Acres* is a strongly political, ecofeminist novel. Jane S. Bakerman states that «Smiley is very open about the fact that *A Thousand Acres* is a message novel,» quoting her NBCC Award acceptance speech, in which Smiley said that the book was a «complex argument against a certain kind of farming and land use, that is leading us towards an environmental disaster, the destruction of the lives of people and of the moral life of our country» (128-29). This complex argument is a reformulation of the metaphorical and moral relationship men have with women and nature, and Smiley's statements in a *Time* interview are indeed reminiscent of Kolodny's call for a more healthy re-imagining of both: «Women, just like nature or the land, have been seen as something to be used. . . . Feminists believe that women have intrinsic value, just as environmentalists believe that nature has its own worth, independent of its use to man» (Duffy 92). I questioned the success of this project in the novel when I first identified its link with Kolodny's project in *The Lay of the Land*, and if one follows this critical path, one may conclude that Smiley has not fully succeeded in dramatizing this.

On the other hand—this is the second option a reader has when faced with the paradoxes of *A Thousand Acres*—one may argue that the novel follows the logic of the supplement in its relation to *King Lear*. Thus, it is a conceptual avoidance of logocentric binary oppositions. This logic, as Barbara Johnson has elucidated, is «a revolution in the very logic of meaning. . . . Instead of 'A is opposed to B' we have 'B is both added to A and replaces A'. A and B are no longer opposed, nor are they equivalent. Indeed, they are no longer equivalent to themselves» (xiii). The identity of each position in the social text of *A Thousand Acres* is not coherent and autonomous, but dependent on a logic of *différance*. On the level of the novel's characters, they are neither wholly evil or wholly good, but as a

supplement to the Shakespearean characters on which they are based, they are both good and evil at the same time; they are human in all their unresolved complexity.

The novel, in this purely deconstructive reading, does not so much oppose the play as it adds to and replaces it. It adds to it because it expands Shakespeare's play by bringing in new historical considerations (the American society, modern versions of patriarchy, capitalism etc.), and it replaces the patriarchal «truths» of the play with «truths» informed by a feminist project. Still, the old «truths» remain (such is the logic of the supplement), and one might question how powerful this strategy is. Also, in this vein of thinking, a deconstructive project cannot by definition provide answers or solutions; it can only open existing answers or truths to questioning, dislodging them from within. However, if deconstruction is viewed as merely a strategy that exposes truths as fictions, it is reduced to a kind of philosophical game.

As Michael Fischer asserted, such a deconstructive approach «remains trapped in the conventions that theoretically it claims to dissolve»; it «goes nowhere—like running in place» (qtd. in Atkins 1). Recently, however, deconstruction has taken a more historicist or political turn. This represents the third and most productive approach to the above-mentioned paradoxes. Barthes struck the note in an epigraph to this chapter, and it may be picked up here. The third strategy of reading is (as Silverman insists) an alternative form of deconstruction; a «juxtapositional deconstruction» that we have termed «hermeneutic semiology». Hermeneutic semiology is neither trapped in logocentric discourse, nor does it deconstruct it without knowing where to go next. According to this reading, what *A Thousand Acres* does is not only to deconstruct patriarchal concepts. It also constructs new alternatives that nevertheless are self-deconstructive in their undecidable paradoxical state. They do not institute themselves as *Doxa*, but as paradoxes that (like *King Lear*, the phallogos etc.) contain the germs of their own deconstructions. As soon as they are posited, they start to unravel. This is not a foreign thought to Derrida: «[T]he very condition of a deconstruction may be at work,

in the work, *within* the system to be deconstructed; it may *already* be located there, already at work . . . participating in the construction of what it at the same time threatens to deconstruct» (qtd. in Esch 375). The role of the reader is to uncover those always already constituted processes of deconstruction.

We may, in fact, talk about three parallel processes of hermeneutic semiology. I have already argued that Ginny's scribing of self is an interpretative activity; a hermeneutic semiology of the self. In this first process, she must de- and reconstruct her self through the language of the self represented by the social text, to avoid neurosis or psychosis. This is a process that, in Kristeva's words,

constitutes a synthesis that requires the thesis of language to come about, and the semiotic pulverizes it only to make it a new device—for us, this is precisely what distinguishes a text as *signifying practice* from the 'drifting-into-nonsense' [*dérive*] that characterizes neurotic discourse. . . . In this way, only the subject, for whom the thetic is not a repression of the semiotic *chora* but instead a position either taken on or undergone, can call into question the thetic so that a new disposition may be articulated. (104)

Second, in calling into question—deconstructing—the repressive patriarchal social text of Zebulon County on one level, patriarchal metaphorizations on another level, *King Lear* and its receptions on yet another level, and so on *ad infinitum*, the text of *A Thousand Acres* does not create a new truth. That would be reverting to logocentrism. Instead it creates a provisional truth that must also eventually give way to new alternatives.

Thus, these double-gestured processes of Smiley's novel perform a literary hermeneutic semiology of the kind that I outlined for my own project of reading/writing in chapter 1. My approach here can serve as an example of the third process of hermeneutic semiology; that of the reader. The ultimate example of these processes is the final metaphor of the novel, which will also occupy the last part of this chapter: Ginny's gleaming obsidian shard.

The Gleaming Obsidian Shard

The liberating function of undecidability indicates that the writing of *A Thousand Acres*—the many inter/texts of *écriture* it embraces—is a kind of white magic performed by the narrator-sorcerer Ginny. The analysis of the etymology of the *pharmakon*-words illustrates that liberating writing is connected with woman. This connection is what necessitates a designation of both as poisonous, and their consequent devaluation by a phallogocentric order threatened by both. Writing and women are undecidable, a condition unthought of in Western Apollonian metaphysics. Therefore, women and artists are scapegoated.

A Thousand Acres can therefore be termed a kind of Thoth-text. Thoth is the marginalized supplement to Ra, as the moon is to the sun, writing to speech, and woman to man:

The figure of Thoth takes shape and takes its shape from the very thing it resists and substitutes for. In distinguishing himself from his opposite, Thoth also imitates it, becomes its sign and representative, obeys it and *conforms* to it, replaces it, by violence if need be. He is thus the father's other, the father, and the subversive movement of replacement. (Derrida, *Dissemination* 93)

In rewriting *King Lear*, as I argued in chapter 2, the novel takes shape from the play, but becomes both its self and its opposite. Ginny's writing is self-reflexive. It deconstructs, which foregrounds Ginny as a textual entity: a *scribe*. It is therefore fitting that Thoth is not only a pharmacist and magician. He is also the god of creative writing (hence Kristeva's «poetic language» as liberating practice) and the patron of scribes (Derrida, *Dissemination* 84-94). In a dominator re-mything, this danger of the *pharmakon/écriture* was averted by making Thoth not only marginalized in relation to Ra, but a *male* god: «When the patron of the scribes changed from a goddess to a god, only male scribes were employed in the temples and palaces, and history began to be written from an androcentric perspective» (Rorlich-Leavitt,

qtd. in Eisler 93). Moreover, as Eisler has pointed out, writing itself was quite possibly invented by women in Sumer (71). In fact, the snake symbolism analyzed in my chapter 3 is connected with the *pharmakon* both in terms of medicine/poison and writing. Historically, both healing and writing are associated with women, hence «the intertwined serpents known as the caduceus are still the emblem of the modern medical profession. . . . This is the association of the serpent with the Goddess, an association, which, as we have seen, probably applied to both healing and prophecy» (Eisler 70). As a female scribe, Ginny is a powerful weapon of subversion. She can end the androcentric writing of history and of stories, and through her scribing create not only an individual text for herself, but a more balanced story for the rest of us.

There is both despair and hope in the novel, and it seems that, ultimately, the novel ends up believing in the potential of personal insight and a narrative that relates this insight to others. Thus, I would like to argue, it is a metafictional novel. I have hinted at metafictional characteristics of *A Thousand Acres* before, because these textualities are important in most of this article. The term metafiction «indicates a kind of fiction that comments upon fiction, that foregrounds, lays bare and defamiliarizes the literary conventions that make writing fiction possible . . .» (Wilson 294). This is what *A Thousand Acres* does when it deconstructs *King Lear*. Quite often metafictional texts will have even their characters and narrators speculate upon their conditions of existence. *A Thousand Acres* is not so radical as to have Ginny realize that she is a textual construction molded intertextually by the textual construction of Goneril. Nor does she realize that she is a character and narrator in a novel. This does not preclude the novel from being termed a metafictional text, for metafictional texts «may be either overt or covert. . . . [They] either overtly thematize or covertly *actualize* their language and/or their narrative conventions. When the language and/or narrative conventions are actualized . . . they are embedded . . . in the fiction's structural design» (Wilson 296).

There are three ways in which *A Thousand Acres* is a covertly metafictional text: First, Ginny's intertextual relationship with Goneril is made so clear in the novel that the reader cannot help realizing its importance and thus reflect upon the ontology of narrative. Of course, this also signals her story as being a fictional person's story. Second, the linguistic inscriptions I have analyzed in this chapter also serve to actualize the language of the novel metafictionally. Thus, the foregrounding of *King Lear* textualities (which I assume is intended by Jane Smiley), as well as the wealth of signification on the level of the lexicon and its etymology (which is a more or less unintended function of intertextuality) are two kinds of metafictional elements.

Third, Ginny has many self-reflexive narratorial comments in the novel. For example, one of the many times she reflects upon her past and her ancestors, she thinks about her grandmother's story:

Our ownership spread slowly over the landscape, but it spread as inevitably as ink . . . It was a satisfying story. There were, of course, details to mull over but not to speak about. One of these was my grandmother Edith . . . I used to wonder what she thought of him [Ginny's grandfather], if her reputed silence wasn't due to temperament at all, but due to fear. She was surrounded by men she had known all her life, by the great plate of land they cherished. She didn't drive a car. Possibly she had no money of her own. That detail went unrevealed by the stories. (132-33)

The story of her past is a story of patriarchy and greed. Details like women's situation were suppressed. It is therefore interesting to see that Ginny advocates narrative as a way to deal with suffering: «They [the men] had us, Rose and me, in their suffering, but they didn't have what we had with each other, a kind of ongoing narrative and commentary about what was happening . . .» (113). This statement is equally important for Ginny's personal redemption (chapter 5) and her metafictional status, transcending her situation and reflecting upon story and narrative in general. She sums up this status in a statement that is both metafictional and anti-phallogocentric:

The strongest feeling was that now I knew them all. . . . I didn't have to label them . . . Labeling them, in fact, prevented knowing them. All I had to do was to imagine them, and how I «knew» them would shimmer around them and through them, a light, an odor, a sound, a taste, a palpability that was all there to understand about each and every one of them. In a way that I had never felt when all of us were connected by history and habit and duty, or the «love» I had felt for Rose and Ty, I now felt that they were mine. (305-306)

Ginny is not involved in an Apollonian labeling of people, but an exercise of imaginative power. Freed from the social text over which Larry as Logos ruled, she can write her transient truth. She comments on the story of her family thus:

It was an involving story, frightening and suspenseful, full of significance, if only to our family, and mystery, too, since Daddy only acted, and never revealed his motives. It was a story the neighbors surely followed with relish, eager for clues to what was really going on, and ready to supply any memories or speculation that would explain unaccountable twists in the narrative. (155)

Surely it is a kind of narratorial irony to add humbly «if only to our family». Her story has relevance beyond their family, just as Shakespeare's and Smiley's texts both have relevance beyond their immediate production.

If one accepts my view that the people of Zebulon County represent traditional readers/critics of *King Lear*, Ginny's comment here is very resonant. As I argued in chapter 2, critics have tended to find clues and supply speculations about *King Lear* that follow a dominator model. Moreover, they are spectators to this drama. Ginny indicates in places that she is conscious of performing a part versus her father (cf. the sub-chapter «Modes of Individual Signification—Caroline» in chapter 4) and of playing the role of a dutiful daughter in front of them all (cf. the sub-chapter «Gaze, Sight, and Insight» in chapter 5). Deconstructionist readings of *King Lear* see Lear's madness as a crisis where he uses intertexts to try and achieve an authentic identity, trying on different roles without finding one that fits (McCanles 206). In *A Thousand Acres*, Ginny uses the intertexts of *King Lear*, body

and nature to *scribe* her identity. This might in fact be a fourth covert metafictional element: «roles, all roles, query the steadiness of fictional assertion, the solidity of psychological construction, and foreground the discontinuities, the character-splinters, of characterization» (Wilson 304).

The «character-splinters» seems to be what Ginny has in mind when she asserts the futility of trying to label the characters of her life, both in terms of logocentric metaphysics and in terms of traditional mimesis. This brings us to another splinter, Ginny's «gleaming obsidian shard». It is a surprising phrase, never before mentioned in the novel. Even if this metaphor suddenly appears in the last sentence of the novel—«This is the gleaming obsidian shard I safeguard above all the others» (371)—it is an important one. Strangely enough, Jane S. Bakerman even makes a reference to the shard in her article title, although she does not mention it at all in that article. In my analysis, this shard symbolizes the hermeneutic semiology that Ginny the character, Ginny the narrator, and *A Thousand Acres* performs. In a novel that problematizes language on so many levels, it is fitting that the closing metaphor should be so rich in meaning.

First, Ginny seems to see this shard as the key to redemption after the destruction we have seen throughout the novel; a kind of talisman that will help her in the future. *Talisman* is actually yet another meaning of the word *pharmakon* (Derrida, *Dissemination* 166). Second, the fact that it is obsidian points to its feminist project of reversing processes of dominator re-mything: obsidian mirrors were attributes of the ancient priestesses (Eisler 26). Obsidian, then, is metaphorized as female. It is also natural: Obsidian is volcanic glass, representing a truth that is of the earth instead of being man-made; it is thus more closely related to Ginny's connections with nature. These textualities are not incidental, as we will see when discussing what kind of «truth» the obsidian shard represents.

Margaret Rozga, the only published critic to discuss the obsidian shard, argues that it refers to the poison jar and that this «canning jar of poisoned sausage . . . is her safeguard against becoming like her father» (28). This interpretation points to the fact that the poison jar in the end is symbolic of something that Ginny has *rejected*. It was a burden she had to rid herself of; «the burden of having to wait and see what was going to happen» (367). It might in fact be said to represent the «truth» of patriarchy and logocentric discourse. As such, it is a shiny hard glass surface that hides the poison within. The shard may then represent a *fragment of truth*. It symbolizes a focal point of the innumerable texts that make up Ginny's textual horizon: pulling together the network of discourses into a single, hard, tangible unit that is not whole (it is not a whole glass jar), but a broken piece, ostensibly flawed. This truth will not represent itself as all-powerful. The splintering of truth into shards is instead a process of deconstructive dispersal, whereas the process of imbuing the obsidian shard with meaning, is a *scribing* of hermeneutic closure.

It is important in *A Thousand Acres* to have us *understand* the complex network of motivations at work in all texts. There must be a hermeneutic construction of meaning. We see this again in the Epilogue, where Ginny's interpretations of the people in her life are verbalized as fragments of her language of self: «Let us say that each vanished person left me something, and that I feel my inheritance when I am reminded of one of them» (370). An additional insight, which is at least equally important, is the insight that these interpretations of her life and her people constitute her inheritance and her identity: «The non-objective character of these identities cannot be overstressed. The signs of the self are produced through the interpretation and maintained through the ongoing activity of interpretive experience» (Silverman, *Inscriptions* 342). Ginny can know herself as a subjective «knowledge» or «truth» in continual interpretation, and perpetuate that knowledge in a more fruitful way for the next generation: Pammy and Linda. She recognizes her responsibility: «I have inherited Pam and

Linda. . . . We talk sometimes, with reasonable calm, about Daddy and Rose and Pete and Caroline and even Jess. They understand that all Rose could bequeath them was her view of things» (369).

To have and spread this knowledge (metafictionally, to us readers as well) is not least important in understanding Larry Cook, the transcendental signifier. Rose seems to prefer the kind of label for Larry that has been given Goneril and Regan; she will see him as evil in order to sustain her rage: «I'm telling you, if you probe and probe and try to understand, it just holds you back. You start seeing things from his point of view again, and you're just paralyzed. . . . Ginny, you don't want to understand it, or imagine it» (212). But Ginny needs to imagine—or interpret—her father in order to understand her self. Once again, Ginny refutes that kind of logocentric labeling, saying about him that «he is what he is and can't be labeled» (369). Earlier in the novel, she has criticized the logocentric reality that the men in her life inhabit. They are exemplified by Ty and Henry: «Here, I thought, were two people who agreed on so many things that their opinions automatically took on the appearance of reality. It was a small world they lived in, really, small, complete, and forever curving back to itself» (267-68).

She has to question the reality of such a small world and open it up for new readings. In the end, through her imaginative power as bodied narrator, Ginny understands how the patriarchy has worked on her and her family. Many things remind her of her father and keep in the foreground of her mind how the controlling urge of the Apollonian has motivated Larry's actions as King, patriarch, and signifier:

I can imagine what he probably chose never to remember—the goad of an unthinkable urge, pricking him, pressing him, wrapping him in an impenetrable fog of self that must have seemed, when he wandered around the house late at night after working and drinking, like the very darkness. This is the gleaming obsidian shard I safeguard above all the others. (370-71)

The key word here is *imagine*. The redeeming factor of the tragic plot of *A Thousand Acres* is precisely Ginny's ability to interpret *why* things happened. This is the major achievement of the novel, having Ginny obtain access to the writing that brought the «truth» of patriarchal power into being. This is also a revolution in poetic language, bringing the semiotic into the symbolic. It can only be a fragment of truth, as it is a subjective interpretation, but it can still be dispersed in a new narrative. Larry could not understand, blinded as he was by a «fog of self», intoxicated by the power of his social text. Larry and Lear, we see now, did not make decisions on the spur of the moment (the meaning of «goad» in *King Lear*: «All this done / Upon the gad?» [I.ii 25-26]); their actions were all part of a larger dominator process.

The shard of truth we can find in *A Thousand Acres* is a healing *pharmakon* in my reading. It is not a poison, but a medicine passed on from the *pharmakeus* Ginny to us readers, to interpret again and write our own truths. In this manner, perhaps the dominator process can be turned.

In/Conclusion

As Julia Kristeva might have argued: all forms of language are sites of struggle. . . . It is up to us to make the struggle over the meaning of the sign—the meaning of the text—an explicit and inevitable item on the cultural agenda. (Moi, «Feminist Literary Criticism» 220)

[T]here has always been an ethico-political dimension to Derrida's writing, manifesting itself particularly in a respect for *otherness*, be it textual, historical, or personal. . . . This responsibility toward the other is also a responsibility toward the *future*, since it involves the struggle to create openings within which the other can appear beyond any of our programs and predictions, can come to transform what we know or think we know. (Attridge 5)

In other words, poetic language and mimesis may appear as an argument complicitous with dogma—we are familiar with religion's use of them—but they may also set in motion what dogma represses. . . . And thus, its complexity unfolded by its practices, the signifying process joins social revolution. (Kristeva 112)

In my dictionary, there are four listings on the word «conclusion». Its most common meaning is that it is «something that you decide is true as a result of knowing that other things are true» (*Collins Cobuild* 289). The conclusion of theses like this one, then, usually consists of synthesizing remarks functioning as a persuasive punchline that justifies the author's analysis. This is a problem in this case.

As the title of my final section indicates, reading literature does not result in neat conclusions unless one decides to ignore some of the multiple significations the text performs with the reader, as well as the significations *of* the reader. Much has been said on the necessary inconclusiveness of reading literature, and I will not add to that here. I will just emphasize that my perspective of hermeneutic semiology prevents me from embracing the idea of undecidability completely. This is not solely an «inconclusion». My reading of *A Thousand Acres* achieves some kind of closure in that I, the reader/writer, decides to stop the play of significations at a certain point. This article, as stated in introduction, is not a classical

analysis of *A Thousand Acres*, but an exploration of this play. It has, as they say, been a good read, but now it must end.

Not «inconclusion», then. I would prefer to break that word up and use the word «conclusion» preceded by the separate modifier «in». Again, my dictionary informs me that «**in conclusion** is used to indicate that you are just about to say the last thing that you want to say» (*Collins Cobuild* 289). The last things I want to say in this article, follow two main interests in writing it. First, I want to reflect briefly upon the most important arguments I have made. Second, I want to express my ideas about their wider implications. For, even though this is simply a subjectively *scribed* commentary upon certain intertextualities, it will hopefully help further the debate both of the concepts and theories I have read and written, and the two literary works I have also read and written.

My argument about both concepts and texts is informed by an interest in the philosophy of meaning. I have focused on the term *intertextuality* to indicate the vast meaning potential in the field of signification a text inhabits, and coined the term *foregrounding* to describe a process in which a subject reads these intertexts in order to create a coherent whole. In parallel fashion, I argue that we are all textual subjects in our linguistic processing and cognitive faculties, which (to a greater or lesser extent) even includes our physical being—our bodies. Thus, we might also be said to embody intertextuality on a large scale: to create a coherent whole, we foreground texts from the immense intertextual space of reality as we see it, and they become part of our horizons and our selves. This parallel indicates that a reading based on hermeneutic semiology is an appropriate way to read if one wants to challenge traditional objectivism and use oneself in reading. For, both in reading literary texts and the world, we find that truth and meaning are continually being dispersed due to the instability of language. But we are also able to continually re-construct new truths and meanings. People and texts are in a continual process of signification.

This process of deconstruction and reconstruction is dramatized in *A Thousand Acres*. I have identified several interesting critical trends in the reception of *King Lear*, the most important being the Apollonian labeling of the elder sisters as unquestionably evil. This label entails a denial of their individuality, and is striking in that even feminists have not taken issue with it. Also, I have found certain characteristics of Shakespeare's play to perpetuate and strengthen dominator myths of (gender) hierarchies. *A Thousand Acres* represents postmodern literary criticism; both literature and criticism of literature. Thus, it performs a literary hermeneutic semiology which deconstructs both *King Lear* and its traditional interpretations, to reconstruct it into a decidedly new interpretation.

Moreover, this is done on American soil. Just as the numerous texts contained within *King Lear* follow a patriarchal and capitalist model, so do American metaphorizations of nature. *A Thousand Acres* is set on a farm, which foregrounds the conflict between a «wild» nature which the Apollonian mind must conquer and destroy, and the «civilization» of dominator hierarchies created in our Western tradition. However, Ginny is able to read the textualities of nature and re-construct them into something more fruitful. As my analysis of the motif of the tiles has illustrated, this process is facilitated by Ginny's increasing awareness of the poisonous nature of the social text. This signifying structure of Zebulon County, of which Larry is the Transcendental Signifier, is one she must read and interpret in order to scribe her own self.

The other characters that are close to her are reminders of what happens if she does not do this. Caroline surrendered to the existing power structure, buying relative freedom from the patriarchy by supporting it. Rose and Pete became victims to their own rage, a rage that wore them both out and in the end killed them. Jess remained the coldly detached stranger, and Ty was a mere shadow of a man. Ginny's realization that these are all victims of the poison of the social text is an important one for her work in *textualizing* nature and her body. She utilizes

both nature and her body to interpret her family and her self, seeing them as texts she can rewrite and thus escape the signifiatory power of her father. With this bodily empowerment comes visual power—she shifts from an object position where everybody can push her around, to a subject position where she can both reclaim the memory of her body and control her own visuality. Along with the failed alternatives of the other characters, her abusive father and her absent mother serve as con/texts against which she must define herself.

Ginny's deconstruction and reconstruction of the Text of her life illustrates an overlapping between some of the theoretical concepts I have been using. Deconstruction indicates that her *scribing* of self is—on a philosophical level—a way to bring the larger play of signification—*écriture*—into the phallogocentric structure of both her life and of *King Lear*. Within the realm of psychology, this process can be termed a Kristevan revolution in poetic language: bringing the drives of the semiotic into symbolic actualization. Paglia's and Eisler's theories illustrate that these ideas have a historical background in our Western tradition as a conflict between the dominator sky-cult of the Apollonian and the partnership earth-cult of the Dionysian. Kolodny's ecofeminist perspective points to the political potential of the processes that these concepts describe.

We see this potential in that Ginny as a character in *A Thousand Acres* performs a hermeneutic semiology where she re-interprets her life and her self—a valuable talisman made of obsidian. In addition, as the narrator of *A Thousand Acres* she performs a hermeneutic semiology by which *King Lear* is re-interpreted. Thus, her insights on both these levels are offered as a healing remedy to us readers. The inscription of Ginny as an intertextual counterpart to Goneril and as a *pharmakos/pharmakeus* alerts the reader to this metafictional level. The undecidability of text and language is not monstrous, but offers interpretative freedom. In my reading of these intertextualities, the reader must also perform a hermeneutic semiology in order to realize the fullest potential of these textual movements.

Because of the hermeneutic semiology Ginny and the novel have provided us with, we can also deconstruct and reconstruct the texts of the world that we encounter.

Beyond the Text?

Some deconstructors assert that there is nothing beyond the Text. The adversaries of deconstruction have waged numerous attacks on this notion. This article demonstrates the liberating potential of regarding the world as a Text, as complex networks of signifying structures that are not eternal and unchangeable, but which may be rewritten for the improvement of our societies. *A Thousand Acres*, both on its microlevel of rewriting a social text and its macrolevel of rewriting *King Lear* demonstrate this too. As the epigraphs to this conclusion indicate, there is a strong ethico-political engagement in my writing here. Inevitably so, since such a commitment is also the main premise of *A Thousand Acres*. Not only do I follow the Law of literature, as quoted in introduction, but I would like this text to have some import beyond the purely academic.

My project as well as Smiley's, then, attempts to engage wide-reaching cultural issues. My brand of literary hermeneutic semiology, appropriated from Jacques Derrida via Hugh Silverman, is vigilantly anti-hierarchical. In my scribing, I have struggled to create openings in the text so that the tyranny of closure is avoided and new truths can be continually instituted:

Thus, literary and cultural texts of all kinds constitute a society's ideological practice, and literary and cultural criticism constitutes an activity that, in its own meager way, either submits to, or self-consciously attempts to transform, the political effects of that indispensable social practice. (Kavanagh 319-20)

In this humble way, I hope my reading of the intertextualities of literature, body, and nature can help foreground this ethico-political dimension of Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*. Her

novel points to dominator myths that have been constructed over centuries, and shows us that such myths must be deconstructed for a more balanced world view to be constructed. This kind of insight

may linger there for a day, or even a week. But relentlessly the force of the teaching of centuries works to undermine it, until what is left is merely a fleeting impression of a time of great excitement and hope. Only through reinforcement from other sources—both familiar and unfamiliar—can we hope to retain this knowledge long enough to make it our own. (Eisler 59)

My reading of *A Thousand Acres* is my contribution to such a reinforcement from literary studies. I hope that my reading of the novel has brought out that it is not only a feminist project (a designation that might be stigmatizing in these «post-feminist» times), but a «humanist» one: one that challenges all hierarchical thought and all suppression, not only on the basis of gender.

If these issues can be foregrounded in people's horizons, maybe we can change the meaning of the sign and the meaning of the text. For our horizons are not only what we use in reading literature, it is what governs our conceptions and thoughts in understanding the world. Changing texts and horizons may mean changing the world.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 5. ed. Fort Worth, FL.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988.
- Armstrong, Charles. «Introductions: Jacques Derrida and the Question of Literature.» *Teorismer*. Eds. Even Arntzen, Rolf Gaasland. Tromsøstudier i litteratur 5. Tromsø: Universitetet i Tromsø, 1995: 7-28.
- «*A Thousand Acres*. About the Production.» Aug.12, 1997. *Movieweb*. Online. Internet. Sep.24, 1997.
- Atkins, G. Douglas. Introduction. Atkins and Bergeron 1-19.
- Atkins, G. Douglas and David M. Bergeron, eds. *Shakespeare and Deconstruction*. American University Studies Ser. IV. Vol. 57. New York: Peter Lang, 1988.
- Attridge, Derek. Introduction. Jacques Derrida *Acts of Literature* 1-29.
- Bamber, Linda. «The Woman Reader in *King Lear*.» (1986) *Shakespeare King Lear*. Ed. Russel Fraser. 291-300.
- Bakerman, Jane S. « 'The Gleaming Obsidian Shard': Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*.» *Midamerica: The Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature* 19 (1992): 127-37.
- Barthes, Roland. *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*. (1975) Trans. Richard Howard. London: Macmillan, 1977.
- . *S/Z*. (1970) Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.
- Becker, Carl. «Everyman His Own Historian.» *American Historical Review* 37.2 (1932): 221-236.
- Bradley, A.C. «King Lear.» *Kermode* 76-107.
- Brøgger, Fredrik Chr. *Image-making Discourse*. Diss. Universitetet i Tromsø, 1995.

- Carroll, Robert and Stephen Prickett, eds. *The Bible. Authorized King James Version.* (1611)
Introduction and notes by eds. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Cheung, King-Kok. *Articulate Silences.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993.
- Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary.* N.p.: Collins/Kunnskapsforlaget, [c. 1992].
- Dear, Pamela S., ed. *Contemporary Authors.* New Revision Ser. Vol.50. Detroit: Gale, 1996.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Acts of Literature.* Ed. Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- - -. *Dissemination.* (1972) Trans. and introduction Barbara Johnson. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.
- - -. *Positions.* (1972) Trans. and introduction Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.
- - -. *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs.* (1967) Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973.
- Devine, Maureen. *Woman and Nature—Literary Reconceptualizations.* Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1992.
- Duffy, Martha. «The Case for Goneril and Regan.» Review of *A Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley. *Time*, Nov.11, 1991: 92.
- Eagleton, Terry. *William Shakespeare.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
- Eisler, Riane. *The Chalice and the Blade.* San Fransisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Erickson, Peter. *Rewriting Shakespeare, Rewriting Ourselves.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1991.
- Esch, Deborah. «Deconstruction.» Greenblatt and Gunn 374-391.
- Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class?* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1980.
- Fraser, Russel. «The Date and Source of *King Lear*.» *Shakespeare King Lear.* Ed. Russel Fraser. 190-193.
- French, Marilyn. *Shakespeare's Division of Experience.* London: Cape, 1982.

- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. (1960) Trans. n.a. 2nd ed. London: Sheed & Ward, 1979.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
- Gottlieb, Roger S., ed. *An Anthology of Western Marxism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1989.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, and Giles Gunn, eds. *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*. New York: MLA, 1992.
- Hartmann, Heidi. «The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Toward a More Progressive Union.» (1979) Gottlieb 316-337.
- Holloway, John. «King Lear.» Kermode 176-197.
- Høgås, Tore. «Body and Nature: *A Thousand Acres*.» February 1997. Online. Internet. August 13, 1997.
- Johnson, Barbara. Translator's Introduction. *Dissemination*. By Jacques Derrida. vii-xxxiii.
- Johnson, Samuel. From Preface and Notes. *King Lear* 1765 edition. Kermode 27-29.
- Kavanagh, James H. «Ideology.» *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. 306-20.
- Kellman, Steven G. «Food Fights in Iowa: The Vegetarian Stranger in Recent Midwest Fiction.» *Virginia Quarterly Review* 71 (1995): 435-47.
- Keppel, Tim. «Goneril's Version: *A Thousand Acres* and *King Lear*.» *South Dakota Review* 33.2 (1995): 105-117.
- Kermode, Frank, ed. *Shakespeare: King Lear: A Casebook*. Rev.ed. Casebook Ser. London: Macmillan, 1992.
- Kolodny, Annette. *The Lay of the Land*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1975.
- Kristeva, Julia. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Mack, Maynard. «Actors and Redactors.» Kermode 49-76.

- McCanles, Michael. «Shakespeare, Intertextuality, and the Decentered Self.» Atkins and Bergeron 193-211.
- McLuskie, Kathleen. «The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare: *King Lear* and *Measure for Measure*.» *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*. Ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985. 88-108.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. London: Wildwood House, 1982.
- Miner, Valerie. *A Walking Fire*. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 1994.
- Mitchell, Juliet. Excerpt from *Women's Estate*. (1971) Gottlieb 296-315.
- Moi, Toril. «Feminist Literary Criticism.» *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Ann Jefferson and David Robey. 2nd ed. London: Batsford, 1986. 204-221.
- - -. Introduction. *The Kristeva Reader*. By Julia Kristeva. Ed. Toril Moi. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986. 1-22.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Francis Golffing. New York: Doubleday, 1956.
- Norris, Christopher. *Deconstruction—Theory and Practice*. (1982) Rev. ed. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Paglia, Camille. *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1990.
- Rowe, John Carlos. «Postmodernist Studies.» Greenblatt and Gunn 179-208.
- Rozga, Margaret. «Sisters in a Quest—*Sister Carrie* and *A Thousand Acres*: The Search for Identity in Gendered Territory.» *Midwestern Miscellany* 22 (1994): 18-29.

- Sandhaug, Christina. «Caliban's Intertextual Refusal: *The Tempest* in *Brave New World* and *Galatea 2.2*.» *Nordlit* 2 (1997): 23-44.
- Schlegel, A.W. From *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*. Kermode 29-32.
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Ed. Russell Fraser. (1963) Rev.ed. New York: Signet, 1987.
- Silverman, Hugh. *Inscriptions: Between Phenomenology and Structuralism*. New York: Routledge, 1987.
- . *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Smiley, Jane. *A Thousand Acres*. New York: Fawcett, 1991.
- . *The Greenlanders*. New York: Knopf, 1988.
- . «The Life of the Body.» (1990) *Antæus* 75/76 (Autumn 1994): 190-206.
- . *Moo*. New York: Knopf, 1995.
- Stearney, Lynn M. «Feminism, Ecofeminism, and the Maternal Archetype: Motherhood as a Feminine Universal.» *Communication Quarterly* 42.2 (1994): 145-59.
- Thompson, Ann. *King Lear*. The Critics Debate. London: Macmillan, 1988.
- The True Chronicle History of King Leir*. (1605) Excerpts. Shakespeare *King Lear* 204-211.
- Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. (1899) London: Unwin, 1970.
- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. (1930) Trans. Talcott Parsons. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Welsford, Enid. «The Fool in *King Lear*.» Kermode 123-134.
- Wilson, Robert R. «This is Not a Meta-Review of Three Books on Metafiction (But what Account should be given of a Self-Referential Title?).» *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*. (June 1985): 292-305.



Publikasjonsliste fra Høgskolen i Harstad

Fra og med 1996 ble tidligere publikasjonsserier ved Høgskolen i Harstad erstattet med en **Skriftserie** og en **Arbeidsnotatserie**.

Skriftserien - ISSN 0807-2698

- 1998/19** **Tore Høgås:** «Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Text: Intertextualities of Literature, Body, and Nature in Jane Smiley's A Thousand Acres.»
(ISBN 82-453-0113-2) Kr. 130,-
- 1998/18** **Harald Torsteinsen:** «Om å skynde seg langsomt. Hvordan skape oppslutning om organisasjonsreformer i kommunesektoren?»
(ISBN 82-453-0112-4) Kr. 40,-
- 1998/17** **Truls Erikson:** «Intellektuell kapital: Hvilke grep må til?»
(ISBN 82-453-0111-6) Kr. 40,-
- 1998/16** **Ruben Moi:** «Voice and Vision - An analysis of the Allegorical Aspects in Seamus Heaney's Oevre» (ISBN 82-453-0110-8) Kr. 120,-
- 1998/15** **Tore Einar Johansen / Kjell Toften:** «Retraining of Russian Military Officers - a feasibility study» (ISBN 82-453-0109-4) Kr. 50,-
- 1998/14** **Alexander Kwesi Kassah:** «The Community Idea»
(ISBN 82-453-0107-8) Kr. 50,-
- 1998/13** **Alexander Kwesi Kassah:** «Community-Based Rehabilitation in the city: A case of Jamestown-Accra, Ghana» (ISBN 82-453-0105-1) Kr. 50,-
- 1998/12** **Kjell Toften:** «Chain Integration in the Norwegian Hotel Industry - industry overview, causes, and some strategic implications»
(ISBN 82-453-0104-3) Kr. 50,-
- 1998/11** **Baard Borge:** «NS' mange ansikter: Innholdsanalyse av et propagandaskrift fra 1944» (ISBN 82-453-0103-5) Kr. 70,-
- 1998/10** **Truls Erikson:** «Entrepreneurial Capital - The Emerging Venture's Most Important Asset & Competitive Advantage»
(ISBN 82-453-0098-5) Kr. 40,-
- 1998/9** **Anne Marit Bygdnes:** «Toalett-trening av mennesker med psykisk utviklingshemming. En teoretisk drøfting og et empirisk bidrag».

(ISBN 82-453-0097-7) Kr. 120,-

- 1998/8 **Tanja Susann Ihlhaug/Leif Hugo Hansen:** «Medbestemmelse eller mer bestemmelse? - bruker lederne de tillitsvalgte?» - *En undersøkelse om ledelsesatferd og ansattes medbestemmelsesrett i kommunal virksomhet i Troms Fylke.* (ISBN 82-453-0096-9) Kr. 90,-
- 1998/7 **Kjell Toften:** «Express Reiser - Scandinavian Package Tour Industry» (ISBN 82-453-0095-0) Kr. 40,-
- 1998/6 **Stein Mikkelsen:** «Safe Community - Symbol and Co-operation. A study of inter-sectoral co-operation and development in a Norwegian community» (ISBN 82-453-0094-2) Kr. 50,-
- 1998/5 **Truls Erikson:** «A Study of Entrepreneurial Intentions Among a Cohort MBAs - The Extended Bird Model». (ISBN 82-453-0093-4). Kr. 50,-
- 1998/4 **Arild Wikan:** «4 Periodicity in Leslie Matrix Models with Density Dependent Survival Probabilities» (ISBN 82-453-0092-6) Kr. 70,-
- 1998/3 **Arild Wikan:** «Dynamical Consequences of Reproductive Delay in Leslie Matrix Models with Nonlinear Survival Probabilities» (ISBN 82-453-0091-8) Kr. 70,-
- 1998/2 **Terje Thomsen:** «Gruppeintervjuet - avgrensning, anvendelse og anvisning» (ISBN 82-453-0089-6) Kr. 50,-
- 1998/1 **Alexander Kwesi Kassah:** «Community Based Rehabilitation and Stigma Management by Physically Disabled People in Ghana». (ISBN 82-453-0088-8) Kr. 50,-
- 1997/17 **Tore L.Jensen:** «Interorganizational Governance Structure and Outlet Economic Performance». An Application of Accounting Data in Interorganizational Performance Measurement. (ISBN 82-453-0088-8) Kr. 110,-
- 1997/16 **Tore L.Jensen:** «En analyse av ukedagseffekter i futuresmarkedet for elektrisk kraft». (ISBN 82-453-0086-1) Kr. 50,-
- 1997/15 **Baard Borge:** «Krig, oppgjør og nasjonal konsensus - Etterkrigsoppgjørenes sosiale virkninger i Nederland, Danmark og Norge». (ISBN 82-453-0084-5) Kr. 50,-
- 1997/14 **Tore Einar Johansen:** «Myter og virkelighet om samer - 'de e forskjell på folk og finna'» (ISBN 82-453-0083-7) Kr. 40,-

- 1997/13 **Eli Samuelsen:** «Den besværlige tiden» - Betragtninger om praksisopplæringen i sykepleierutdanningen (ISBN 82-453-0082-9) Kr. 50,-
- 1997/12 **Eli Samuelsen:** «Du er ikke verdig en plass i herberget - Refleksjon over etikk og etiske vurderingers plass i sykepleien» (ISBN 82-453-0081-0) Kr. 50,-
- 1997/11 **Vegard A. Schancke/Miriam G. Lukwago:** «A Programme for Early Intercultural Psychosocial Intervention for Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Seekers and Refugees (EM) - a Group Approach» (ISBN 82-453-0080-2) Kr. 50,-
- 1997/10 **Hilde Nordahl-Pedersen:** «Alternativ medisin og skolemedisin - en paradigmediskusjon» (ISBN 82-453-0068-3) Kr. 50,-
- 1997/9 **Inger Aksberg Johansen:** «Reminisens i et interaksjonsperspektiv - En kvalitativ undersøkelse basert på intervju med eldre og sykepleiere» (ISBN 82-453-0079-9) Kr. 120,-
- 1997/8 **Aud Merethe Alme:** «Lønnsreform og ledermobilitet - Metodiske tilnærminger og resultater» (ISBN 82-453-0078-0) Kr. 70,-
- 1997/7 **Truls Erikson:** «Should Managerial Competence be in the Retail Growth Performance Equation?». (ISBN 82-453-0076-4) Kr. 50,-
- 1997/6 **Børre Kristiansen/Steinar Johansen:** «Rammer for omsorg - Alternative modeller for organisering av Hamarøy Bygdeheim» (ISBN 82-453-0071-3) Kr. 70,-
- 1997/5 **Truls Erikson:** «Retail Profit Performance and The Relationship to Marketing Outcomes and Financial Structure» (ISBN 82-453-0075-6) Kr. 50,-
- 1997/4 **Rolf Utkvitne:** «Kompetanse i Detaljhandelen». (ISBN 82-453-0064-0) Kr. 70,-
- 1997/3 **Hilde Nordahl-Pedersen (red.):** «Konferanserapport fra Helsedagene i Nord-Norge 1996». (ISBN 82-453-0069-1). Kr. 150
- 1997/2 **Truls Erikson:** «A Study of Career Choice Intentions Among a Cohort HBS MBA Candidates. The Ajzen Model». (ISBN 82-453-0074-8). Kr. 70,-
- 1997/1 **Truls Erikson:** «An Empirical Study of Entrepreneurial Choice Intentions Among a Cohort of MIT Sloan Fellows. The Shapero Model». (ISBN 82-453-0072-1) Kr. 50,-

1997 **Stine Margrethe Hem/Ådne Danielsen/Anne Marie Bakken:**
«Ansvarsreformen i Kvæfjord - En stor oppgave til en liten
kommune». (ISBN 82-90586-49-3, i samarb. med Diaforsk) Kr. 190,-

1996/1 **Arne-Johan Johansen:** «Fra Dårekiste til normalisert omsorg».
(ISBN 82-453-0063-2). Kr. 100,-

Arbeidsnotatserien - ISSN 0809-2567

1998/2 **Kjell Toften:** «Reiselivsnæringen i et markedsføringsperspektiv - en
introduksjon» Et kompendium for RE 4 Turistmarkedsføring
(ISBN 82-453-0108-6) Kr. 70,-

1998/1 **Anne Marit Bygdnes:** «Toalett-trening av psykisk utviklingshemmede»
(ISBN 82-543-0099-3) Kr. 70,-

1997/2 **Aud Merethe Alme:** «Prosjektskisse: Tjenestemannsorganisasjoner
og forvaltningsreformer». (ISBN 82-453-0085-3) Kr. 50,-

1997/1 **Truls Erikson:** «Applying the Canonical Structure of Analysis by
Means of Algebra on Managerial Competence and Retail Growth
Performance Variables». (ISBN 82-453-0077-2) Kr. 40,-

For eldre utgivelser: Ta nærmere kontakt med Høgskolen i Harstad ved Kurs- og
forsknings konsulenten - tlf.: 77 05 81 00

Bestilling av publikasjoner

Jeg bestiller herved:

| Navn på serien | Nummer | Forfatter | Tittel | Pris |
|----------------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Ved samlet kjøp over kr. 500 dekker Høgskolen i Harstad porto/frakt - ellers kommer porto i tillegg.

Navn:

Organisasjon:

Adresse:

Postnr. /sted:

Tlf.: Fax:

Vennligst fyll ut skjemaet og returner til:

Høgskolen i Harstad, 9400 Harstad
Tlf.: 77 05 81 00 Fax: 77 05 81 01





Visste du at...

... Høgskolen i Harstad med sine ca 1.000 studenter er blant landets minste høgskoler. Et godt studiemiljø og en uformell tone med nærhet og god oppfølging av den enkelte student preger skolen. Ved årsskiftet 1996/97 flyttet vi inn i nye lokaler som ligger idyllisk og sentralt plassert ved byens havnepromenade.

... våre to fagavdelinger - økonomi-/samfunnsfag og helse-/sosialfag - gir flere studiemuligheter blant ulike grunnutdanninger og videreutdanninger:

Grunnutdanninger:

- Varehandel og distribusjon
- Økonomi og administrasjon
- Reiseliv og turisme
- Engelsk grunnfag
- Statsvitenskap grunnfag
- Barnevernpedagogutdanning
- Sykepleierutdanning
- Vernepleierutdanning

Videreutdanninger:

- Revisjon
- Internasjonal handel
- Ledelse og organisasjon
- Helse- og sosialadministrasjon
- Rehabilitering
- Psykiatrisk sykepleie
- Reiseliv og turisme

...foruten ordinære undervisningsoppgaver og kurs påtar Høgskolen i Harstad seg også forsknings- og utredningsoppdrag for næringslivet og det offentlige. Våre ca. 60 fagansatte innehar høy kompetanse og dekker et bredt faglig spekter: Økonomi/administrasjon, sosialøkonomi, ledelse/organisasjon, statistikk, statsvitenskap, sosialantropologi, sosiologi, engelsk, matematikk, pedagogikk, spesialpedagogikk, vernepleie, psykologi, sykepleievitenskap, matematikk, jus.

Post- og besøksadresse: Havnegata 5, 9400 Harstad

Telefon 77 05 81 00. Telefaks 77 05 81 01

Internett: <http://www.hih.no>



