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Playing in the Dark and Dirt: Tomboyism and its Image in Carson McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding* as Novels and Films

Hry v temnotě a špíně: tomboyismus a jeho obraz v románech Carson McCullers *Srdce je osamělý lovec* a *Svatebčanka* a jejich filmových verzích

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Prohlašuji, že jsem dizertační práci napsala samostatně, pouze s použitím citovaných pramenů a literatury.
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V Olomouci 28. května 2012 | Olomouc, 28 May 2012

Abstract

My Ph.D. dissertation *Playing in the Dark and Dirt: Tomboyism and Its Image in Carson McCullers's* The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter *and* The Member of the Wedding *as Novels and Films* deals with the phenomenon of tomboyism and the forms it adopts in two novels by the southern writer Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940) and *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), and films and TV programs made from these two novels across the second half of the 20th century. The first part of my work outlines possible theoretical approaches to tomboyism from the perspective of gender (androgyny, feminist criticism, female masculinity, masquerade and gender performance), discusses the issue of the tomboy's liminal position between childhood and adulthood as well as between masculinity and femininity and introduces the method of intersectional analysis which, combined with queer theory addressing identity categories as fluid, allows me to analyze questions of race, class and sexuality arising from the specific regional setting of McCullers's work. Subsequently, I apply this methodology to the reading of the film and TV versions of the novels, constituting new ways their tomboyish protagonists can be viewed – as subversive characters deconstructing fixed ideas of dominance, otherness and subordination.

Abstrakt

Má dizertační práce *Hry v temnotě a špíně: tomboyismus a jeho obraz v románech Carson McCullersové* Srdce je osamělý lovec *a* Svatebčanka *a jejich filmových verzích* se zabývá fenoménem tomboyismu a způsobu, jímž se projevuje ve dvou románech jižanské autorky Carson McCullersové, *Srdce je osamělý lovec* (1940) a *Svatebčanka* (1946), a jejich filmových a televizních verzích vznikajících napříč druhou polovinou 20. století. První část práce nastiňuje možné přístupy k tomboyismu z hlediska genderu (androgynie, feministická kritika, ženská maskulinita, maškaráda a genderová performance) a otevírá otázku tomboyovy liminální pozice mezi dětstvím a dospělostí i mezi femininitou a maskulinitou. Dále zavádí metodu intersekční analýzy, jež umožňuje, ve spojení s pojetím kategorií identity coby něčeho proměnlivého, s nímž přichází queer teorie, analyzovat otázky rasy, třídy a sexuality pramenící ze specifického regionálního ukotvení románů McCullersové. Práce následně aplikuje tuto metodologii na interpretaci filmových a televizních verzí obou románů a nastoluje nové způsoby čtení jejich tomboyských protagonistů jako subverzivních entit rozrušujících fixní ideje dominance, jinakosti a podřízenosti.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Theme and Goal

The following pages will deal with the character of the tomboy, and its representations in two novels by Carson McCullers (*The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, 1940, and *The Member of the Wedding*, 1946), and their film and television versions, produced across the second half of the 20th century. Analyzing the shifting configurations of gender, sexuality, age, race, region and class in the concept of tomboyism and its selected literary and film representations, this work introduces a new way to approach tomboyism, linking the issues of masquerade and performance elaborated by feminist and queer theory with intersectional analysis, which foregrounds the work of other identity facets besides gender. Tomboyism is thus developed as a potentially subversive concept which discloses and dismantles traditional operations of gender, race, sexuality and class divisions, on the much-contested territory of American white, middle-class female childhood and adolescence, and work to re-formulate these categories in the process.

The tomboy, or "a girl who behaves in a manner usually considered boyish,"[1] is a phenomenon with a history in American society and culture, a series of histories in fact, depending on the chosen viewpoint. Feminists see tomboyism as a response to patriarchal society, as an early-feminist stance, both in terms of the life-phase most of them associate with tomboys (childhood to early adulthood), and the era when it was promoted by women writers and lifestyle advisers (mid-19th century). Queer theorists frame the tomboy as "pre-butch,"[2] while for lesbian writers the character is proto-lesbian.

The above-quoted dictionary definition views tomboyism as a gender-bending behavior, like cross-dressing, androgyny, and transsexuality. The tomboy is seen as crossing the barrier between traditional femininity and masculinity, prefering boys' attire and activities over girls' ones, whatever these may be at a given time and place. This protean nature of the concept, its dependence on actual gender

[1] "Tomboy," *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2008 ed.
[2] See for instance Judith Halberstam's discussion of tomboyism in her *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) 187–93.

configurations, as well as its smooth movement among various social and fictional representations, allows tomboyism to transform without losing its legitimacy and relevance.[3] On the other hand, such a degree of fluidity might keep a person, trying to define tomboyism, perplexed, as it results in a great variety of embodiments, from small girls, adolescent lesbians to adult cross-dressers and feminist intellectuals, to name just a few. What's more, some theories do not stop at white girls/women, who were historically connected with tomboyism, but extend the scope of the concept to embrace African Americans, Asian Americans or Latino Americans as well. It is therefore necessary for me to redraw the boundaries of tomboyism to avoid this "anything goes" scenario.[4]

I will thus return to the roots of the concept in American culture and deal with white middle-class girl betweeen childhood and adolescence as my prototypical tomboy. I will also take the protean nature of tomboyism into account and consider actual configurations of power, and set theoretical issues against their cultural and social representations.

The focus on the two novels of Carson McCullers mentioned above suits these concerns very well – they situate tomboyism in a very specific environment of southern culture of the 1930s and 1940s, work with race,

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[3] For the purposes of my work I will limit my inquiry upon American culture, i.e. the culture of the United States. For excursions into other cultures, see, for instance, Marilyn P. Safir, Amir Rosenmann, and Orly Kloner, "Tomboyism, Sexual Orientation and Adult Gender Roles in Israeli Women," *Sex Roles* 48.9–10 (May 2003): 401–10; or the special issue of *Journal of Lesbian Studies* on tomboyism, in which Wan-Chuan Kao deals with "premodern, spiritual tomboyism" in the cult of French childhood saint figure Sainte Foy, see *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15 (2011): 450–65. Tomboyism has become a reflected phenomenon in Asia as well, primarily in the frame of same-sex desire. See, for instance, Megan Sinnott, *Toms and Dees: Transgender Identity and Female Same-Sex Relationships in Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), or Carmen Ka Man Tong, "Being a Young Tomboy in Hong Kong: The Life and Identity Construction of Lesbian Schoolgirls," *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities*, ed. Fran Martin et al. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008) 117–30. In Japanese popular culture, tomboy figure is a staple manga character and it is called "otemba."

[4] The all-embracing approach, allowing for any female non-conformist behavior in the sphere of gender and sexuality to be included under the umbrella of tomboyism, is characteristic of the first book-length study on tomboyism, Michelle Ann Abate's *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), as well as anthologies of "tomboy narratives," literary as well as real-life. See Christian McEwen, ed., *Jo's Girls: Tomboy Tales of High Adventure, True Grit & Real Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), and Lynne Yamaguchi and Karen Barber, eds., *Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-Do* (Los Angeles: Alyson Publications, 1995).

sexuality and class reverberations inherent in tomboy characters, as well as with their interrelations with characters that might be labelled as "other," be they African Americans or deaf-mute homosexuals. Last, but not least, both literary works stress one particular aspect, which is important in my view of the phenomenon – its liminality. McCullers is crucial in the history of tomboyism for her heightened attention to the breach, or threshold, between tomboyish childhood and strictly gendered adolescence, and the introduction of liminal existence as a life-long identity option.

Tomboyism is difficult to conceptualize for other reasons as well – while there is something called a "tomboy canon" in literary history, a list of works most scholars agree upon,[5] "tomboy film," as a set of films is a very loose category, and the films it covers share little more than nonconformist female characters.[6]

The situation is slightly different with adaptations of literary works featuring tomboys, as is the case with both *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding,* the film versions of which will form the core of my work. As *The Member of the Wedding* was adapted four times for film and television, and as its first version from 1952 set the tone for many following ones, I will devote a greater deal of attention to this group of films. From the tomboy as a freak, too tall, anxious, aggressive and theatrical, played by Julie

[5] Most critics and literary historians agree on a set of books that form the core of the canon. Most of them children's and adolescent literature, they range from *Little Women* (Louisa May Alcott, 1868–69), *What Katy Did* (Susan Coolidge, 1872), *Gypsy Breynton* series (Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 1866–67), *Caddie Woodlawn* (Carol Ryrie Brink), shortly, as Christian McEwen has put it, "very white, very upper middle class, almost all written in the 70 years between 1866 and 1936." To change this perception, McEwen proposes "a new list of tomboy heroines" from the novels including *The Member of the Wedding* (Carson McCullers, 1946), *Orlando* (Virginia Woolf, 1928), *The Woman Warrior* (Maxine Hong Kingston, 1975), *Stone Butch Blues* (Leslie Feinberg, 1993), and *Sula* (Toni Morrison, 1973), i.e. heroines who are "not just white and North American, but Black and Hispanic and European and Asian." Christian McEwen, Introduction, *Jo's Girls* xviii.

[6] The term "tomboy film" is used by Rebecca Bell-Metereau in her *Hollywood Androgyny* and Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity.* The films they discuss range from *Woman of the Year* (1942, dir. George Stevens) with Katherine Hepburn as an emancipated busy woman who has to learn to slow her hectic tempo and care more for her husband, to *National Velvet* (1944, dir. Clarence Brown) in which a twelve-year-old girl (Elizabeth Taylor) loves to ride horses. See Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 187–93, and Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) 82–99.

Harris in the 1952 film, to the innocent feminine tomboy-child, embodied in 1997 by Anna Paquin, *The Member of the Wedding* is a perfect example of the changes the understanding of tomboyism underwent in American popular culture in the second half of the 20th century.

The theoretical part of my thesis will thus discuss tomboyism as an intersection of gender, race, sexuality and class, a liminal identity which can be variously performed. The regional setting of McCullers's tomboys opens a vast array of new questions about the specificity of southern tomboyism. Its relation to the emblematic figures of the southern lady and the African American mammy, its link to "white trash" and other forms of otherness, will be discussed on the background of two southern tomboy narratives – the film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962, dir. Robert Mulligan) and Dorothy Allison's white-trash-lesbian novel *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1991) – before embarking on a thorough analysis of the tomboys in the two McCullers novels and their film and TV versions.

1.2. Methodology and Literature

The theme of my work, tomboyism, and the way I decided to approach it, ask for a compact employment of sources from various fields of study, besides extensive use of archival materials on particular films.[7] My method will integrate three distinct fields of study – anthropology (Turner's concept of liminality), feminist film theory (the issue of gender masquerade introduced by Joan Riviere and developed by Claire Johnston and Mary Ann Doane), and queer studies (above all Judith Butler's view of identity as unstable and fluid, a performance).

The linking device will be provided by intersectional analysis, coined and developed by African American feminists to allow them to pursue ways in which various identity facets – like gender, race, sexuality, class, age or region – intersect in the oppression of minority groups. I want to argue that the liminal

[7] I will mostly be using materials located in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Archive/Margaret Herrick Library (shortened as AMPAS further in the text), 333 S. La Cienega Boulevard, Beverly Hills, California), and Warner Bros. Corporate Archive Collection (10671 Lanark St., Sun Valley, California).

position of the tomboy (between childhood and adulthood, femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and same-sex desire, blackness/otherness and whiteness/normativity) allows the concept to debunk seemingly natural and fixed categories of identity as socially constructed fictions, and invites play and masquerade.

As a social and cultural phenomenon, tomboyism has mostly been discussed from the perspective of gender. Tomboy is approached as a gender bender, a girl or woman who transgresses usual gender norms. I will therefore start my inquiry into tomboyism with various forms this gender bending might take and different agendas it may adopt – from feminist criticism of patriarchy, over the quest for a "third" gender option embodied in androgyny, to the view of tomboys as "pre-butch" lesbians, expressed by sexuologists and queer theorists. A thorough analysis of these most common approaches to tomboyism will allow me to revise their methodologies, formulate my definition of tomboyism and elaborate further on its options in other fields than gender alone.

One of the most extensive works on tomboyism so far, and one that I will quote most often, has been undertaken by Michelle Ann Abate in her book *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History*. Outlining the changes tomboyism underwent in the U.S. from the 1850s to the 1990s, Abate connects it directly with changing attitudes toward women and their roles in society. Tomboys, thus, are not limited by age, and the label covers a large collection of gender-bending characters – the late-19th-century New Woman, the flapper of the 1920s, and the lesbian of the 1950s pulp fiction are only a few of Abate's examples.

Although this strategy allows her to place tomboyism in an existing network of representations and meanings, it necessarily rubs the concept of its specificity – while in childhood, Abate's tomboys have many features in common (preference for boys' clothes and outdoor activities being their defining trait), this is not the case with grown-up women Abate labels as tomboys who only share a vague air of nonconformity.

The book is nevertheless crucial for my work, as Abate introduces race into the concept, claiming that the tomboy has always been a "racialized construct," connected frequently with "various forms of nonwhiteness," at one

point even occupying "a liminal position between blackness and whiteness," in the literary and filmic representations she analyzes. The association with blackness or racial otherness is always metaphorical, never literal and thus this association paradoxically bolsters whiteness in the end.[8]

The story of the tomboy's gender- and race-bending in Abate is then quite simple – after a short period of transgression in both respects, the tomboy gets "tamed" and upholds both traditional femininity and whiteness. What is more, once the tomboy loses its connection to "darkness" in the 1990s New Queer Cinema, the whole concept "dies."

Abate's insisting on the tomboy's link to nonwhiteness takes on strange forms at times, mixing literal and metaphorical meanings. Apart from the characters' dark hair and tanned skin, their "connection to nonwhiteness" is manifested by their being raised in the region where blackface minstrelsy was born (in E.D.E.N. Southworth's *Hidden Hand*, 1888); by comparing the plight of women with African Americans, which was a common strategy of women suffragists; by being a flapper keen on jazz and African American culture; or by longing for a bond with foreign peoples, for instance.

This story, though fascinating at first, gets repetitive and worn out over the course of decades that Abate applies it to. Therefore, I want to argue, it is necessary to approach the tomboy's "darkness," or "otherness," to which end the racialization of the character often serves, from different perspectives, including its actual interplay with other facets of identity, like gender, class or sexuality.

Tomboy's connection to androgyny had been discussed mostly by sexuologists and child psychologists in the 1970s, after the psychologist Sandra Bem introduced her "Sex Role Inventory" in 1971, a simple test to measure the degree of femininity and masculinity in individuals which introduced an idea of a gender continuum moving between the two extremes. The interest in androgyny was also fuelled by the publication of the feminist Carolyn Heilbrun's *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (1973), in which the author called for a less rigid and more progressive view of femininity and masculinity as elements present in everyone to a different degree. Both Bem and Heilbrun

[8] Michelle Ann Abate, Introduction, *Tomboys* xii–xiii.

see androgyny as a "third" option beyond strictly (and oppositionally) defined masculinity and femininity. Despite the fact that Bem's findings were later challenged by other researchers, androgyny is an important element in the study of the childhood form of tomboyism which dominate several tomboy narratives. I will focus on one film in which, in my view, childhood tomboyism as androgyny is best captured and poses new questions about the nature of childhood – *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962, dir. Robert Mulligan).

Many of the literary and filmic tomboy narratives show the tomboy as hiding occasionally her identity behind traditional gender markers, as, for instance, dress, when it is convenient to do so. This situation brings forward the issue of gender masquerade and performance. Gender masquerade particularly has a long and diverse history in psychoanalytical theory, arising from Joan Riviere's 1929 article on masquerade as a mode of "flaunting femininity" balancing women's entry into the male sphere of activity; embracing the issue of cross-dressing in an article by Claire Johnston, who writes about women dressed as men as constituting "an utter and irrevocable refusal of 'femininity.'"[9]

Johnston's radical vision of masquerade was not accepted by further theorists – both Luce Irigaray and Mary Ann Doane return to Riviere and develop her train of thought. Irigaray equals masquerade with Freudian femininity and points out that woman has to become a woman while man is a man from the outset: "He has only to effect his being-a-man, whereas a woman has to become a normal woman, that is, has to enter into the *masquerade of femininity*."[10] Masquerade thus allows women "to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in man's desire, but at the price of renouncing their own."[11] Doane deals with masquerade in connection with female spectatorship, and sees it as a method of creating distance between the woman as spectator and her

[9] Claire Johnston, "Femininity and the Masquerade: *Anne of the Indies*," *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 1990) 64–72. In this essay, Johnston compares cross-dressing characters in two Hollywood films – *Anne of the Indies* from 1951, directed by Jacques Tourneur for 20th Century Fox; and *Sylvia Scarlett* (1935) directed by George Cukor for RKO. The essay was originally published in Claire Johnston and Paul Willemen, eds., *Jacques Tourneur* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Film Festival, 1975) 36–44.
[10] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 134. Italics in the original.
[11] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* 133.

image on the screen, and thus, to "confound this masculine structure of the look" and be able to become inscribed into the regimes of film viewing.[12]

To approach femininity as a masquerade results, in the work of queer theorist Judith Butler, in the view of gender identity as performative, i.e. as nothing one would be born with. For Butler, gender expressed in proper femininity and masculinity, is a "regulative fiction" imposed upon us by the society we live in, its rituals and codes. Gender identity is thus something we need to learn through repetition. As Butler writes, "the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established."[13]

It is exactly in the necessity of faultless repetition, where the possibility of a deconstruction lies. I will show in my analyses that a "failure to repeat"[14] gender performances on the part of the tomboys parodically undermines invisible social codes and deems them ineffective. Cross-dressing is one of the cultural practices which, according to Butler, parodies "the notion of an original or primary gender identity."[15] Introducing the notions of masquerade and gender performance into tomboyism allows me not only to display its subversive character, but also to propose a new interpretation of the endings of the stories of McCullers's tomboys.

Few of the scholars who deal with tomboyism situate the character in a specific region within American culture; at the same time, many of the works Abate analyses in her *Tomboys* deal with the South or take place there, including the very first book on her list, *The Hidden Hand* by E.D.E.N. Southworth. A specific regional setting – the American South in the case of this thesis – plays a crucial part in discussing the tomboyish character. The tomboy is always linked to current configurations of femininity (as well as common relations to race and class), and femininity is a very complex issue in the South, different from the rest of the U.S. Tara McPherson deals with it thorougly in her seminal book

[12] Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) 41–57. Originally published in *Screen* 23.3–4 (Sept–Oct 1982) 74–87.
[13] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990; New York: Routledge, 2008) 191.
[14] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 192.
[15] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 187.

Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender and Nostalgia in the Imagined South, in which she sums up various approaches to southern femininity among feminist scholars of the last forty years and connects firmly the production of southern femininity in two most emblematic figures, the lady and its precursor, the belle, with issues of race and racial subordination. She shows how these figures and their very existence rests on the invisible and intricately woven net of exclusions, how black women are prohibited the kind of femininity these figures possess, and how the cherished genteel Old South tradition, picturing the antebellum society as filled with gentlemen, ladies and smiling happy "darkies," i.e. black slaves, precludes alternative visions of the South's history and keeps the region in a sexist, racist and classist mode of perception and representation.

Tomboy's gender transgressions often exclude her from respectable white middle-class society. In many narratives, the tomboy is described as wild and beastly. For example, Frankie Addams, the tomboy from McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*, is said not to be "fit to live in a house."[16] This "othering" of tomboys bespeaks of the connected nature of various identity axes, be it race, class, ethnicity or sexuality, and calls for the introduction of a new perspective which would reflect these interconnections.

This goal is accomplished by intersectional theory developed by U.S. feminists of color, above all Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, who seek to show that various facets of identity interact to heighten social inequality and systemic discrimination. To give an example, I will use the position of women of color, as it is most often with their plight that intersectional theory deals. According to Crenshaw,

> women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. […] Racism as experienced by people of color who are of a particular gender – male – tends to determine the parameters of antiracist strategies, just as sexism as experienced by women who are of a particular race – white – tends to ground the women's movement. […] The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and

[16] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*, *Complete Novels* (New York: Library of America, 2001) 492.

the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women.[17]

Intersectional analysis thus seeks to integrate race into the debates of gender, to see how the two facets of identity interweave, and how cultural otherness is constructed on the bodies of African American women, and also in their representation in literature and popular media. Patricia Hill Collins analyses several "controlling images" of African American women and outlines four major points on which their status as symbols of otherness stands: binary thinking, which "categorizes people, things and ideas in terms of their difference from one another;" the understanding of difference as opposition ("Whites and Blacks, males and females, thought and feeling are not complementary counterparts – they are fundamentally different entities related only through their definition as opposites."); the process of objectification, in which "one element is objectified as the Other, and is viewed as an object to be manipulated and controlled;" and subordination, which works as a solution to the inherent instability of the relationship between binary opposites, as "tension may be temporarily relieved by subordinating one half of the binary to the other. Thus, Whites rule Blacks, men dominate women, reason is thought superior to emotion in ascertaining truth [...] and subjects rule objects."[18] Intersectional analysis works to name, locate and dismantle origins of intersecting opressions which are "grounded in interdependent concepts of binary thinking, oppositional difference, objectification, and social hierarchy."[19]

While intersectional analysis was originally intended for the study of the representation of African American women, I want to argue that it is an invaluable tool for other groups which have been labelled as "other" for various reasons. The southern tomboy, for instance, functions as "the objectified Other" of the lady and the belle, which renders him racially other as well and moves him closer to African Americans or Native Americans. At the same time, the

[17] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (July 1991): 1251–52.
[18] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (1990, London: Routledge, 2009) 77–79.
[19] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 78.

tomboy usually occupies the central, unmarked position of the member of the middle class which counterpoises her gender difference (an important exception being the McCullers's tomboy character from her novel *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*). The tension among various layers of the tomboy's identity, and their changing position on the dominance/subordination axis, constitutes the undercurrent of my work.

Although the connection of intersectional theory with the issue of gender masquerade and performativity might seem incongruous, it allows me on one hand to dynamize identity facets which remain rigid in African American feminist theory, and conceptualize white tomboyism as racial/class/sexual otherness without necessarily having to embrace Abate's argumentation of the tomboy's merely fleeting link to non-whiteness, on the other. I want to argue that the association with non-whiteness, in this case, might serve as a provisional way to enhance the tomboy's cultural otherness. Also, the questioning of the tomboy's whiteness which is played out under the umbrella of his savagery and link to African Americans or Native Americans, brings forward the issue of whiteness as race and the notion of race as "a quality of Otherness, not reality."[20] The first line of thought is pursued by Richard Dyer in his book *White*, where he claims that

> the invisibility of whiteness as a racial position in white (which is to say dominant) discourse is of a piece with its ubiquity. […] For most of the time white people speak about nothing but white people, it's just that we couch it in terms of 'people' in general. […] There is no more powerful position than that of being 'just' human.[21]

The joining of Black Feminist Thought with queer theory thus allows me to deepen my analysis of the way various identity facets surface and submerge at given moments in the tomboy character, and to see how these facets intersect and counteract one another. Though developed for a better understanding of the way race and gender issues combine in the oppression of African American

[20] The notion of race as an ideological construct, "a quality of Otherness," is taken from Sander L. Gilman's *Difference and Pathology* quoted by Lola Young in her summary of the race-as-ideology debate. See Lola Young, *Fear of the Dark: 'Race,' Gender and Sexuality in the Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2003) 39.
[21] Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 3.

women, intersectional theory was not mentioned to serve this purpose only. As Crenshaw notes, "the concept can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age and color."[22]

While queer theory and intersectional analysis have developed useful tools to approach gender, sexuality and race, neither has attempted to address class directly, although, as I will show in my analysis of southern tomboys, their class position is a crucial element of their identity. First of all, the model of southern femininity that tomboys fiercely wish to avoid is deeply rooted in (white) middle-class notion of proper gender socialization. Not complying to this notion not only moves the tomboy out of her unquestioned whiteness, but also out of her middle-class position, towards "commonness," a specifically southern category which goes beyond class, or, even worse, towards "trashiness."

As both labels indicate, the tomboy's social position is mutable and involves other aspects than socio-economic status. This approach is well demonstrated by Pierre Bourdieu who includes taste and cultural preferences into the formation of social class:

> The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment, […] implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, […] to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences.[23]

Cultural goods are thus often important markers in the negotiation of tomboy's social position, and playing the piano or listening to music can make the same difference as fancy clothes.[24]

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[22] Crenshaw 1244–45, note 9.

[23] Pierre Bourdieu, "Introduction to the First Edition," *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (1984; London: Routledge, 2010) xxiv.

[24] In my discussion of class, I do not pursue solely economic criteria, but, along with Bourdieu and cultural studies approach class as a convergence of "economic, social and cultural conditions," and an important constituent of "all forms of subjectivity." See David E. James, who discusses at length the "disappearance" of class in U.S. cultural studies. David E. James, "Introduction: Is There Class in This Text?" *The Hidden Foundation: Cinema and the Question of Class*, ed. David E. James and Rick Berg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 12, 13.

My last note on methodology tries to address a prevalent question asked when one deals with literary and filmic works – the issue of adaptation theory. First of all, it is necessary to say that my theme and the way I decided to approach it, calls for a rather hybrid attitude, a methodology combining several concepts and approaches. Neither gender, sexuality, race, nor class, age or region function in a vacuum of literary or film works, and thus immanently, but they reflect, and often also re-shape, elements of their social and cultural setting, along with specificities of the medium in which they appear, idiosyncracies of their authors, and, in case of the film and television, the institutional regulations and practices.

Therefore, I am not interested in undertaking strictly an intermedia analysis to which adaptation theory is most apt, moving from literature to film and studying the differences in narrative patterns, the role of the characters, and changes in their representation. I also do not approach the films through the lens of their literary origin, as it is dubitable in most cases. With most of the films I will deal with, the changes in the scripts were provoked by extratextual circumstances, which are more important for my theme than the actual changes; many of the films are hybrid texts in that they draw upon diverse sources beyond the scope of pure literary adaptation, from the text of a theatre play to performances of former impersonators of the same roles.

The approach which situates the literary work as naturally superior to the film adaptation on the basis of its antecedence is criticised by many, even within the realm of adaptation studies. Linda Hutcheon, for instance, discusses in the introduction to her *Theory of Adaptation* the inherent paradox of critics denying literary adaptations as derivative, and artists who still make them (not mentioning their popular appeal), and connects it to the prevailing method of "case studies": "in practice, it [the case studies method] has tended to privilege or at least give priority (and therefore, implicitly, value) to what is always called the 'source' text or the 'original.'"[25]

Robert Stam also parts with the "moralistic" tradition in adaptation studies, teeming with accusations of "infidelity," "betrayal," "bastardization,"

[25] Linda Hutcheon, Introduction, *Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006) xiii.

and violation;" and tries to "deconstruct the unstated doxa which subtly constructs the subaltern status of adaptation (and the filmic image) vis-a-vis novels (and the literary word)."[26]

Interestingly enough, while Brian McFarlane also parts with the fidelity argument, his method inherently relies upon the priority of literature – in his *Novel to Film* he proposes to distinguish "between that which can be transfered from one medium to another (essentially narrative) and that which, being dependent on different signifying systems (essentially, enunciation)." Also, the novels he selects for his case studies are mostly canonical works of English and American literature – *The Scarlett Letter*, *Random Harvest*, *Great Expectations*, and *Daisy Miller*.[27]

My focus in dealing with literary and film criticism of given works, particularly McCullers's two novels and their visual counterparts, is on the reconstruction of the state of the gender/sexuality/race/class debate, or rather its construction in the reviews of and comments on the works in question; and subsequently, in a new look at these issues, using theoretical frameworks established in the first part of my thesis.

Many adaptation theorists call for the need to bring into play what they call the "context" of a literary of film work, but none of them proposes a method as to how to define and approach it. For Linda Hutcheon, for instance, context means "a time and a place, a society and a culture."[28] She takes the role of gender and race into account only in relation to "transcultural adaptation," when a work is adapted from one culture to another, although she adds that "even within a single culture, the changes can be so great that they can in fact be called transcultural."[29]

Robert Stam does mention the overall importance of gender and racial aspects, sums up available theories ("multiculturalism, postcoloniality, normative race, queer theory, feminist standpoint theory") and grants them with

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[26] Robert Stam, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) 3–4.
[27] Brian McFarlane, Introduction, *Novel to Film: an Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) vii.
[28] Linda Hutcheon, Introduction, *Theory of Adaptation* xvi.
[29] Linda Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation* 147.

an impact on the theory of adaptation; in his call for the change "protocols of reading" he includes only "multicultural and racial aspects."[30]

To sum up, although recent adaptation theories take post-structuralist and post-colonial concepts into account, and include a wider array of issues, they do not produce a coherent methodology or approach which could be used to explain how racial and gender constellations in literature and film get constructed, changed in the process of adaptation, and read or re-read by particular critics, audiences and filmmakers. Many of them also perceive context as something stable and singular, retrievable from the works they choose to analyse. As Linda Hutcheon writes:

> In the act of adapting, choices are made based on many factors […]. These decisions are made in a creative as well as interpretive context that is ideological, social, historical, cultural, personal, and esthetic. And that context is made accessible to us later in two ways. First, the text bears the marks of these choices, marks that betray the intentions of the creator – at the very least insofar as those assumptions can be inferred from the text. […] Second, […] is the fact that extratextual statements of intent and motive do exist to round out our sense of the context in creation.[31]

My work, on the other hand, does not see literature as superior in any sense to film, and considers "context" to be a rather problematic label covering the relative and unstable nature of social expectations, production and critical conventions, as well as personal idiosyncracies. I also do not necessarily strive to compare literary works with the films based on them, and do not do it in all cases. Tomboyism in film and literature has quite separate histories, and though the tomboyish character was first conceived in word, its visual representation is by no means inferior or dependent upon its literary archetype.

1.3. Structure and Outline of Individual Chapters

My thesis is divided into two major parts – in the first one, I deal with the issue of tomboyism, its history, theoretical approaches taken to address it, and the

[30] Robert Stam, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," *Literature and Film* 11.
[31] Linda Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation* 108–09.

development of my methodology. Examples that I use in the first part, are selected to be either works from the "tomboy canon," or works featuring tomboyish character related to the culture of the American South. In the first part, I take up only film versions of literary works (as is the case with *To Kill a Mockingbird*) or their film sequels (two versions of *Little Women* from 1933 and 1994).

Although this might seem a rather random selection, it allows me to pursue two goals – first, to explore tomboyism on screen and come up with certain recurring modes of representation of this figure; second, to prepare the ground for the analysis of tomboyism in the films based on McCullers's work. The theoretical part will result in the establishment of five possible modes of representation of tomboy's gender transgressions: feminist, androgynous, masculine, lesbian, and performative. All of them are reflected in the ways McCullers's tomboys, as well as their film counterparts, has been approached by the screenwriters, producers and directors, as well as the audiences and critics. I will also introduce the issue of liminality and outline a way to address multiple identity layers intersecting in the tomboy character.

The first chapter of my work discusses the meaning of tomboyism and its dependence on the point of view chosen and method applied. It attempts to support the claim by tracing the history of the word "tomboy" from its first dictionary occurence in 16th century to its current usage. It also notices a peculiar situation – very often, the meaning of the concept in American culture is seen as so commonplace that it does not require any explanation, and so all-embracing that it can accomodate strikingly diverse manifestations.

By using works of feminist historians on gender in 19th century society, when tomboyism was said to "appear" in American culture, the following chapter highlights one of the most powerful, though unreflected, aspects of tomboyism in academic discourse – its attachment to the feminist reflection of contemporary women's roles. At the same time, a paradoxical role of tomboyism is accentuated from the very beginning. On one hand, tomboyism is capable of destabilizing fixed social categories (like gender or proper femininity), on the other hand, it is usually contained within these categories at the end of tomboy

narratives. This containment is performed by "tomboy taming," the process of the tomboy's acquiescence to prevalent gender norms, usually at play at the onset of the girl's adolescence.

The tomboy's attraction to things boyish manages to put the whole gender system into motion – therefore, in feminist literature, the tomboy is generally referred to as a gender bender, a person who bends the usual understanding of what is masculine and what is feminine by crossing the line dividing the two. The notion of bending is interesting for its euphemistic character, embodying the very paradox I mentioned above – bending the gender codes, though an act of transgression, does not necessarily imply their breaking. Tomboy as a gender bender thus seems to keep the codes intact, yet, at the same time, the character succeeds to illuminate their artificial, socially generated nature, based on contemporary configurations of power.

Gender aspects of tomboyism, approached from the feminist perspective (though influenced by epistemological criticism) do by no means imply a single methodology. On the contrary, tomboyism under the umbrella of gender can be conceptualized in many different ways. In my work, I propose five major ones, arranged on the basis of their historical occurence in feminist studies.

For this reason, I start with androgyny, relying on research done by Carolyn Heilbrun in her pioneering book *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, published in 1973, an acute criticism of gender stereotypes, falling back on the Greek tradition to legitimize the need for social change. Along with feminist theory, I pursue the acceptance of androgyny in psychology, in the work of Sandra Bem, who coined androgyny as the "third" gender option, and in further studies that disproved her claim. At this point, I introduce Bell-Metereau's book *Hollywood Androgyny* (1985) to see how she connects manifestations of androgyny in film with gender options in general, and tomboyism in particular.

As tomboyism for me is irrevocably linked to childhood and early adolescence and Heilbrun, as most feminists of her time including Bem, focus on grown-up women, I extend their perspectives by including a debate on childhood as inherently androgynous, connected to innocence, purity and sexual disinterestedness, and follow the interaction of innocence and gender-bending in

the notion of the androgynous tomboy. To illustrate my point, I analyze the film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, in which the major female character's androgyny reshapes the issue of tomboy taming.

In the following chapter, I compare two film versions of *Little Women* (from 1933 and 1994), and the way femininity works in both. My analysis here is based on acting styles and profiles of Katherine Hepburn and Winona Ryder, who play the tomboyish main character of the novel, Jo March; publicity and reviews, as well as the directors's statements about their own involvement in the feminist movement. Such comparison, rarely done before,[32] allows me to reconceptualize the tomboy in relation to age, the degree of femininity, and subversiveness, and challenge the air of progress encompassing the more recent adaptation, showing how it works to contain and dissolve the tomboy's difference and gender transgressions by making Jo more feminine (and feminist) than tomboyish. This point will be crucial for my later analysis of the films based on McCullers's *Member of the Wedding*, where a similar trajectory can be seen, comparing the 1952 version with the one from 1997.

This comparison also functions as an opportunity to look deeper into the relation of femininity and masculinity in the concept of tomboyism, and the changes this relation went through over time. As the role of Katherine Hepburn in the 1933 version of *Little Women* shows, adopting masculinity (or at least the Hollywood version of it) was perceived as a viable way for women to obtain public voice, at the same time, it was a deeply ambiguous, even dangerous project, calling for intense public as well as private control. In the 1994 version, what was formerly seen as masculine is reshaped as simply human, which, on one hand, saves the main character from final submission, but, on the other one, confirms the view of femininity and masculinity as irreconcilable binary opposites.

The idea that femininity is located in the female body and masculinity belongs to the male one, is challenged by queer theorist Judith Halberstam in her seminal book *Female Masculinity,* which I use extensively in the chapter

[32] One of the few studies being Robyn McCallum, "The Present Reshaping the Past Reshaping the Present: Film Versions of 'Little Women,'" *The Lion and the Unicorn: a Critical Journal of Children's Literature* 24.1 (2000): 81–96.

attempting to capture tomboy's masculinity. In this chapter I also introduce the notion of the tomboy as inherently lesbian and attempt to unravel the convoluted lines of gender and sexuality in the concept. This project by no means seeks to eliminate any connection of tomboyism with same-sex desire, it only strives to disautomatize the process in which such a connection is created. Lesbian overtones, as I will show later, reverberate in McCullers's criticism, especially with *The Member of the Wedding*, in which the tomboy resolves her anxiety by finding a girl-friend.

After introducing these models of tomboyism created through gender mechanisms (perceiving gender as a stable facet of identity), I move my attention to other important concepts that are associated with tomboyism and are important for the work of Carson McCullers – the liminal nature of tomboyism, its use of masquerade, and, finally, the concept of gender performativity coined and pursued by Judith Butler.

Liminality, as a concept introduced into cultural studies via structuralist anthropology, namely the works of Victor Turner, is extremely pertinent to the analysis of tomboyism. The tomboy operates between masculinity and femininity, as well as between childhood and adulthood (adolescence being one of the most liminal stages); in McCullers, the character is trapped even further, between childhood and adolescence, moving in an arena with no name to it, described by metaphors of thresholds and doors. The problem with liminality, at least in the Turnerian sense, however, is that it remains caught in a binary vision of the world, without questioning the structure forming these binary opposites. What is crucial for my reading of liminality in relation to tomboyism, though, is the tension it creates between the phases, and the critical light it sheds on them.

In many of the films I deal with in my thesis, the tomboy's work with gender binaries may be seen as profoundly questioning their fixedness and essential character. Gender, dismantled by tomboyism, becomes a social convention, an agreed-on form of behavior. The efforts on the part of the tomboy's surroundings to transform her into a proper, i.e. a feminine girl, as well as the process of tomboy taming, reframe gender as something that is taught and can be taken on along with the proper dress and hairstyle. Gender, or femininity,

in case of the tomboy, is revealed as a strategy, a mask. What the tomboy does, though, is not just exposing the mask, along with the artificial nature of femininity, but also appropriating the mask for its own purposes. Hence, the concept of gender masquerade imbues tomboyism with transgressive potential.

The issue of masquerade has undergone profound theoretical rendition from its appearance in Joan Riviere's seminal psychoanalytic text "Womanliness as a Masquerade," published in 1929, and it was pursued mainly in the field of psychoanalytic feminist film theory. Riviere links masquerade with inbetweenness and intermediacy, calling attention to women who, despite their heterosexuality, dress and look like men in order to be able to occupy masculine positions and escape punishment, and her conclusion is radical – femininity is a masquerade, no "genuine" femininity exists behind the mask.

Psychoanalytic film theory, based on the assumption of film as an inherently phallocentric system, introduces the notion of cross-dressing into masquerade (woman has to become a man to be allowed to occupy central position in the narrative), thus coming closer to what tomboyism is based on. The point of masquerade as formulated by Mary Ann Doane is also of use for tomboyism. Doane re-visits conclusions made by her predecessor Claire Johnston who claimed that masquerade rids the woman of her identity, remaking her into a fetish for the male gaze, and invites a more positive reading of the concept. Masquerade, according to Doane, does not rid the woman of her femininity, but helps her achieve distance from her own image, a free space in which she can challenge the male gaze. A similar kind of distance, or rather gap, appears in tomboyism in the phase of tomboy taming, which usually operates by means of clothing and behavioral patterns. In many tomboy narratives, including those mentioned in my work, the tomboy manages to deconstruct femininity via masquerade – either by flaunting femininity that is supposed to go with the dress, or by ignoring it altogether, making the dress into an empty shell devoid of any significance.

Gender in tomboyism, whether expressed by cross-dressing, or by flaunting/ ignoring femininity during the phase of taming, not only upsets the view of gender as something essential. Masquerade allows tomboyism to refract

gender into a performance. Hence, tomboyism and its cultural representations can effectively be addressed via queer theory, especially through the lens of performativity of gender, developed by Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990). Butler here explodes several givens of feminist identity politics, above all the idea of a core governing one's identity and gender manifestations. She replaces it by the notion of performance, and its repetition, which might on one hand generate the illusion of unity, on the other, it keeps the potential of subversion in the game with the "failure to repeat"[33] the performance or a "proliferation of gender."[34] This proliferation, which takes place in drag, cross-dressing or the butch/femme image, invites parody and immitation, both tools important in the tomboyish performance – tomboy is, as the very word suggests, a "fake" boy. Approaching tomboyism via parody, masquerade and performance exposes traditional femininity and masculinity as performances on their own, thus impairing their hegemony, and redrawing the playground of the tomboy discourse.

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of McCullers's tomboys in the books and films, I pay attention to the regional aspect of her work, which obviously influences her tomboyish characters. The following chapter thus explores tomboyism in the particular setting of the American South and southern culture with its emblematic figures of the lady and belle, the mammy, or black domestic help, and "white trash." Such an excursion is necessary not only for historical reasons, showing how the ideal of southern femininity operated to accomodate its transgressions, presenting itself as a masquerade, but also for conceptual reasons – to discuss tomboyism in the American South and its cultural representations means to include other identity categories into the notion, particularly race and class.

I use several other scholars and writers as models in this effort – above all Tara McPherson who links gender and race in her profound revaluation of basic southern myths and their contemporary versions. While McPherson focuses on the tropes of femininity and race (the southern lady and the mammy character), nostalgia, guilt and memory (in the prolific genre of southern

[33] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 192.
[34] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 203.

autobiography); the works of Shirley Abbott and the novel by Dorothy Allison *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992) launch the issue of class, sexuality and growing up in the South.

McPherson explores gender in relation to race on the example of two characters – Scarlett O'Hara and Mammy from *Gone with the Wind*, the emblematic southern narrative, literary as well as filmic. In my discussion of McCullers, I will also pursue this model, as the mammy is transformed into "domestic help" in both *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding*.

I am predominantly interested in the ways various identity categories (gender, race, sexuality and class) interact within the tomboy. To be able to do this, I introduce the method of intersectional analysis into my work, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in law theory, and taken over by feminists of color for the purposes of cultural criticism, focusing on the ways gender, race, class and sexuality interlock in the lives of women of color, and perpetuate their oppression. Although I do not want to portray the tomboy as another oppressed minority, I do believe it is legitimate to adopt this methodology for slightly different purposes – to see how the categories work on the axis of oppression/superiority. Last but not least, I want to see if, and if so, then how, they can be subverted by means of parody or imitation, through the tomboy's performance and masquerade.

The analysis of two McCullers novels, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding*, and primarily its two tomboy characters Mick and Frankie, is at the center of the following chapter. With the extensive use of critical material on the novels, ranging from New Critical close reading focusing on the existential theme of solitude, over feminist critics to queer theory, I draw a parallel with the previous chapters, which opened many of the same questions from a more theoretical perspective, and reconstruct a story of McCullers criticism, reaching its peak in the vision of the world as a queer paradise in *The Member of the Wedding*, only to dismantle this story and complicate it by the introduction of intersectional analysis, trying to look simultaneously at the work

of gender/sexuality/race and class in the tomboy characters and their African American counterparts.

The story of the journey of McCullers's tomboys onto the screen is far from a simple adaptation, as the next chapters will demostrate. In both cases, the issue of what is the very message of the respective stories was re-examined, and external aspects, such as who is going to be the leading star of the production, exerted considerable influence; in both cases, the promotion of the final work betrays uneasiness regarding the tomboyish adolescent character and its subversive potential, covered by exaggerated focus on the theme of heterosexual romance in the way of a happy ending. The fact that in neither of the films, the promised romance is effectuated, and in some, its intimation carries profoundly disturbing repercussions, surprisingly seemed to be of no importance to the production.

The Member of the Wedding is chronologically the oldest adaptation of a McCullers's work, and has the richest history of multiple versions. It was adapted four times, two times as a live-TV production (1958 and 1982), once as a TV film (1997), and once as a Hollywood motion picture (1952). The first version, shot in 1952, which I focus on mostly, as it set the ground for all that followed, epitomizes the complex relation of most of the versions to the novel – the script of this version was based almost exclusively on the theatre play, which McCullers herself wrote from her novel, and which was a Broadway success in the 1950–1951 season. The film features most of the play's original cast and was often criticised for being too theatrical.

The following versions combine the play with the novel as their source material more freely, the first film version, however, functions as a crucial reference. In my analysis of the four versions, I focus mostly on the rendering of the tomboy character, the interpretation of the story's coda by contemporary reviewers as well as in later assessments, and the approach to racial issues embedded in the characters of Berenice, her foster brother Honey, and her "gentleman caller" T.T. Williams; last but not least, I trace the intersections of gender, race, class and sexuality in the tomboy Frankie and her use of masquerade and performance to navigate the liminal space.

While the character of Frankie, the tomboy, has no filmic prototype to be modelled upon, and uses either violence and aggression or excessive theatricality to express her gender difference, African American characters are trapped in the network of powerful sterotypes of race representation in Hollywood cinema – I will focus predominantly on the image of the mammy. At the same time, as I will reveal, some of the actors perpetuated the stereotypical treatment of their roles themselves. This is the case with Berenice in the first version of *The Member of the Wedding*, played by Ethel Waters, who refashioned Berenice into the old, religious, tragedy-ridden Negro.

Berenice is also situated into the role of a super-mother, watching over Frankie's as well as Honey's missteps, as if they were both of the same race and their lapses were mutually comparable. This approach might on one hand support Frankie's feeling of interracial connection, on the other, it robs Berenice of any racial as well as gender identity, making her into the voice of white, heterosexual, middle-class complacency. It is exactly the relation between the mammy stereotype and the de-racialization of the mammy character, which is most intriguing, as well as completely preposterous, in the three versions of *The Member of the Wedding*, and which gets revisited in the 1997 TV-film. Here, Berenice is de-mammified and remade into a young-looking, slender and relatively independent African American woman.

The first version of *The Member of the Wedding* sets the tone in yet another important aspect crucial in my analysis. While many of the critics swallowed the bait of the promotion and read the film's ending as Frankie's embrace of heterosexual femininity, a closer look at the acting style of Julie Harris as Frankie before and after her "metamorphosis" into a woman, reveals distinct elements of masquerade at play, which manages to destabilize the heterosexual matrix and open the film to queer re-readings.

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter was filmed only once, in 1967, on location in Selma, Alabama, amidst the ongoing civil rights struggle. For this reason, contact between white and African American characters, which was the basis for Mick's cross-racial identification in the novel, was eliminated, leaving only Mr. Singer, the deaf-mute, move between the two races freely. Singer, played by

Alan Arkin, the star of the production, is the center of the movie, the film is framed by his arrival to the town and his death, and all other characters are defined by their relation to him.

Just as in the 1952 version of *The Member of the Wedding*, where Ethel Waters was the star, Alan Arkin's name appears first in the film's credits, foregrounding his role and predetermining the audience's focus. The production correspondence nevertheless reveals that this was not an immediate decision – Joel Freeman, the executive producer for Warner Bros.–Seven Arts, commented as late as July 3, 1968, three weeks before the film's official opening night, negatively on the proposed trailer: "My reaction has not been a very positive one. The center of focus is on Carson McCullers and Sondra rather than Alan Arkin."[35]

The central position of Singer allows the film's director Robert Ellis Miller to insist on the film's not being „about racial problems,"[36] despite the fact that most of the changes in the script involved very contemporary racial issues, and some of the critics reproached the film's updating of the novel's 1930s setting and introducing "Black Power militance."[37]

The focus on Singer and race (and I will argue that race, i.e. whiteness as well as non-whiteness, is a major issue in the film) necessarily minimizes the importance of Mick Kelly, the tomboyish character. What is more, Mick, as embodied by Sondra Locke, looks distinctly un-tomboyish – she has long blonde hair, big green eyes, and despite wearing shorts, she is delicate and charming. Several male critics patronizingly compare Mick/Sondra to a fawn, or pullet, and view her trajectory as a common growing-up story, while women critics, on the other hand, describe the process of Mick's becoming a woman as deeply disturbing.

Neither of them, elaborates on Mick's tomboyism, or her lack of it, in any detail. It is thus impossible to determine whether their use of the word "tomboyish" in their reviews pertain to the fact that the film was based on a

[35] Joel Freeman, letter to to Ken Hyman, 3 July 1968, MS. Box 2, folder 20 (*The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – correspondence), Joel Freeman Papers, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[36] Rex Reed, "The Stars Fall on Alabama – Again," *New York Times* 10 Dec. 1967: 19.
[37] Dan Wakefield, "Anytown, Alabama," *Atlantic* Oct. 1968: 147.

rather well-known novel by a well-known author, or whether it relates in any way to the rendering of the character on screen.

Be it as it may, tomboyism in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is constructed in a different fashion, along different facets of identity, and I want to argue in this chapter, that these facets are predominantly sexuality, race, i.e. whiteness and nonwhiteness, and class. Class is so pivotal in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* that it governs representation of race as well, and the intricate connection of race and class reveals deeply seated social mechanisms. While Mick's whiteness helps mask her social decline, upward social ambitions among African Americans curtail their claim to racial identity, making them into traitors of their own people.

Mick's class decline, though complemented by racial superiority, results in her paralyzing anxiety about growing up into a woman, and a complete break with heterosexual femininity. Though she does accept the "facts" of adult life in the end, changes her name to Margaret, wears feminine clothes, quits school, and works full-time to support her family, she has been drained of her restless energy and enthusiasm in the process, which were part and parcel of her tomboyish identity.

Grouped together, the film versions of McCullers's two novels draw a complex portrait of screen tomboyism as an intersection of various identity components, as well as their mutual interdependence. The class decline of Mick Kelly is redeemed by Sondra Locke's pronounced whiteness, while Julie Harris's masculine aggression suppresses her middle-class status. The aspect of performance, present predominantly in all versions of *The Member of the Wedding* and strikingly missing in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, adds yet another perspective. Frankie's permanent crossing of several boundaries and her theatricality part from an innocent childhood game of play-acting and explode the naturalness of basic social categories. Gender performance, extended in my analyses upon other identity facets as well, thus challenge the neat contours of coming-of-age stories, and introduce the possibility of growing "sideways" instead of simply "up."[38]

[38] I am borrowing the metaphor of growing sideways from the subtitle of Kathryn Bond Stockton's *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham:

2. FROM BOY TO WOMAN AND GIRL: EPISTEMOLOGY OF A CONCEPT

There is no single definition of the tomboy. What a tomboy is depends very much on who asks, and whom. Time also plays a crucial role. A 1970s exploratory research study from clinical psychiatry took as its goal to disprove a widespread view of the scientific community that tomboys are "rare and abnormal;"[39] twenty years later, editors of a collection of real-life tomboy narratives needed to give no definition for their writers to hit the spot:

> Tomboy seems to be so familiar a concept in contemporary North American culture that it needs no definition. We defined the term not at all in our calls for submissions, yet the hundreds of responses we received presented a virtually uniform picture of a girl who – by whatever standards society has dictated – acts like a boy. Despite this uniformity, the actual transgression of 'boy's territory' takes many forms, of course. For some girls, it is excelling in – or even just playing – sports; for others, it's as simple an act as biking to the creek to catch frogs. Still other girls cross the gender line by preferring math to English, science to history, shop to home etc. […] what unites this multifarious mix is energy: vigorous, life-seeking energy.[40]

The shift in opinion is evident – tomboyism is no longer seen as a minority issue, on the contrary, it seems so prevalent that it is unnecessary to explain.

The fact that tomboyism forms "a normal and significant portion of most women's childhoods,"[41] is nevertheless the only one that studies of this phenomenon agree on. And even here a significant problem arises – who actually are these women? The majority of research on tomboyism, ranging from clinical psychology and sociology to cultural studies, take as their subjects

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Duke University Press, 2009).

[39] Janet S. Hyde, B. G. Rosenberg, and Jo Ann Behrman, "Tomboyism," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 2.1 (Fall 1977): 73.

[40] Lynne Yamaguchi and Karen Barber, Introduction, *Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-Do* 10, 12.

[41] Betsy Levonian Morgan,"A Three Generational Study of Tomboy Behavior,"*Sex Roles* 39.9–10 (1998): 787. A 1996 study stated "self-reported tomboyism to be approximately 50%." Shawn Meghan Burn, A. Kathleen O'Neil and Shirley Nederend, "Childhood Tomboyism and Adult Androgyny," *Sex Roles* 34.5–6 (1996): 426.

white, middle-class American females, acknowledging at the same time that more racially and ethnically diverse approach is needed.[42]

The first steps in this direction have been undertaken by another collection of tomboy stories, *Jo's Girls* (1997), introducing into the tomboy canon African American, Chinese American and Chicana tomboys displayed in *Sula* (1973) by Toni Morrison, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Women Warrior* (1975) and Sandra Cisneros's *House on Mango Street* (1984), respectively. Spanning from the late 19th-century story "Tommy, the Unsentimental" by Willa Cather to then up-to-date Manhattan Latino girl-gang of Maria Hijonosa's *Crews* (1995), the collection deserves mentioning as it reveals several competing conceptualizations of "tomboy identity" – tomboy as a feminist, tomboy as cross-gendered, tomboy as a lesbian and the queer tomboy. Before I embark on the further elaboration of these labels, I will make an etymological detour to explore the history of thes concept.

2.1. A Rude and Boisterous Creature: Tomboyism as the Mixed Cure for American Womanhood

Under the entry of "tomboy," *Oxford English Dictionary* displays a series of transgressions that are a staple of the phenomenon. The first emergence in 1556 explained "tomboy" as "a rude, boysterous, or forward boy."[43] Only some twenty years later, tomboy became "a bold or immodest woman;"[44] and shortly thereafter, the notion was transfered to cover younger age and defined the

[42] Though most of this work will deal with white tomboys, it is necessary to see the reductivity of such an approach, to avoid the mistake made by feminists in the 1970s who theorized about women in general without addressing their own specific position as white women and the difference of experience in communities of women of color. For more on white and black feminism see, for instance, bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); and Hazel V. Carby, "'Woman's Era:' Rethinking Black Feminist Theory," *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 3–19.

[43] This use is illustrated by a quotation from Nicholas Udall's 1566 comic play *Ralph Roister Doister:* "Is all your delite and ioy In whiskyng and ramping abroade like a Tom boy." "tomboy, n." OED Online. December 2011. Oxford University Press. 26 January 2012 <http://www.oed.com>.

[44] The example for this usage is this: "Sainte Paule meaneth that women must not be impudent, they must not be tomboyes, to be shorte, they must not bee vnchast." "tomboy, n." OED Online. <http://www.oed.com>

tomboy as we know it today – a "girl who behaves like a spirited or boisterous boy; a wild romping girl; a hoyden."[45] The shift from an unruly woman to a girl is a crucial one, as it bespeaks a process of social containment, which gives tomboyism its subversive potential. Once tomboyism became an American phenomenon, in the second half of the 19th century, this containment process was dubbed tomboy taming.

At the same time, the shift from a woman to a girl brought about another important change – it opened tomboyism to white middle class female population (the former occurences of tomboyism in adult women applied infallibly to low-class population). In 19th century America, this shift was manifested in the discussion of deteriorating female health and possible improvements in the middle-class white women's lifestyle. In her book-length study of tomboys as a social and cultural phenomenon of the 19th and 20th centuries, Michelle Ann Abate sums up the development of the concept of ideal womanhood during the 19th century – from the cult of True Womanhood, equating femininity with fragility, over the replacement of "the vogue of the 'Invalid Woman'"[46] by a more assertive view coined in the 1830s and 1840s, which prescribed healthy diet and bodily movement, while making child-bearing a matter of the nation's survival and connecting it firmly with issues of racial policy:

> Angloamericans feared that maintaining white racial control after emancipation would be difficult, and – in some regions – perhaps even impossible. […] Numerous physicians noted that as a result of eating rich foods, wearing tight corsets and avoiding physical activity, many [American women] were unable to conceive children while those who did often gave birth to sickly and even defective infants.[47]

Sharon O'Brien adds another dimension to the emergence of tomboyism as a child-rearing practice in the mid-19th century America – not only female

[45] The first occurence is from 1592 ("If thou shouldest rigge vp and downe in our iackets, thou wouldst be thought a very tom~boy."), though a clearer example comes from 1656 *Glossographia* by T. Blount: "Tom~boy, a girle or wench that leaps up and down like a boy." "tomboy, n." OED Online. <http://www.oed.com>

[46] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008) 4.

[47] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 6.

frailness, but also physical sickness and mental instability of middle-class women contributed to the abandonment of former ideals of femininity:

> Alarmed by the growing number of hysterical and neurasthenic women who abandoned domestic responsibilities, a surprising number of post-Civil-War advice-givers began to recommend free, active, untrammeled childhoods for little girls and even advocated tomboyism. […] An active tomboy would surely develop the resourcefulness, self-confidence and, most important, the physical health required for motherhood.[48]

The new ideal, however, was not less problematic than the old one. It disclosed a paradox that has not been succesfully reconciled since – by introducing an active girlhood option into the repertory of American women, it made passage from childhood to adulthood a surprisingly painful process, exposing femininity as an inherently restrictive institution. Although Abate writes that "young girls embraced this new code of conduct not as a means to transgress their adult roles as wives and mothers, but, on the contrary, to train for them,"[49] tomboyism was not accompanied by a similar change in the concept of marriage, family or gender roles within the Victorian middle-class household.

As a child, the white middle-class woman was allowed to roam freely and enjoy rough-and-tumble play with her male companions as she pleased; when she entered adolescence, however, she found herself facing a series of rules significantly curtailing her independence. The message of activity, physical fitness, good health and self-reliance that Victorian girls were allowed to nurture had to be promptly forgotten and replaced by an image that was more befitting – the ideal of the Victorian lady.

Adolescence became the most focused-on period in women's lives, watched intensely not only by the girl's mother, but by the whole society, imposing on the girl its ideas of proper behavior backed by current medical research: in adolescence

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[48] Sharon O'Brien, "Tomboyism and Adolescent Conflict: Three Nineteenth-Century Case Studies," *Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History*, ed. Mary Kelley (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979) 352. The major advice-giving books of the time were Dr. J. H. Kellogg, *Ladies Guide in Health and Disease* (1883); and Mary Virginia Terhune, *Eve's Daughters* (1882).
[49] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 6.

boyish activities were to be doubly shunned: not only were they too strenuous, but they might encourage unfeminine characteristics to develop at this critical stage. […] Rest and carefully-regulated exercise must replace the tomboy's unfettered activity to ensure that energy would not be drained from the all-important uterus and ovaries.[50]

Once the 19th-century belief that there is not much of a difference between a girl and a boy in childhood, hence they could be brought up in the same way until they reached adolescence, gave way to the contemporary understanding of gender in childhood, the whole early life of a girl, from childhood all the way into adulthood, became a much controlled territory.[51]

The breach between ungendered childhood and strictly gendered adulthood of Victorian women, however, did not bring the end of tomboyism as too-dangerous a concept. The vision of tomboyish women was contained in the ritual of tomboy taming, transforming tomboyism from a life-long lifestyle option for all women to a brief phase in their lives, childhood. Abate connects the emergence of tomboy taming on one hand with the post-Civil War emergence of a "newly created stage of adolescence," and on the other, with the increase of professional opportunities for women, which resulted in refocusing the goal of tomboyism and centered it more on the issue of women gaining entrance into the public zone.[52]

This is also the time when, according to Abate, tomboyism, weakening its bond to traditional femininity, starts to be associated with masculinity:

Rather than expanding the boundaries of acceptable notions of femininity, tomboys during the Civil War era began to coopt elements of masculinity: they bemoaned being born female and having to participate in feminine activities.[53]

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[50] Sharon O'Brien, "Tomboyism and Adolescent Conflict: Three Nineteenth-Century Case Studies," *Woman's Being, Woman's Place* 355.
[51] See, for instance, Louise Westling: "In frontier days, girls were raised without much sexual differentiation from males until puberty. Later in the antebellum period a similar childhood liberty was common, contrasting sharply with the absolute restrictions the patriarchy placed on adult women in marriage." Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers*, ed. Beverly Lyon Clark and Melvin J. Friedman (New York: G. K. Hall, 1996) 156.
[52] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 31.
[53] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 30.

As masculinity was not welcome in adult women, its traces had to be excised properly from the adolescent tomboy. Tomboy taming thus became a staple of most tomboy narratives, at the same time, though, it allowed tomboyism to survive well into the 21st century.

3. TOMBOY AS A GENDER-BENDER: LIBERATION OR MISOGYNY?

From the moment when tomboy taming became the usual way society handled its tomboys, the notion of the tomboy as a gender-bending figure emerged. In most tomboy narratives, the tomboy engages in an array of activities that are not supposed to bring her any pleasure – from climbing trees to playing baseball – as they are intended for children of the opposite sex.
Engaging in and enjoying activities ascribed to the opposite sex, the tomboy seems to challenge the social conception of gender and appropriate roles based on gender.

The concept of gendered childhood – the strict division of colors (pink vs. blue), clothes (dress vs. jeans) and activities ("house" and dolls vs. sports and GI Joe toys) – imposed upon children since their birth, bespeaks the society's uneasiness about the nature of gender differences and the idea of children's innate innocence which would allow them, without any coercion, to choose the gender role that suits their sex. This concept made tomboys a social anomaly from a very early stage, contrasting them with more feminine girls, who enjoy typical girl's outfits and activities. The tomboy's attraction to boyish things brings into question her relation to gender labels, along with the nature of gender labels themselves.

The most debated aspect of tomboyism has been its relation to traditional femininity and masculinity and the relation of the two in the concept. In this frame, psychoanalyst Karen Horney rationalizes in her 1926 "Flight from Womanhood" the girl's adoption of masculine clothing or activities on the basis of low social assesment of traditional femininity.[54] On the other end of the spectrum, one of the former tomboys claims in recollection of her childhood that "in the short run, tomboy serves the nontraditional girl's desire for typically boy

[54] Karen Horney, "The Flight from Womanhood: The Masculinity-Complex in Women as Viewed by Men and by Women," *Feminine Psychology* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967) 54–70. This opinion was taken up and elaborated in the 1940s by Clara Thompson, and by feminists, later on. See Dianne Elise, "Tomboys and Cowgirls – The Girl's Disidentification from the Mother," *Sissies and Tomboys: Gender Nonconformity and Homosexual Childhood,* ed. Matthew Rottnek (New York: New York University Press, 1999) 140–52.

things. In the long run, however, the label perpetuates misogyny within the very girl it appears to liberate."[55]

Does the preference for masculinity automatically mean the denial of femininity? Does the tomboy have to prefer masculine things and condemn feminine ones at the same time to be a real tomboy? Although the aim of my work is to revise a generally accepted notion that tomboyism is only an issue of gender, i.e. the relation between femininity and masculinity, and present the tomboy as an intersection of gender, sexuality, race and class, I cannot ignore the existence of this issue. Also, there is work to be done in the realm of the tomboy's gender transgressions as they by no means follow a unified course.

In the gender arena, the tomboy has been approached as an embodiment of several theoretical concepts, from an androgyne over a proto-feminist to a lesbian butch. Among many aspects in which they differ, one is of ultimate importance for my work – their approach tomboy taming. In the tomboy narratives which I will deal with in the following chapters, the issue of tomboy taming functions as a narrative closure, a kind of return of the "lost daughter." In some, the idea of taming is not even proposed and tomboyism as a life-long option is negotiated. The metaphor of gender-bending thus becomes central in these cases. Can we talk about androgynes or butches as gender-benders? Is gender bended, extended, transgressed, or broken by feminist, masculine, androgyne, and/or lesbian butch tomboys? Before I will undertake a probe into the sexuality, race and class aspects of tomboyism, I will examine each of the tomboy's gender embodiments to see how they came into being and how they operate, and I will bring other crucial concepts into the debate, which will allow me a more complex analysis of Carson McCullers's novels and their film/TV versions – the concepts of masquerade and gender performance.

[55] Denise Carmen Paquin, "There's No Girl in Tomboy," *Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-Do* 233.

3.1. Childhood Innocence and the Androgynous Tomboy

One of the less usual connections in contemporary feminism, sexuology and child psychology, although a much debated one a few decades ago, is that of childhood tomboyism and androgyny. While the concept of androgyny has a history of its own, and I do not intend to deal with it here in any great detail, there are places of intersection that draw my attention, as it is exactly at these intersections that the tomboy may be discussed and its meaning negotiated.

3.1.1. Androgyny as the 'Third Option' in Feminism and Clinical Psychology

The connection of tomboyism and androgyny usually takes place in the sphere of childhood; in this type of reasoning, tomboyism is understood as a childhood stage and androgyny is approached less as a "spirit of reconciliation between the sexes"[56] and more as a prelapsarian state of "genderless innocence, before the fall into male and female, masculine and feminine."[57]

This effort to read childhood as an inherently androgynous state has much to do with sexuality, the body and the whole discourse of childhood-as-innocence, where what is meant by innocence is purity as well as sexual disinterestedness on the part of children.The ideal of childhood innocence and the changes in this ideal directly influence the ways childhood is portrayed in popular culture as well as the ways tomboyism is positioned in the childhood-as-innocence discourse. In her analysis of the image of children in films, Kristen Hatch sums up the changes in the concept of childhood during the 19th century and points out the fact that this ideal had reverberations well into the 20th century:

> The ideal of childhood innocence that was celebrated on the stage throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was itself a relatively recent invention. For centuries, Christian thinking

[56] Carolyn Heilbrun, Introduction, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (1973, New York: Harper, 1974) x.
[57] Sarah Gleeson-White, *Strange Bodies: Gender and Identity in the Novels of Carson McCullers* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003) 97.

associated the child with sin […]. By the 1830s the association of childhood with innocence had begun to shape middle-class childrearing practices in North America. Whereas earlier generations had been concerned about what they perceived to be children's bestiality and propensity to sin, rushing children towards adulthood as quickly as possible, nineteenth-century parents cherished the ideal of the child's innocence and worked to prolong childhood for as long as possible.[58]

Thinking about childhood as androgynous on one hand limits the potential scope of androgyny to "asexuality," on the other hand, when the debate includes gender division of roles and strives to argue the undividedness of children, it tends to posit the child as morally superior to adults, who follow their strictly gendered life paths. Childhood innocence, moral superiority and androgyny do nevertheless not engage in any clear-cut and fixed relationship of mutual dependence.

Tomboyism as a gender-bending behavior takes the whole issue one step further; it reshapes the meaning of androgyny-as-childhood-innocence, and becomes a kind of litmus test for the whole concept of androgyny. The childhood tomboy in film and literature actually does not deny gender divisions, nor does she move in an a-gender space – childhood for tomboys may be an asexual time, but definitely not an a-gender one. Tomboyism thus introduces androgyny into the world of gender conventions, while androgyny presents tomboyism with the option of gender-balanced identity, as opposed to strictly masculine and feminine codes. Androgyny thus might be approached as a strategy for the lessening of the pressure at gender conformity and for a reworking of the binary opposites of masculinity and femininity. The junction of androgyny and tomboyism becomes inherently transgressive, as it collides with actual social expectations: though androgyny-as-sexual-disinterestedness-in-childhood is a tolerated and at times even a welcome concept (especially when it joins forces with the idea of childhood innocence), androgyny as a savvy gender-bending tomboyish practice is definitely not.

This is exactly the point where my discussion of tomboyism-as-androgyny intersects with a strategy pursued in the early 1970s by Carolyn

[58] Kristen Lee Hatch, "Playing Innocent: Shirley Temple and the Performance of Girlhood, 1850–1939," Diss. University of California Los Angeles, 2006, 13–14.

Heilbrun within the feminist discourse. Heilbrun uses historical hindsights as a ground on which to challenge the unnecessary strictness of gender roles in contemporary society, strictness that she views as a residue of Victorian values. She goes back to ancient Greece for the term "androgyny," and includes the tradition of Western mysticism, which views God as androgynous, and man before the original sin as a "complete, masculinely feminine being." In this way of arguing, androgyny is a saintly state, as opposed to the division into feminine and masculine: "Original sin is connected in the first instance with the division into two sexes and the Fall of the androgyne." Heilbrun not only defends androgyny as a positive gender option, but labels the habit of dividing into opposites as anti-androgynous and patriarchal.[59]

Pointing out that "our definitions of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' are themselves little more than unexamined, received ideas," she calls for a liberation "from the confines of the appropriate" and a move "toward a world in which individual roles and the modes of personal behavior can be freely chosen."[60]

Heilbrun's probe into androgyny coincided with an interest in this concept on the part of clinical psychology in the 1970s and early 1980s. Terri Sweig sums up this research, starting with the founding figure of Sandra Bem who introduced androgyny as a "third" option and argued that "strongly sex-typed individuals might be seriously limited in the range of behaviors available to them as they move from situation to situation;"[61] to later works that challenge Bem's conclusions and her method. While Bem (as well as Heilbrun) promotes androgyny as a theoretical platform on which "to eliminate the 'either-or' in favor of 'both-and' regarding the range of behaviors open to everyone,"[62] psychological studies that followed later came with different results, arguing that the feminine and masculine parts were not reconciled and balanced in an

[59] Carolyn Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* xvii–xix.
[60] Carolyn Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* ix–xiv.
[61] Sandra Bem, "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 42.2 (1974): 155.
[62] Terri L. Sweig, "Yang Femininity: Girlhood Tomboyism and Adult Women's Development," Diss. Pacific Graduate Institute, 1996, 41.

androgynous personality, but that "the masculinity dimension of androgyny was what led to enhanced self-esteem in both sexes."[63]

Jones, Chernovetz and Hansson argue that Bem's hypothesis that "androgyny equals adaptability […] seems not to hold for males," because no male in their analysis prefered to become less masculine, i.e. more feminine and adrogynous.[64] They also dispute its relevance for females and point out that "the more masculine in orientation, the more adaptive, competent and secure the female subject was." This finding supports feminist readings of contemporary society as patriarchal, with distinct value system preferring and rewarding features labeled as masculine.

The Bem Sex Role Inventory, used in most mentioned experiments confirms the conservative division of masculine and feminine features – most of the qualities labelled as masculine might be seen as generally desirable in any society, while the opposite is true for many of feminine characteristics. Masculine qualities include self-reliance, independence, strong personality, leadership ability and ambitiousness, while being feminine means being yielding, shy, flatterable, soft spoken, gullible, and childlike, among other qualities.[65]

The most surprising outcome of the Jones, Chernovetz and Hansson study is a daring assumption that "females who completely violated societal sex role expectations appear to be happier, more competent, and more adaptive than either androgynous or sex-typed females"[66] which would significantly rehabilitate tomboyism. The authors unfortunately do not elaborate on their finding in any direction.

Debates of the nature and desirability of androgyny left a distinct mark on the research of masculinity and femininity in children. Joan D. Hemmer and Douglas A. Kleiber sum up the research done so far in this field and call for the

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[63] Terri L. Sweig, "Yang Femininity," 41.
[64] See Warren H. Jones, Mary Ellen O'C. Chernovetz and Robert O. Hansson, "The Enigma of Androgyny: Differential Implications for Males and Females?" *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 46.2 (1978): 310.
[65] See Sandra Bem, "The Bem Sex Role Inventory," 24 July 2009 <http://faculty.sunydutchess.edu/andrews/bem_sex.htm>.
[66] Warren H. Jones, Mary Ellen O'C. Chernovetz and Robert O. Hansson, "The Enigma of Androgyny" 311.

introduction of androgyny into the discussion of gender-bending children (tomboys and "sissies") which would mean "flexibility, not pathology," in response to their research among elementary school children who "use the labels [tomboy and sissy] pejoratively for children whom they regard as socially difficult and antisocial in many respects."[67]

This attitude, at least toward tomboys, seems to change among older children, a shift which for Hemmer and Kleiber suggests that "growing into the tomboy role is associated with many current ideas about androgyny for females."[68] Such an argument supports the above-voiced hypothesis that androgyny was a popular gender identity for females at the time of the study. The authors, however, end their study on a tentative note:

> The tomboy who shows strength, resourcefulness, leadership, creative ideation, and independence (traditionally masculine and instrumental) need not be viewed negatively when these are attributes admired by the larger society. It is not surprising that she should be viewed positively. What is not known, and should be investigated in tomboys, is what happens to these qualities as she enters adolescence.[69]

The contradictions encountered by researchers dealing with androgyny, mainly the assumption that androgyny per se, as a balanced connection of feminine and masculine elements, does not exist outside of the theoretical feminist framework, lead to the abandonment of the concept as a useful psychological category. The question articulated above, of the position of androgyny in tomboyism beyond the scope of childhood, therefore, remains unanswered. This does not mean that there had been no effort to do so in the sphere of the arts, and namely, in film.

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[67] Joan D. Hemmer, Douglas A. Kleiber, "Tomboys and Sissies: Androgynous Children?" *Sex Roles* 7.12 (1981): 1210. A sissy is a gender-bending boy who prefers typically feminine clothes and occupation over male ones. The sissy character often accompanies the tomboy in tomboy narratives.

[68] Joan D. Hemmer, Douglas A. Kleiber, "Tomboys and Sissies" 1210.

[69] Joan D. Hemmer, Douglas A. Kleiber, "Tomboys and Sissies" 1211.

3.1.2. Androgyny as Cross-dressing and the Rise of the Tomboy Film

In her 1985 book *Hollywood Androgyny*, Rebecca Bell-Metereau situates androgyny in the frame of Heilbrun's theory, links its assessment at a given time with current gender expectations, and elaborates on its transformative potential. Bell-Metereau's approach is significant for my work because of her definition of androgyny in cinema. Without much theoretical discussion, she states that, "role reversals and cross-dressing in films follow peaks that correspond to periods of greater experimentation in the society at large."[70]

Approaching androgyny as gender role reversal, not an expression of sexual disinterestedness, allows Bell-Metereau to cross the gap between childhood and adulthood which seemed unsurpassable to clinical researchers, and to place androgyny directly into the adult world, along with introducing an array of new gender-bending character types which try to reconcile and balance elements of femininity and masculinity within themselves and reveal simultaneously gender role restrictions and expectations of a given time, or, more precisely, the filmmaker's idea of them.[71]

Bell-Metereau includes the tomboy among her adult androgynes or "male impersonators" and uses this character to demonstrate changes of social moods regarding proper gender roles in the 1950s America. This era epitomizes for Bell-Metereau the culmination of possible ways of representing masculine women on screen and it brought "an almost schizophrenic obsession with the role of the masculine woman, portraying her in some films as the wholesome, harmless tomboy-next-door and in others as the castrating, deceptive, covertly controlling Mom of the male's most humiliating fantasies."[72]

In the framework of the 1950s crisis of masculinity, associated with the collapse of "clear-cut boundaries between masculine and feminine behavior,"[73] the tomboy emerges in films like *National Velvet* (dir. Clarence

[70] Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) 2.
[71] As Bell-Metereau writes, "films do not reflect statistical reality, but they do reveal filmmakers' impressions of trends in society." Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* 234.
[72] Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* 69–71.
[73] Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* 71.

Brown, 1944), *Pat and Mike* (dir. George Cukor, 1952), and *Tammy and the Bachelor* (dir. Joseph Pevney, 1957) as a paradoxically conservative force, helping to reconstruct the gender status quo. Despite adopting masculine attire and activities, the tomboy of the 1950s gives up any claims to power or authority, willingly or by means of what Bell-Metereau calls a "conversion fantasy." This fantasy is rooted in the idea that "women who don't like men or who like their work (including tomboys, career women, feminists, implied lesbians etc.) can be converted […] by the right man."[74]

In this way, by using what former masculine women employed to subvert rigid gender roles (i.e. role reversals and cross-dressing), while conforming to the roles, the tomboy in these films, "probably the most popular masculine heroine image of the fifties," eliminates any potential of transgression.[75] Moreover, in its work with androgyny, the character takes up the idea of androgyny as asexuality, familiar from the discussion of androgyny in children.

I am quite unwilling to pursue what Bell-Metereau presents as "tomboy films" in greater detail, as her grouping of films under this label ranges from a teenage horse-rider played by young Elizabeth Taylor in *National Velvet* to grown-up Katherine Hepburn in *Pat and Mike* – the two characters have very little in common, except for the final narrative twist, when they submit to male authority.

What is intriguing in Bell-Metereau's argument though is the way she reshapes the meaning of both tomboyism and androgyny by alternating them freely with the category of "masculine woman" and a "cross-dressing character," emphasizing two facets of tomboyism that are crucial for my discussion – gender-bending and performance. Anticipating the notion of female masculinity raised later by queer theorist Judith Halberstam, without connecting it directly with same-sex desire, *Hollywood Androgyny* joins the discussion launched by Sandra Bem's critics, who concluded that there is no balance or blending of gender opposites taking place in the concept of androgyny, that it is the masculine element that takes over, while both gender labels remain locked within their boundaries.

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[74] Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* 99.
[75] Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* 88.

Although this might apply to the 1950s tomboy, in her discussion of other films Bell-Metereau challenges this argument and reveals the dynamism of the whole issue by showing that, in some films at some time, androgyny was a working and liberating gender option for the characters and thus, indirectly, for the viewers as well. The decisive element lies in the film's narrative: "The key element in distinguishing films that support the status quo from those that offer alternative is whether the masculine woman is allowed to survive as such."[76]

The tomboy for Bell-Metereau does not represent a potentially subversive character, which would, as I proposed above, use androgyny to gain social status and challenge the issue of gender roles division in the end. The reason might be that she does not address childhood tomboyism but focuses on grown-up women. I will thus use her notion of cross-dressing as androgyny and apply it on childhood-to-adolescence tomboyism which will allow me to explore the subversive potential of tomboyism as androgyny in relation to rigid gender roles.

In discussing childhood-to-adolescence tomboyism-as-androgyny, I want now to focus on a specific type of the tomboyish androgyne who, by wearing masculine clothes and engaging in masculine activities does not deny femininity, but works to include elements of both genders and thus proposes a new perspective of gender configuration in tomboyism. The outcome of this strategy is not a confirmation of the patriarchal status quo, but an ingenious way to sidestep the issue of tomboy taming and make tomboyism into a life-long gender option.

3.1.3. Androgyny and Tomboyism in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

A good example of this type of tomboyish androgyne is the character of Scout Finch from Robert Mulligan's film *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), based on a novel of the same title by Harper Lee. A southern author living in Alabama, Lee published only one book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, in 1960. It was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961 and gained immediate popularity – as Claudia

[76] Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* 68.

Durst Johnson sums up, two years after its publication, even before the film was released, the novel sold "two and a half million copies in hardback editions and two million paperback copies."[77] The book has remained a bestseller ever since, selling "nearly a million copies a year, more than any other twentieth-century American classic," as the inside flap of a book celebrating its fiftieth anniversary claims.[78] The story is set in a small town in the 1930s and narrated by a six-year-old Scout Finch, a white middle class tomboy. It interweaves the theme of growing up with racial issues – Scout's father is a lawyer and defends an African American accused of the rape of a white girl.

I am focusing here on the film, leaving the book behind for the moment, as it is in the film that traces of androgyny are highlighted and developed. Scout in the film is no longer simply a rebellious tomboy with short-cropped hair, who tries to level with boys around her, despises girlish clothes and fights with her schoolteacher for her right to read whatever she wants to; the shift in the conception of her character makes her less radical and more socially acceptable, but a closer look at these shifts and the performance of Mary Badham in the role of Scout reveals another possibility of reading the character – as an androgynous child in whom elements of masculinity and femininity are relatively balanced and their edges blur and melt together.

Starting with the scene in which Scout dons a dress on her first day of school, Gary Richards comments on the way Scout destroys the idea that gender can be easily and clearly assigned based on clothing and appearance, explicitly linking Scout to the tradition of drag queens:

> Whereas the drag queens often satirically imitate femininity, Scout parodies – although far less self-consciously – masculinity. […] Because Scout's anatomy is distinct from the gender of her performances, they make public the same dissonances of corporeality as arise from drag performances. […] [I]mages of Scout in her customary drag of overalls and her internalization of masculine acts and gestures […] denaturalize the feminine clothes.[79]

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[77] Claudia Durst Johnson, chronology, *To Kill a Mockingbird: Threatening Boundaries* (New York: Simon &Schuster, 1994) xiii.
[78] Mary McDonagh Murphy, *Scout, Atticus and Boo* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010).
[79] Gary Richards, "Harper Lee and the Destabilization of Heterosexuality," *Harper Lee's* To Kill a Mockingbird, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2007) 159.

In the same way, it might be added, Scout denaturalizes gender expressivity by being a girl and wearing boyish overalls. The analogy with drag queens is too far-fetched, in my opinion – whatever Scout does with gender conventions, she definitely does not deliberately upend them by becoming a gender performer. Living without a mother or another feminizing influence (Aunt Alexandra who in the novel supervises Scout's proper gender socialization, is completely missing from the film) and being quite young, Scout goes beyond gender distinctions and passes as an androgyne. She is thus able to connect with both her masculine and feminine sides without having to see them as antithetical. She might wear a dress to school, but at the same time she spends the rest of her time in overalls.

Scout's androgynous personality does not stop at the reconciliation of feminine and masculine characteristics. It is backed by her foray into the world of animals and objects which strengthens her otherness and highlights her movement inbetween categories. We see her crawling on all four from under the house and hanging upside down from a hanging chair on the porch. In the end, she goes to a Halloween pageant in the costume of a ham, thus becoming an animated object herself. This quality of the film version of Scout did not go unnoticed by the reviewers at the time of the film's release, although it was wrongly attributed to both Scout and Jem: "The two children are nothing short of phenomenal. Untrained, they respond to direction like bright young animals, alert, sensitive, plastic."[80]

Focusing on racial issues, the film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* seems to leave behind aspects of gender socialization in the Jim Crow South that the book was dealing with to a great extent. This move opens the way for androgyny, not in the feminist sense that Heilbrun as well as Bell-Metereau were pursuing, but in the sense of abandoning gender distinctions altogether.

To Kill a Mockingbird operates here within two regimes – it adopts the childhood-as-innocence perspective, even hinting at the moral superiority issue (in one scene Scout wards off a lynching by embarrasing the mob). At the same

[80] James Powers, "Pakula-Mulligan Pic In Line for Honors," *Hollywood Reporter* 11 Dec. 1962: n.pag. *To Kill a Mockingbird* – production file (reviews), Core Collections, AMPAS.

time, the film abandons the a-sexual and a-gender space of this discourse (Scout never ceases to be a girl and even falls in love), moves via tomboyism, overcoming tensions between masculinity and femininity inherent in this concept, and arrives at a new gender option. Moreover, while a tomboy usually has to go through the tomboy taming phase, the layout of Scout's family and her surroundings does not indicate any such efforts, at the time of the story, or in the future. Androgyny here operates as a camouflage resulting in the abandonment of tomboy taming. Thus, there is more radicalism in Scout's tomboyish androgyny than there would be, were she simply a tomboy.

The issue of androgyny resurfaces in McCullers's novels, and particularly in the films based on them. *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* in this respect follows a similar trajectory to *To Kill a Mockingbird.* The main tomboyish character played by Sondra Locke in the film version of the novel is "detomboyed" and reshaped as animal and innocent – in the reviews, she is labelled as "a crawny pullet," "newborn fawn," an "elf" and a "beanstalk," detaching her potential subversiveness from any usual identity markers (be it gender, class, sexuality or race). Locke's public persona, created along with the film's promotional campaign, is of special interest. The official story amusingly presents Locke as a "work of art" of her husband Gordon, her childhood sweetheart and best friend, who, with the help of fake freckles and knee scabs, thinned grayish hair and ace bandage, managed to fool the studio representatives into believing Sondra is sixteen instead of twenty one. The couple is often photographed with their faces next to each other, as if they were mirror images, interchangeable and androgynous. "We're like one person," says Locke in one of her first press interviews.[81]

[81] Edwin Miller, "A Searching Kind of Person," *Seventeen* 4 (Apr. 1968): 258. Reinforcing the impression of the couple being one is the fact that Gordon was present at all the interviews Locke gave for the film.

3.2. Against the Nice-Girl Paradigm – Tomboy as a Proto- and Post-Feminist

Tomboyism in general, and tomboyism in McCullers in particular, is strongly connected to the feminist discourse. Abate directly links the emergence of tomboyism in US pre-Civil War culture with "the birth of white feminism,"[82] and many of the authors of tomboy narratives she analyses were avowed supporters of feminist agenda of their time, from Louisa May Alcott over Sarah Orne Jewett to Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Tomboyism in McCullers was first addressed by feminist critics, namely Louise Westling and Barbara A. White, who see the source of the tomboys's major conflict in social pressures forcing them "to abandon masculine independence and accept a feminine identity."[83] Contrasting independence to femininity establishes the tomboy as an (un)conscious rebel in a society organized along patriarchal lines, a rebel who cannot win the battle by herself, but who can contribute to the larger war for women's equal rights.

3.2.1. The Quintessential Tomboy Revisited: Katherine Hepburn as the Next Door Garbo

Jo March, the main character from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, published in 1868 and 1969, holds a high status among tomboyish protagonists. Christian McEwen called her "the quintessential tomboy,"[84] and for Abate, Jo is "a beloved icon of female gender rebellion to this day."[85] Abate sums the immense impact of Jo March, and *Little Women*, on the public image of tomboyism succintly:

> Although nearly 150 years have passed since Jo's first appearance, she continues to be seen by critics and readers alike as not simply one example of a rebellious tomboy, but the paradigm for

[82] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 5.
[83] Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 155.
[84] Christian McEwen, Introduction, *Jo's Girls: Tomboy Tales of High Adventure, True Grit, and Real Life*, ed. Christian McEwen (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997) xii.
[85] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 22.

such figures. Writers as diverse as Gertrude Stein, Simone de Beauvoir and Joyce Carol Oates have commented on the influence that Alcott's novel in general and that Jo March in particular had on their development.[86]

The story of *Little Women* follows the growing up of four sisters during and especially after the Civil War and the ways their individual ambitions are either fulfilled or reshaped in the process. The tomboyish Jo is the second oldest and the most adventurous; she makes her living writing sensational stories and gains her true voice as a serious writer in the end.

Although *Little Women* is by no means a southern novel, I have decided to include the film versions of the book into my debate about tomboyism, as the development of the filmic rendering of this tomboyish character echoes in the ways McCullers's tomboys, especially Frankie from *The Member of the Wedding*, were reconceptualized by the U.S. film industry in the second half of the 20th century. Also, these versions perfectly depict the varying degree to which feminism comes to define and embrace tomboyism which is an important topic in McCullers's criticism. Last but not least, the analysis of film version of *Little Women* allows me to address the issue of the visual impersonation of the tomboy by various film actresses which I will address in dealing with the film and TV versions of McCullers's novels. Leaving aside silent and TV productions, three film versions of the novel were produced across the 20th century – in 1933, 1949 and 1994. I will focus on two of them, the first and the last, as they reveal an intriguing dynamics between tomboyism and feminism.

Jo March is played by Katharine Hepburn in the 1933 *Little Women*, for whom the role was one of her favorites, as it reminded her of her youth. In her biography, Hepburn talks about her unconventional upbringing, her athletic pursuits, climbing trees, riding bikes and horses. At one point, she writes about her hair being cropped short and adds: "I'd always wanted to be a boy. Jimmy was my name, if you want to know."[87] Although Jo is characterized as a tomboy by her sisters, and often criticized for her "rude" and "unladylike" ways – "You're old enough to leave off boyish tricks and behave better, Josephine,"

[86] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 26.
[87] Katharine Hepburn, *Me: Stories of My Life* (New York: Random House, 1991) 39.

says the eldest sister Meg to Jo at the very beginning of the film – her appearance is very different from other tomboys I have dealt with so far and will deal with in the following chapters.

In comparison with them, Jo looks distinctly feminine – she wears dresses with long skirts and has long hair she cares about. Jo's appearance is definitely due to the film's setting during the Civil War, when there was no idea yet about women wearing trousers, particularly not women of Jo's social class. It is nevertheless necessary to add that Jo's description in the book does not create such a feminine image. She is here depicted as "very tall, thin and brown," reminding one of "a colt." She is said to have "a decided mouth, a comical nose, and sharp grey eyes, […] big hands and feet, a fly-away look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman, and didn't like it."[88]

Jo's tomboyism in the film is expressed solely by her behavior. Driven by her restless energy, she jumps over fences, runs wildly, whistles, and speaks her mind loudly and without reserve. Although her sisters admonish her often, Jo's audacity is clearly beneficial for the family – she befriends Laurie, a rich boy-next-door at whose party Jo's sister meets her future husband and whose grandfather often helps the family in difficult situations. At the same time this code of conduct sets Jo apart and makes her lonely. She detests the idea of growing up into a lady, which is the only option available to her. Thus, she decides to leave for New York to pursue her passion for writing. There she meets Professor Bhaer, an absent-minded, clumsy foreigner, with whom she gradually falls in love; along with the death of her favorite sister Beth, which is a lesson in humility and meekness for Jo, her feelings for Bhaer teach her to accept change as inevitable and make her into a grown-up woman.

Jo's central conflict is emphasized by the casting of the role. While Jo is fifteen in the book, Katherine Hepburn was eleven years older than her character at the time of the shooting. Besides the fact that casting older actresses in juvenile roles was not considered as odd at the time, the age difference works to portray tomboyism as a kind of behavior which does not belong to adulthood.

[88] Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (1868–1869, New York: Penguin, 2007) 4.

As Hepburn looks her age and there were no efforts to make her look younger, Jo's tomboyish pranks seem incongruous from the very beginning and the contrast between her behavior and that of a lady exemplified by her sister Meg isolates Jo profoundly from her surroundings.

In this respect, *Little Women* create the blueprint for future tomboy narratives in which tomboys are fighting the idea of growing up into a lady, a meek, soft-spoken and orderly creature, only to succumb in the end. The issue of tomboy taming is interestingly resolved in this version of *Little Women* – it is shown as a gradual, and also natural, process, painful but rewarding. The thing that Jo feared most about growing up – the dissolution of the family – did not happen; on the contrary, the family only grew larger with newcoming husbands and children of her sisters.

The ending allows for a different, more subversive reading. Jo runs into Professor Bhaer on the porch of her family's house, and while both of them recede from the rain through the front door, they damage their umbrella, as they forget to close it. This event is bemusedly observed by the family maid, which brings to mind the question whether Jo will ever be adult enough not to need supervision, not mentioning whether she will ever be a proper lady.

While the development of Jo as well as the ending of the film might leave contemporary viewers with mixed feelings, period reviewers seemed to be completely happy with the story and the reviews were full of praise for Hepburn's performance, concluding that "it is Miss Hepburn's part which is the central point of the work, and it is her excellence which makes for the success of the work."[89] Others discussed the modernity of Hepburn's rendering of Jo, transforming the Victorian tomboy into a believable and contemporary character. What is striking is that the reviewers viewed Alcott's character as too feminine:

> The electric Kate disturbs the Alcott tradition. Hollywood could have provided a score of graceful, feminine Jo who would have satisfied the preconceived type. But this actress creates a new and stunningly vivid character; strips the Victorian hoyden of her too syrupy goody-

[89] Richard Watts, Jr., rev. of *Little Women*, dir. George Cukor, *New York Herald Tribune* 17 Nov. 1933: n. pag. *Little Women,* 1933 – production file, Core Collections, AMPAS.

goodiness and endows the role with awkwardly engaging youth energy that makes it the essence of flesh and blood reality.[90]

This reading might explain the sense of Jo's displacement within the narrative that I mentioned earlier. Andrew Britton goes even further, claiming that "Hepburn's presence is always more radical than her films;"[91] at the same time, though, this view is most likely caused by Hepburn's previous roles and her off-screen persona. Her early publicity (*Little Women* was her fourth film) compared her frequently to Greta Garbo, the androgynous, sublime and enigmatic star.

At the same time though, as Britton notes, Hepburn is presented as an accessible version of Garbo: "Hepburn's ideological function is to mediate the romantic 'other' and 'American-ness.' Thus, '*la divine*' is remoulded as the everyday, the myth of the androgyne as the myth of the red-headed tomboy, self-realisation through romantic passion as fresh-faced modern confidence."[92]

Britton claims that in the early Hepburn image of a tomboy, "'boyishness' is offered […] as […] an agreeable tension within, rather than a disturbing negation of, 'femininity.'"[93]

I want to argue that the ending of *Little Women*, along with the profoundly mannish off-screen appearance of Hepburn, disturbs the reading of Jo as succumbing to conventional femininity. Her transgressive potential is betrayed further by the over-enthusiastic publicity slogans for *Little Women*. A one-page advertisement in *Screen play* presents the story as a "glorious romance of four girls in love," despite the fact that Beth dies before she manages to lay her eyes on any man; a different caption from an unsourced ad presents Hepburn as "the wild, sweet, secret idol of every man," although she ends up with Proffesor Bhaer, hardly an image of the everyman.[94]

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[90] Rush., rev. of *Little Women*, dir. George Cukor, *Variety* 21 Nov. 1933: n. pag. *Little Women,* 1933 – production file, Core Collections, AMPAS.
[91] Andrew Britton, *Katharine Hepburn: Star as Feminist* (New York: Continuum, 1995) 8.
[92] Andrew Britton, *Katharine Hepburn* 24. Italics in the original.
[93] Andrew Britton, *Katharine Hepburn* 20.
[94] *Screen Play* 11 (1933): vii. Both ads are located in *Little Women,* 1933 – production file, Core Collections, AMPAS.

The feminist potential of the film, along with Jo/Hepburn's disclocation within the narrative, is further fuelled by retrospective reviews from the 1970s and 1980s, when the film was ocassionally televised or screened. The Hepburn persona, now seen as a proto-feminist, dominates critical assesments of the film:

> George Cukor's *Little Women* […] has been dismissed sight unseen by too many people as period sentimentality. It should be seen and appreciated for its tough-mindedness […], especially in the new context of feminism, of which Hepburn was the heroic exemplar at a time when she stood alone.[95]

3.2.2. Post-feminism and the Hollywood Dark Girl

While the context of feminism was not new in the 1990s, the self-proclaimed feminism of *Little Women*, shot in 1994 by Gillian Armstrong from a script by Robin Swicord, brought about a lively discussion about the role(s) of women in contemporary American society.

Armstrong and Swicord's version of *Little Women* introduces two crucial departures from the preceding versions – Jo is no longer the main focus of the film and her tomboyism is not othering her in the way it did in the 1933 film. Jo of the 1990s is simply fighting for the right to pursue her artistic career and finds her own voice in the end – she publishes pulp literature under a male pseudonym, while signing "Little Women" which brings her fame as well as the love of Professor Bhaer, with her own name.

There is no lesson in humility, loss and suffering to be learned from the family; on the contrary the family is a haven of safety and support – after Beth dies, Jo, grown-up and confident in her life career, is given the house of her aunt and plans to establish a school there. Although Jo goes through several stages in her life, her journey is not from tomboyism to femininity, but rather simply from innocence to experience.

There is one more aspect in the film that makes Jo's growing up very different from the one we saw in the 1933 film. Where the former Jo was

[95] Andrew Sarris, rev. of *Little Women*, dir. George Cukor, *Village Voice* 12 Dec. 1977: n.pag. *Little Women,* 1933 – production file, Core Collections, AMPAS.

constantly forced by her mother, a typical example of 19th-century self-denial, and her sisters to conform, Jo in this film is not forced to change her ways, as her mother is a feminist who supports and nurtures her individuality. As a representative of the 19th-century Women's Progressive Movement, the mother serves as a role model to Jo. Jo, therefore, does not need to rebel, but rather to persevere in her efforts.

For this she gets a double reward – fame, and the husband. Significantly, Proffesor Bhaer is no longer the impractical, clumsy eccentric, but an attractive, elegant and self-confident man. In this way, the film finally reconciliates independence of spirit and ambition (character traits viewed as masculine in the previous version) with femininity and traditional family values and present its female audience with an ideal of modern femininity which seeks to embrace both "the loud, playful sexiness of our times" and "our delicacy, our sensitivity and gentleness" as one critic of the film put it.[96]

In both films, Jo strives to match her unconventional personality with her surroundings. In the 1933 film, she loses and finally conforms, giving up her tomboyism. In the 1994 version, she, with the help of her family, wins and seems to keep her independence despite the impending marriage. Although this summary encourages to read the 1994 tomboy as more progressive and fulfilled, a closer look into the way tomboyism is constructed in the two films and how it is related to unconventionality of the two Jos, complicates the image.

Jo in the 1933 film is a rebel in the world that does not welcome rebels. Her rebellion is rooted in her ignorance of the gendered base of adult behavior – several times, she is engaging in activities women should not be engaging in. Her transgressions are not only leading her into masculine territory; they function as uncanny extensions of childhood into adulthood, as, for instance, in the scene in which Jo and Laurie fence wildly, Jo falls down, and Laurie apologizes to her, realizing suddenly they are too grown up to act like playmates – " I forgot you were a girl and I'm afraid I got a bit too rough."[97] In tune with the view of tomboyism as a phase in the process of female growing-up, Jo's

[96] Mary Gaitskill, "Does *Little Women* Belittle Women?" *Vogue* Jan. 1995: 44.
[97] *Little Women*, dir. George Cukor. Warner Brothers Home Video, 2001, DVD.

battle against time, her effort to stay suspended between childhood and adulthood forever, are presented as futile.

Jo in the context of the 1994 film is a different type of gender rebel – feminine in appearance and behavior from the very beginning, she ventures into the male sphere intelectually by attempting to pursue a writing career and earn her living by herself. Her goal is a life-long one, and consists of carving out more space for ambitious women, acknowledging intellect as a human, rather than masculine, feature. While the 1933 Jo fights the very idea of gendered behavior by pointing out the restrictiveness of adult femininity, compared to the freedom girls are allowed to enjoy in childhood, the Jo from the 1994 film celebrates femininity and calls for a freedom of choice for every woman to decide what she wants to be – Jo is not shown as any better, worse, or other than her sisters.

The difference between the two Jos is further fuelled by the appearance and off-screen personas of the actresses who play them. Hepburn was twenty six at the time, Winona Ryder, though twenty two in 1994, looked much younger and her looks in no way "redefine the beautiful" as was the case with Hepburn.[98]

While Ryder appeared in a small "rough-girl" part in Jim Jarmusch's *Night on Earth* (1991), smoking and cursing, and despite being called "Hollywood Dark Girl," her darkness was always redeemed by her "doe-eyed […] pretty fragility" off-screen and her "acceptable unthreatening-ness" on-screen, playing "the cheerleaders to renegates rather than a renegate herself," as Alissa Quart put it.[99]

This image recalls what Angela McRobbie, a British feminist and youth-culture scholar, labelled as post-feminism, a cultural discourse which "draws on and invokes feminism as that which can be taken into account, to suggest that equality is achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasize that it is no longer needed, it is a spent force."[100] According to McRobbie, postfeminism involves a "double entanglement," linking

[98] Andrew Britton, *Katharine Hepburn* 26.
[99] Alissa Quart, "Puzzle of a Downfall Child: Will Winona Rise from Her Own Smoldering Ashes?" *Film Comment* 38.5 (Sept.–Oct. 2002): 28.
[100] Angela McRobbie, "Post-Feminism and Popular Culture," *Feminist Media Studies* 4.3 (2004): 255.

neoconservative values (chastity, traditional gender roles) with liberalization of choice (gay marriage).[101]

An important aspect, expanded by McRobbie's followers, is postfeminism's emphasis upon sophistication and irony in relation to media consumption – "thank goodness it is permissible, once again, to enjoy looking at the bodies of beautiful women," sums McRobbie this approach in reaction to an ad which would be labelled as simply sexist by feminists[102] – and on youthful enthusiasm and young audiences/consumers. This focus results into a vogue of teenage heroines, of which Winona Ryder is a good example, "so girlish that she specialized in teenagers into her mid-twenties."[103]

Tomboyism is thus approached differently in the two films – while both Jo Marches are perceived as tomboyish by the authors as well as the films' reviewers, the meaning of tomboyism is different in each case. The 1933 version of *Little Women* constructs tomboyism as a gender-transgressive behavior which strives to upend traditional understanding of gender roles in the 19th-century America. Therefore, it is limited to the period of childhood and shown as preposterous in adulthood. There is no way to reconciliate Jo's tomboyism with her new role as a woman, hence tomboyism becomes an isolated phenomenon and Jo's acceptance of her adulthood and femininity is accompanied by feelings of loss.

Tomboyism in the 1994 film is firmly embedded in the feminist discourse of the times, embodied predominantly in the director/screenwriter/producer trio's views and is welcome to embrace both career and femininity, childhood and adulthood. In a *Los Angeles Times* interview with the screenwriter, director, and producer of *Little Women*, all married women with children, the producer Denise Di Novi summed up the feelings of hers and her colleagues about feminism and the film: "'I think we're

[101] See Angela McRobbie, "Post-Feminism and Popular Culture," 255–56.
[102] Angela McRobbie, "Post-Feminism and Popular Culture" 259.
[103] Alissa Quart, "Puzzle of a Downfall Child" 28. Ryder played teenagers well into her late twenties, see for instance her role as Suzanna Kaysen, a high-school graduate in *Girl, Interrupted* (1999, dir. James Mangold).

evolving into a more humanist and inclusive feminism that's able to embrace men and motherhood in a way 60s feminism couldn't.'"[104]

Tomboyism here is viewed less in terms of physical exuberance and energy (i.e. a behavioral quality), and more as intellectual and artistic bend of the tomboy's personality, a trait that is life-long and should be nurtured. It needs to be noted though that to be approached as such, tomboyism is rid of its gender-bending potential – Jo March in the 1994 version does not regret her femininity, nor does she loathe the idea of marriage and family. What is more, her approach is validated by the film's ideological frame, which places the ethos (and importance) of individual endeavor over the issue of social constraints and conventions.

The analysis of the two versions of *Little Women* reveals that tomboyism is not a fixed and static concept, but a set of features which might embrace diverse identifications between traditional femininity and masculinity. It also displays the way in which feminist agenda has been incorporated into Hollywood discourse at different times as well as feminists's complex relation towards tomboyism as a gender-bending behavior.

The tension between femininity and masculinity of the tomboy and thus its form of social rebellion played out in the two versions of *Little Women,* resurface in the films made of McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*. This is especially pertinent in the comparison of the 1952 film and the 1997 one – in the first one, the tomboy Frankie is played by Julie Harris whose appearance in this role is very masculine; she was also criticized for being too old for the part (Frankie is twelve, Harris was twenty six at the time of the shooting).

The 1997 version features Anna Paquin, 14 years old at the time, looking very childlike and fragile. These shifts are interpreted by feminist critics as betraying a gender backlash taking place in the 1990s US society, polishing femininity and heterosexuality in its girls. Abate, for instance, talks about "the gender conformity of seemingly gender-bending tomboyism" in relation to the 1990s and describes its features as follows: "a young girl who plays softball

[104] Kristine McKenna, "Not So Little Women," *Los Angeles Times* 27 Dec. 1994: F14.

instead of baseball and whose hair is pulled back in a long pony tail rather than cropped in a short crew cut."[105]

I would nevertheless like to offer a different reading of these changes, from the perspective of gender performance and masquerade – in the older films, the tomboys reveal the performative nature of femininity and gender roles in general (Meg tells Jo to "remember she is almost a young lady"), the 1990s films show gender markers as fluid and make the degree of femininity and masculinity into a personal decision.

The opening of tomboyism within the framework of feminist ideology which I have outlined in my analysis of *Little Women* from 1994, serves tomboyism well politically, as it helps this concept to become more fully accommodated within American cultural discourse. This point becomes more evident when we compare the tomboy with a similar figure of the "sissy," the gender-bending boy, and the different treatment of the two in American culture as well as clinical discourse. It is well exemplified by popular US psychologist Leonard Sax's advice to the parents of a sissy. While he claims that tomboyish girls "should be encouraged to pursue those gender-atypical activities,"[106] he calls sissies anomalous and recommends firm discipline:

> So what can you do if your son is an anomalous male and he's five, six, seven, eight years old? Number one: adopt and maintain a firm disciplinary style. […] Number two: encourage competitive sports.[…] Next, you have to take an honest look in the mirror. If your son is an anomalous male, there is a good chance that you have been overly protective, too careful to shield him from the scrapes and bumps of everyday life.[107]

Implementing tomboyism within feminism presents it as a phenomenon with a past, and also as a catalyst, propelling social changes leading to the freedoms women are currently enjoying. On the other hand, though, this perspective presents tomboyism with many faces – from Jo March to the late-19th-century

[105] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 223.
[106] Leonard Sax, *Why Gender Matters: What Parents and Teachers Need to Know about the Emerging Science of Sex Differences* (New York: Doubleday, 2005) 233.
[107] Leonard Sax, *Why Gender Matters* 227–28. This attitude bespeaks a deeply conservative view of proper masculinity at the heart of American society.

New Woman, the flapper of the 1920s, the lesbian of the 1950s pulp fiction, and on to the 1990s Girl Power movement.

Seeing tomboyism as an all-embracing form of rebellious conduct of small girls, female adolescents, as well as adult women, heterosexual, asexual, as well as lesbian, rubs away specificity of the concept and it becomes increasingly difficult to deal with it. As my belief is that such an approach blurs important distinctions, my point here is to part with an all-embracing tomboyism, and for the purpose of my analysis limit tomboyism to childhood and adolescence, a liminal period in the life of American girls; thus allowing me to expose its transgressive potential and its power to disturb traditional gender concepts and open new paths, culturally and socially.

3.3. Tomboyism, Lesbian Sexuality and (Female) Masculinity

The tomboy in American literature and culture occupies a thin margin separating two worlds – the world of girls seeking power and independence, features which are usually identified with boyhood, and the world of girls who want to be boys; occasionally collapsing the distinction altogether. It is this distinction, however, that has attracted much critical attention, especially in the discussion of tomboy's inherent misogyny, transvestitism or lesbianism.

3.3.1. Tomboyism Between Gender and Sexuality

On the one hand, there is an effort to undifferentiate tomboyism and offer a simple explanation of tomboyish inclinations. Christian McEwen writes in her introduction to tomboy narratives:

> With some exceptions […] the issue is not maleness per se. Most tomboys do not actually want to be boys. Rather, they covet a boy's freedom and independence: the opportunity to explore and have adventures, the acceptance of physical risk.[108]

[108] Christian McEwen, Introduction, *Jo's Girls* xix.

From this point of view, the tomboy refuses to succumb to the "strictures of niceness," which, according to Greer Litton Fox, impose limitations and curb women's pursuit of control, power and participation in the world.[109] The refusal to become a "nice girl" and give up "control, power and participation in the world" makes the tomboy into a social outcast in a traditionally gendered culture.

To soften these disparities and allow women to keep the memories of their tomboyish past without necessarily compromising their present lives, Betsy Levonian Morgan comes with an alternative scenario, claiming that "self-described tomboys tend to embrace boys' and girls' activities rather than reject girls' activities; that is, they play with both trucks and dolls."[110] This approach, reintroducing the concept of androgyny into the debate, is unfortunately not supported by any relevant data on the part of Morgan; it is also not supported by available tomboy narratives, in which the conflict between the tomboy's pursuit of individual happiness and social expectations is central.

On the other hand, there is a concept of the tomboy as a future lesbian. This kind of tomboy narrative is significant in its replacing the issue of adolescent tomboy taming with that of the coming out. The rise of the tomboy lesbian in the realm of popular culture of the 1990s slowly overshadowed other frames of reference possible for the thinking of the tomboy and resulted in limiting the scope of tomboyism to same-sex desire. At the same time, it has served as a trailblazer, offering an alternative story of a tomboy true to her spirit of independence throughout her whole life, at a time when heterosexual tomboyism was being markedly feminized, as I have pointed out above in my analysis of the 1994 version of *Little Women*. The issue of tomboy's sexuality, though, and its connection with her gender expression, is a very pertinent one, as it situates the debate about tomboyism between feminism and queer studies, the former gradually giving up to the latter, as feminism becomes "taken into account," i.e. "no longer needed" in post-feminism.

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[109] Greer Litton Fox, "'Nice Girl': Social Control of Women through a Value Construct", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2.4 (Summer 1977): 817.
[110] Betsy Levonian Morgan, "A Three Generational Study of Tomboy Behavior," 789.

The association of tomboyism and lesbianism has become a cultural commonplace, especially with the rise of queer theory and the LGBT movement in the 1980s. Its onset also owes much to a method of recall, used by sexuologists and sociologists in their research of adult women, who were asked to recall the patterns of their childhood behavior. The use of recall on the one hand helped establish tomboyism as a common phenomenon (all previously quoted studies arrived at their data by using recall, most of them complaining at the same time of the lack of research on young tomboys); on the other one, though, used first in studies on lesbian women, it lead to the conclusion that there is an obvious connection between tomboyism and lesbianism.

Michelle Ann Abate in her *Tomboys* traces the connection of tomboyism and lesbianism in American culture back to the late 19th century, when, with the birth of sexuology as a scientific discipline, "tomboyism went from being seen as an effective preparatory stage for marriage and motherhood to a potential breeding ground for lesbianism."[111] She further discusses it in connection with the lesbian pulp novels of the 1950s in which "any female character who was even remotely tomboyish was also, ultimately, a lesbian,"[112] and defines tomboys in the New Queer Cinema of the 1990s, when "lesbian-themed films […] became a home for an alternative form of tomboyism."[113]

C. Lynn Carr argues in her study "Tomboyism or Lesbianism? Beyond Sex/Gender/Sexual Conflation" that many problems in the discussion of tomboyism are rooted in the conflation of categories of sex, gender and sexuality, and strives to challenge the notion that childhood tomboyism, untamed in adolescence, leads inevitably to adult lesbianism.

Carr approaches the link between lesbianism and tomboyism from the angle of the degree, and necessity, of "choosing masculinity" and "rejecting femininity" in the forming of tomboyish identity. Although her conclusion that "adult women who recalled 'choosing masculinity' in childhood without 'rejecting femininity' are more likely to identify as heterosexual than are those

[111] Michelle Ann Abate, Introduction, *Tomboys* xxi.
[112] Michelle Ann Abate, Introduction, *Tomboys* xxi.
[113] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 230.

who reported both 'choosing masculinity' and 'rejecting femininity,'" is a conflation of gender and sexuality par excellence, her study is nevertheless important for proposing that (recalled) tomboyism is not necessarily linked to lesbianism; according to Carr, it is rather "bound to 'butchness' in both lesbian/bisexual and heterosexual women."[114]

3.3.2. Judith Halberstam and Female Butchness – Tomboy Film as Queer Cinema for Pre-Teens?

In her efforts at a reconceptualization of the binary opposites of masculinity and femininity and the use of butchness in the description of tomboys, Carr refers to the work undertaken by the queer theorist Judith Halberstam in her 1998 book *Female Masculinity*. Halberstam here argues against the reduction of masculinity to the male body, and proposes a system of gender preferences to replace compulsory gender binarism:

> A system of gender preferences would allow for gender neutrality until such a time when a child or young adult announces his or her or its gender. Even if we could not let go of a binary system, there are still ways to make gender optional – people could come out as a gender in the way they come out as a sexuality.[115]

Halberstam challenges the automatic linking of female masculinity with lesbianism and calls for a more open, less categorical approach, saying that "the masculine heterosexual woman need not be viewed as a lesbian in denial; she may merely be a woman who rejects the strictures of femininity."[116]

The frame Halberstam constructs here, allowing for a more fluid reading of gender, is especially fitting for the conceptualization of the gender-bending phenomenon of the tomboy. Halberstam actually devotes a whole chapter to tomboy characters on screen, characterizing the tomboy as "a powerful early form of female masculinity."[117] She also distinguishes the tomboy film as a sub-

[114] C. Lynn Carr, "Tomboyism or Lesbianism? Beyond Sex/Gender/Sexual Conflation," *Sex Roles* 53.1–2 (Jul. 2005): 128.
[115] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 27.
[116] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 59.
[117] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 299, note 18.

genre within a larger group of the "butches on film," dubbing the tomboy as "pre-butch."[118]

The reframing of tomboyism as butchness that Halberstam does in her book is an inspiring project. "Before there were lesbians, there were butches," explains Halberstam why it is necessary to replace the ahistoric label "lesbian" and introduce more specific categories into the discussion of queer cinema and gay and lesbian studies in general.[119] She is nevertheless well aware of the tensions between butchness and the representation of homosexuality in different eras of the Hollywood cinema and tries to subvert a division of gay and lesbian images into positive and negative:

> The history of the butch dyke in film […] has long been regarded by gay and lesbian historians as the history of cinematic homophobia; however, the butch does not simply function in a negative register. Before the emergence of an independent lesbian cinema, the butch was the only way of registering sexual variance in the repressive environment of Hollywood cinema.[120]

This effort of bringing the butch into the game is definitely a praiseworthy one, as it goes against historical simplifications and opens new ways of reading queer cinema. At the same time, however, Halberstam's restructuring of queer cinema to include instances of butchness that were in existence long before "queer" or "lesbian" became used for "registering sexual variance" shifts butchness (and tomboyism along with it) out of gender transgression into the realm of same-sex identification. Halberstam realizes this in her discussion of the tomboy film and she therefore stresses the need to "carefully bracket the tomboy film from other lesbian and butch narratives because this genre does not explicitly announce itself as lesbian."[121]

While the heyday of the tomboy genre, which occured according to Halberstam in the 1970s and 1980s, was brought about by the rise of feminism and its impact upon the concept of child-rearing, resulting in a more liberal vision of "sex-role orientation" of children, "the tomboy film faded from view

[118] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 187.
[119] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 186.
[120] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 186.
[121] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 299, note 18.

by the end of the 1980s partly owing to the implicit link between tomboys and lesbians." The fact that a non-lesbian genre became linked to lesbianism and disappeared from the screen, is for Halberstam the direct effect of "a public psychologized discourse on homosexuality" which began to see tomboys as "potentially queer."[122]

This argument is certainly a valid one, but it is necessary to bear in mind that tomboyism, as Abate shows, has been linked to lesbianism much earlier than the late 1980s; and that Hollywood (and popular culture in general) has long seen tomboy films "as queer cinema for preteens," as Halberstam calls them.[123] This is also the reason why tomboy taming has become a staple device in tomboy narratives (with the exception of tomboys as lesbian butches, who are othered by their sexuality), and why there are so many feminine tomboys in popular culture, especially once the tomboy butch has moved into the realm of independent queer cinema in the first half of the 1990s.

To keep tomboyism and lesbianism apart, while preserving the butchness of the tomboy, Halberstam limits the genre of tomboy film to a few works produced by the Hollywood industry in a specific period (the 1970s and 1980s), and incorporates into this diverse group one film from the early 1950s (Fred Zinnemann's *The Member of the Wedding*).[124] At the same time she tries to posit the tomboy in an a-gender space, a utopian place of gender innocence, when she says: "I do not see the tomboy as either a male impersonator or a cross-dresser but as a preadolescent gender within which the adult imperatives of binary gender have not yet taken hold."[125]

This approach is compatible with the concept of gender fluidity coined by queer theory, it nevertheless limits the scope of tomboy narratives further by

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[122] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 188.
[123] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 193.
[124] Halberstam mentions and/or discusses the following films in her book: *Foxes* (1980, dir. Adrian Lyne), *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1974, dir. Martin Scorsese), *Paper Moon* (1973, dir. Peter Bogdanovich), *Little Darlings* (1980, dir. Ronald F. Maxwell), *Times Square* (1980, dir. Allan Moyle), *Something Special* (1986, dir. Paul Schneider, listed at imdb.com under *Willy/Milly*) and *The Member of the Wedding* (1952, dir. Fred Zinnemann). Most of the films star one of the following actresses who came to embody the tomboy film in this era: Tatum O'Neal, Jodie Foster, and Kristy McNichol. See Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 187–93.
[125] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 299, note 18.

ignoring the figure of the adolescent tomboy, the focus of a great body of tomboy narratives, *The Member of the Wedding* included. What is more, in the light of the previous discussions of gendered childhood and the introduction of tomboy taming as a coercive practice of child-rearing, Halberstam's argument loses its force, as there is nothing like a specific "preadolescent gender."

The concept of female masculinity, or butchness as I would like to argue in my work, is able to embrace both lesbian and heterosexual tomboys. While it might be argued that children tomboys are not necessarily seen as lesbians or heterosexuals, they definitely do not live in any a-gender territory. Tomboy's gender rebellion starts early in childhood and culminates in most cases with either taming or coming out in adolescence.

3.4. Beyond the Either-Or Trap: Tomboyism as Liminality

The gender-oriented lens, through which existing works approach tomboyism, presents this phenomenon as moving on an axis between two poles – femininity and masculinity. To step back briefly from feminist/queer theory, I would like to explore in this chapter yet another frame, not usually connected with tomboyism in theory, which features prominently in many literary and filmic works on the subject – liminality.

Many of the tomboyish characters are essentially ambiguous, moving inbetween fixed positions, liminal. They are threshold characters and the narrative focus is on the process of their transformation, which is usually the core of the conflict. Their liminal or threshold position invites new ways to look at both femininity and masculinity in tomboyism – as tomboys are situated inbetween, above these categories, they subvert and challenge their fixity and naturalness. Tomboys generally may be read as doubly liminal. In the scope of the narrative conflict they linger between childhood and adulthood, the denouement usually consisting in their transition to the adult phase; gender-wise, they may be seen as existing between the masculine and feminine order. Their liminal position is important, as it disjoints the temporal axis (phases of life, from birth to death) from the existential one (gender identity), upsetting the

carefully balanced dependence of the two on each other, and offer a new perspective of the phases as well as identities in question.

The concept of liminality was popularized in the 1960s and 1970s by Victor Turner, a structural anthropologist studying ritual societies. Turner drew on the research done on the rites of passage by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in the early years of the 20th century, and especially on his definition of three steps in each rite of passage – "separation, margin (or *limen*), and aggregation;"[126] focusing exclusively on the middle stage.

According to van Gennep and Turner, the rite of passage in a ritual society operates along a well-established line – the neophytes (initiates) are stripped of everything they have, get physically as well as metaphorically separated from their previous position in the social structure, and become passive, humble, silent and submissive: "The neophyte in liminality must be a tabula rasa, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respect that pertain to the new status."[127] The person in a liminal state is symbolically emptied and then refilled in accord with the position or role he/she will hold in the social structure. Liminality thus gives way to structure, as they are interdependent in ritual societies. At the same time, Turner allows for liminality to be viewed as inherently subversive – with our being "betwixt and between," we help to "expose the basic building blocks of culture just when we pass out of and before we re-enter the structural realm."[128]

Adolescence which is the major frame of tomboyism is an important rite of passage with a prominent liminal stage. In addition to that, tomboyism itself may be viewed as liminal, poised on the edge between traditional masculinity and femininity, without a clear-cut social role and position in the social structure. Many of the features of tomboyism I have described so far correspond to those formulated by Turner in relation to neophytes: they are ambiguous and paradoxical, confuse conventional categories, "symbolically either sexless or

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[126] Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between," *The Forest of Symbols Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973) 94. Italics in the original.
[127] Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969, New Jersey: Aldine, 2008) 103.
[128] Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between," *The Forest of Symbols* 110.

bisexual," unclean and polluting, since "they are neither one thing nor another; or may be both."[129]

Being inbetween gives the tomboy a unique opportunity to observe both sides from a distance, without participating in either. Liminality in the sense of gender invites to read traditional femininity and masculinity as unnatural, socially constructed ideals, and opens the question of what happens when somebody does not conform to these ideals. At the same time, though, liminality in Turnerian, i.e. structuralist sense, implies two sides between which one is located. Although this inbetweenness may challenge the naturalness of the poles between which it operates, and reveal their ultimate artificiality, it leaves their configuration and supreme authority unshaken.

The tension between liminal states of existence and demands of structure, embodied in the tomboy and reinforced by the use of threshold imagery, features prominently in McCullers, especially in *The Member of the Wedding*. In this novel, the protagonist is often described as being neither here nor there, hanging around in doorways, puzzled, and the world around her as stopped still. By the end of the narrative, after the protagonist undergoes a profound change of identity and finds her place, the structure seems to take over. Although critics of the *The Member of the Wedding* have disagreed as to the mood of the novel's ending, ranging from life-affirming to deeply critical, few of them have discussed the very nature of the closure, which is, as I will show later, questionable in the least. Liminality in *The Member of the Wedding* does not give way to structure but profoundly undermines its base and embraces a multifaceted and hybrid vision of the world.

3.5. Tomboyism and Masquerade

3.5.1. Womanliness as Masquerade in Psychoanalytic (Film) Theory

One of the most important concepts in my journey towards the re-definition of tomboyism is masquerade which allows me to look deeper into the tomboy's

[129] Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between," *The Forest of Symbols* 98.

debated and paradoxical gender. Just as Halberstam's concept of female masculinity managed to break the automatic connection of masculinity with male body, masquerade challenges femininity as something women are born with and allows to address tomboy's theatricality, present in many of the narratives.

In her 1929 essay "Womanliness as Masquerade," which introduced the concept into psychoanalytic theory, Joan Riviere focuses on the nature and role of gender and indicates a radically new way to think about it. Starting with the typology of women, she focuses on a group that her contemporary, psychoanalyst Ernest Jones, classified as "intermediate" types: "In daily life types of men and women are constantly met with, who, while mainly heterosexual in their development, plainly display strong features of the other sex."[130] And while the definition seems clear, Riviere complicates it by adding women into this group, who not only devote themselves to masculine activities and follow a profession outside of home, but, at the same time, function as perfect mothers and wives within the homes themselves. Going beyond the common explanation of this phenomenon which views it as "an expression of the bisexually inherent in us all," Riviere moves the argument further, looking at this type of women from the perspective of their position in contemporary patriarchal society: "I shall attempt to show that women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men."[131]

This type of reasoning resonates in many debates about the nature of tomboyism, especially when the theme is approached from the feminist perspective. Women/girls are said to choose masculine/boyish look and occupation to gain a position in life that is forbidden to them as feminine/girly women/girls. This explanation also appears in psychoanalytic literature, where Karen Horney in 1926 elaborated on the psychoanalytic axioms of "penis envy" and the "Oedipus complex," and placed them into contemporary social context:

[130] Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Viktor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Caplan (London: Methuen, 1986) 35. Originally published in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* (1929) 10: 303–13.
[131] Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," *Formations of Fantasy* 35.

These typical motives for flight into the male role – motives whose origin is the Oedipus complex – are reinforced and supported by the actual disadvantage under which women labor in social life.[132]

Riviere, however, approaches this theme from yet another perspective – there might be women, who ”display strong features of the other sex” for whatever reason, yet there are women, too, who take up masculine activities while keeping the whole array of feminine attributes at the same time. The reason for their not going overboard seems to be the fear of punishment and guilt of transgression into a forbidden, i.e. male, territory. As a defense strategy, these women put on a mask of femininity, sometimes exaggerated, to assure the patriarchal order of the temporary nature of their violations and their proper gender. While this explanation might seem logical enough, Riviere adds another, final twist:

The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the ‘masquerade.’ My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.[133]

Riviere’s disturbingly radical conclusion was taken up by theorists and developed in several directions since its publication, I will nevertheless limit myself to a specific segment, pertinent to my focus upon film, namely feminist film theory, where the concept of masquerade underwent a significant transformation.

In her essay “Femininity and the Masquerade: *Anne of the Indies*,” Claire Johnston makes heavy use of masquerade in quite an unusual context – via the theme of cross-dressing. The point of masquerade for her is no longer excessive femininity used as a mask and a cover up, but a direct attempt at the appropriation of power – the masquerade consists of the woman’s hiding behind the facade of a masculine dress, adopting the position of the Father directly, not via the detour of flaunting femininity.[134] As she explains in her earlier essay:

[132] Karen Horney, “The Flight from Womanhood,” *Feminine Psychology* 69.
[133] Joan Riviere, “Womanliness as a Masquerade,” *Formations of Fantasy* 38.
[134] See Claire Johnston, “Femininity and the Masquerade: *Anne of the Indies*,” *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 1990) 64–72.

"[i]n order to be accepted into the male universe, the woman must become a man."[135]

The subversive potential of masquerade forms the core of a revision of classic psychoanalytical concepts of film theory from the position of the spectator. Working on a theory that would allow female spectatorship in the psychoanalytical framework outlined by Laura Mulvey in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Film," Mary Ann Doane returns the concept of masquerade to the flaunting of femininity, to bestow woman with a distance from her image in a different way than this distance is achieved in Mulvey, i.e. by means of a "trans-sex identification" on the part of the woman.[136]

Doane employs masquerade to maintain a certain degree of resistance in the positioning of woman as an object of the (masculine) gaze:

> The transvestite adopts the sexuality of the other – the woman becomes a man in order to attain the necessary distance from the image. Masquerade, on the other hand, involves a realignment of femininity, the recovery, or more accurately, simulation, of the missing gap or distance.[137]

It is exactly in this distance where Doane situates the possibility of a "'destabilization' of the image," as the woman gains subjectivity through distance and challenges her position as a fetish of the male gaze.[138] Although she ends her "reconsideration" on a slightly skeptical note, voicing the difficulty of aligning female spectatorship with masquerade due to the mixture of passivity and activity in Riviere's masquerade, both Doane's essays are indispensable in

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[135] Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols (University of California Press, 1976) 211, 213. Originally published in Claire Johnston, ed., *Notes on Women's Cinema* (London: Society for Education in Film and Television, 1973) 24–31.

[136] See Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by *Duel in the Sun*," *Psychoanalysis and Cinema,* ed. Ann E. Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 1990) 28. Originally published in *Framework* 15–17 (Summer 1981): 12–15. Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" was originally published in *Screen* 16.3 (Autumn 1975): 6–18.

[137] Mary Ann Doane, „Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism,* ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) 49. Originally published in *Screen* 23.3–4 (1982): 74–88.

[138] Mary Ann Doane, "Masquerade Reconsidered: Further Thoughts on the Female Spectator," *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 33.

bringing the masquerade out of the confines of pathology, as well as the psychoanalytical discourse of absence and lack. Doane also recognizes another crucial point behind Riviere's metaphor of the mask – it redraws gender as a social process: "To claim that femininity is a function of the mask is to dismantle the question of essentialism before it can even be posed."[139]

To sum up, there are two crucial corollaries of this overview of approaches to masquerade in psychoanalytical film theory – first, that masquerade in film pertains to cross-dressing and may include female characters who dress as men; and second, that masquerade undermines femininity as an essential category. For Riviere, as well as Doane, femininity is masquerade.

Applied to tomboyism, the concept of masquerade helps address the issue of boy's clothing and activities from a wider point of view than identity politics of traditional feminist approaches, unraveling the bond of gender and sexuality – Riviere addresses masquerade in heterosexual women, not only proto-lesbian butches as does Halberstam. Masquerade also provides a tool for the scrutiny of tomboyism as a process, not only a gender category. This processual character of tomboyism will be developed in connection with the theory of gender performativity below, and will result in a more complex approach to this phenomenon.

3.5.2. Tomboy Taming and Masquerade – Against the Grain of Tomboy Narratives

Tomboy narratives, literary as well as filmic, reflect many concerns articulated in the theories mentioned above. The tomboy's cross-dressing, her adoption of masculine ways and activities, might definitely be viewed as an effort at the appropriation of activity and agency within the text. On the other hand, just as in many cross-dressing movies where the woman is not allowed to carry her masquerade to the very end and keep her power intact, the tomboy's central role in the narrative is usually temporary and corrected in the end.

[139] Mary Ann Doane, "Masquerade Reconsidered: Further Thoughts on the Female Spectator," *Femmes Fatales* 37.

The potential of a clash is often smoothed by the presence of an unchallenged adult authority, most often a parent that keeps an eye on the proper socialization of the rebellious daughter. Significanly it is often the mother or another female relative, who steps in and explains with love and the use of her example (she was just like her daughter when she was her age) the appeal of traditional femininity, saving the integrity of the narrative and perpetuating gender roles and relations in a timeless repetition of one life story.

Clarence Brown's *National Velvet* (1944), included by Abate, Halberstam as well as Bell-Metereau under the tomboy film label, is a perfect example of this strategy. A twelve-year old Velvet Brown (Elizabeth Taylor) wins the Grand National Steeplechase disguised as a jockey. Her mother, who swam across the English Channel when she was young, explains to Velvet after the race that "things come suited with time, Velvet. Enjoy each thing, then forget it and go on to the next. There's time for everything. There's time for having a horse and the Grand National, be in love, having children."[140]

Masquerade in tomboyism is closely connected with clothing and its role in the signification of gender. Clothing often indicates the degree of tomboyism, as I have showed in the analysis of *Little Women* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* and it is also the major force in the process of tomboy taming which moved from adolescence to an earlier age in the 20th century. With the general introduction of compulsory school attendance, girls were forced to wear proper feminine dress to public spaces, such as the classroom. The first day of school as a metaphor for the onset of tomboy taming appears in many modern tomboy narratives, including adult women's recollections of their tomboyish pasts. Kanaki L. Kauka's description of her tomboyish childhood epitomizes this shift:

> In real life, the school we attended did not allow girls to wear pants, and I was miserable. Skirts meant no playing on the jungle gym, because boys would tease you about your underwear. Skirts also meant no running.[141]

[140] *National Velvet*, dir. Clarence Brown, Warner Home Video, 2000. DVD.
[141] Kanani L. Kauka, "The Other Kind," *Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-Do* 109.

The fact that tomboy taming is motivated by institutional pressure (internalized in successful cases, establishing the fiction of a natural transformation of the tomboyish girl into a feminine woman) explains the sudden and immediate character of the desired metamorphosis; at the same time it opens a space for subversion in a similar way to Doane's reading of Riviere.

The implementation of tomboy taming by means of clothing and other external accoutrements radically disconnects traditional femininity from the female body and creates a distance, a gap. Femininity in this respect might work as a mask signifying a tradition magically passed over, though an initiation ritual of sorts, to the person who puts it on. This ritual works with imperceptible flawlessness until someone fails to deliver it properly, or fails to see it as a necessary ritual at all. This is the moment when the mask abruptly ceases to represent anything and femininity stands for nothing but the clothes, a socially sanctioned effort at gender compliance.

This aspect is suggested in the figure of the tomboy as androgyne, discussed above, and it resonates with Riviere's and Johnston's attitude towards bisexuality and sexual heterogeneity that get disclosed in the masquerade. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* we see Scout Finch going to school for the first time, upset because she has to wear a dress. At recess, however, we see her fighting with her schoolmate, covered with dust and dirt, paying no attention to the dress. In the scenes from the first day of school, Scout manages to cancel the automatic link between a dress and a set of rules and restrictions that a proper girl should follow. The authority figure, represented here by Scout's older brother Jem, does not act on behalf of gender, but intelligence and class pride, and therefore has no impact on Scout's gender identification. Next time when Scout appears in a dress, the spectator has no clue to guess at her behavior – the dress has become a perfect mask, the better so, as it does not hide anything. The mask of femininity in *To Kill the Mockingbird* only highlights the distance between the image and its runaway signification.

Femininity as a masquerade is exposed not only by the tomboys rebelling against the restrictions implied by feminine clothes, or simply ignoring them; it is embedded in the very concept of tomboy taming. The procedure itself

excludes any notion of essential femininity. Beneath the educational tone of many tomboy narratives, an important fact gets lost or at least overlooked, a fact crucial for the construction of any counter-narrative – proper gender behavior is something the tomboys have to learn and to learn it correctly there is usually a role model to follow. The coercive character of tomboy taming is well hidden behind the idea of the temporary nature of tomboyism, the belief that tomboyism is a phase the girls outgrow.

With a change of perspective, one may approach tomboy taming as a deconstruction of traditional femininity, demonstrating itself through a mask which has to be put on repeatedly to fit and become real. This perspective also allows for a revaluation of tomboyism, as it opens a way to see it as an inherently subversive concept. As Christian McEwen notes succinctly:

> But if good-girl capitulation were the only theme, no tomboy book would have survived past its first printing. Despite the conscious intentions of their authors, books like *Little Women* […] also carry a very different and more subversive message. […] celebration of physical exuberance and daring, of delicious disobedience and ambition.[142]

3.6. Tomboyism and Gender Performativity

3.6.1. Identity Categories as Sites of Gender Trouble – Judith Butler and the Queering of Identity Politics

Via its constitutive element of tomboy taming, tomboyism links the concept of masquerade with the notion of gender performance, developed by the queer theorist Judith Butler in her seminal 1990 book *Gender Trouble*. Drawing on Michel Foucault's genealogical critique, Butler here strives to move feminism outside of the confines of identity politics and formulates the very idea of a fixed and stable identity as a "regulatory fiction."[143]

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[142] Christian McEwen, Introduction, *Jo's Girls* xvii.

[143] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990; New York: Routledge, 2008) 33. Butler borrows the term from Foucault. Genealogical critique, which "refuses to search for the origins of gender," and instead, "investigates the political stakes in designating as an *origin* and *cause* those identity categories that are in fact the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses," is an important tool for Butler as it helps her challenge the

Butler argues that a person's sex is nothing inborn or immutable and that gender should not be viewed as only a "cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex,"[144] following the logic of two sexes and two analogical genders and the metaphor of nature and culture often used in this context. Both sex and gender are part of the signifying system we live in and cannot be posited as natural, outside or above the system as this strategy would be a fiction helping justify practices which regulate and control intelligibility of human bodies in the sense of a clear display of their gender.

Once gender is not viewed as inborn or essential but socially instituted and maintained, the idea of identity as something coherent and integral, proceeding from a core and manifesting itself on the surface where it can be read, gets profoundly challenged. Thus, the idea of performance becomes central to Butler's thinking of gender, as it allows to show gender not as something essential, but as a product of the dominant regime of power. As Butler writes:

> That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. […] interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body.[145]

The goal of this regulation, according to Butler, is to keep gender and sexuality within the heteronormative matrix.

Gender manifestations do not spring from any core which would govern their form. Gender is wholly dependent on its performance and to be comprehensible, this performance must be repeated: "This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is a mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation."[146] The fact that certain acts and gestures get repeated might establish the notion of a

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feminist view of gender and sexual identity as something solid and stable and develop her concept of identity as performative. Judith Butler, preface (1990), *Gender Trouble* xxxi. Italics in the original.

[144] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 10.

[145] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 185.

[146] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 191.

center controling these acts and gestures but it is not based on any intrinsic links between them, only on the sheer fact of their repetition.

In Butler's view, there is no interconnection among individual performances. It is exactly their arbitrary relation which constitutes a potential of transformation through a "failure to repeat"[147] the performance properly, or by means of a repetition that manages, "through a radical proliferation of gender, *to displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself"[148] and thus make the performance illegible. As examples of such proliferations, Butler uses drag, cross-dressing or butch/femme identities – i.e. phenomena which use parody and imitation on one hand to explode playfully the idea of an origin imitated in the performance and, on the other hand, to "dramatize the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established."[149] This kind of performance opens gender as such to a radical revision by presenting identity as something unstable and fluid, something that can be formulated as "a personal/cultural history of received meanings."[150]

3.6.2. Gender Performance as a Antidote to Tomboy Taming

From this perspective, the issue of tomboy taming might be seen as a "regulatory fiction" which constructs its subject, tomboyism, as a temporary and limited gender option. The very name, tomboy, signifies something improper and unlawful used in relation to a girl, a kind of a stolen identity which should be reclaimed, a mistake waiting to be corrected. This question resonates in many tomboy narratives, and foregrounds the regulatory work of the very process of naming. Linda Niemann, one of the lesbian ex-tomboys in Yamaguchi and Barber's collection muses on the nature of the tomboyish label and comes to a very similar conclusion as Butler: "*Tomboy* is an odd word. Why not *tomgirl*? Because the word itself reserves certain freedoms to men only. A tomboy can be equal to a boy-boy only to a certain age."[151]

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[147] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 192.
[148] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 203. Italics in the original.
[149] Judith Butler, preface (1990), *Gender Trouble* xxxi.
[150] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 188.
[151] Linda Niemann, "Are You a Boy or a Girl?" *Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-Do* 39.

The idea of conditionality of the tomboy status, its dependence on social recognition and approval, picture the tomboy as a surrogate boy. As Terri Sweig writes: "[T]omboys are respected by both girls and boys yet remain aware that, because of boys' greater social status, regardless of how outstanding they are, their acceptance by boys is conditional."[152]

In many tomboy narratives as well as psychology literature, tomboyism is formulated as a mere imitation, the original being boyhood. This may also be one of the reasons why tomboyism has often been viewed as inherently misogynist, and why childhood androgyny was such a short-lived psychological concept in the 1970s. In the world of two sexes and genders, distinct and oppositional, and compulsive heterosexuality promoted from the early childhood, tomboyism is an anomaly, a disorder and a fake identity.

Hence, tomboy taming seems a logical, legitimate and necessary correction of this incongruous situation. While I was arguing above for female masculinity to be considered outside of the frame of sexuality (same-sex desire at that point), in the case of tomboy taming sexuality is an issue and heterosexuality works clearly as a normative tool that goes hand in hand with proper gender socialization. As Butler aptly notes at the beginning of her book: "I do not mean to claim that forms of sexual practice produce certain genders, but only that under conditions of normative heterosexuality, policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality."[153]

Being a tomboy and having a boyfriend, for instance, are mutually exclusive, just as being a tomboy and having a period, in the minds of many tomboys, real-life as well as fictional: "How could you be a tomboy at all if you could have a baby?" asks herself the central character of Norma Klein's 1978 novel *Tomboy*.[154] The link between tomboy taming and compulsive heterosexuality is so strong in the mind of most tomboys that many vow never to get married. Compulsive heterosexuality is, from the tomboys' point of view,

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Italics in the original.

[152] Terri L. Sweig, "Yang Femininity," 53–54.

[153] Judith Butler, preface (1999), *Gender Trouble* xii.

[154] Norma Klein, *Tomboy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978) 34. Quoted in Michelle Ann Abate, Introduction, *Tomboys* xix.

a socially conditioned, regulatory device with one sole aim – to rob them of their freedom.

The tomboyish imitation of boyhood can not only be aproached as an anomaly or error, but also in the Butlerian sense as a parody of the very notion of the original. Participating in the project of drag and cross-dressing allows to significantly redraw the picture and leave tomboy taming out. Butler's theory of gender as performative allows to reframe tomboyism as parodic of traditional views of girlhood and boyhood as original blueprints of gender identification.

Approaching tomboyism as performative undermines both the idea of a genderless childhood innocence and the strictly divided childhoods of pink and blue, childhoods of small adults. It reopens childhood not to androgyny and inbetweenness, but to gender play, difference and diversity of roles, gestures and costumes. While the concept of femininity as a masquerade allows tomboyism to adopt feminine clothes without having to adopt whatever behavior is associated with them, blurring the boundaries of compulsory femininity and masculinity and their claim to the bodies accordingly gendered; viewing gender as performative introduces tomboyism to a much wider array of gender varieties, depriving femininity and masculinity of their hegemonic power in gender allocation.

The issue of cross-dressing, then, can be viewed from a different perspective than the frame of the masquerade allowed – not as an effort, usually futile, to gain power over the narrative and spectatorial position, associated with the male (or the transvestite), but as a parody of gender as a fixed category, with the potential of dispersing the power structures around which intelligibility of the narrative is wrapped.

The cross-dressing tomboy, in this sense, is not only mimicking masculinity, but playfully deconstructing the very notion of gender divisions, replacing it with an image of fluidity and gender as situational. At the same time, the tomboy does not leave the system. Any subversive activity, as Butler noted, can take place only within the boundaries of the current system of power, there is no before or beyond (the very idea of before and beyond being itself the product of the system to legitimize itself), but this does not imply fatalism and

acceptance: “Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization.”[155]

Tomboy taming as an instrument of the system on one hand attempts to produce a properly gendered person, at the same time it incises indelible scars all over the tomboy’s body, marking her as an evidence in the case against itself. From the perspective of gender performance the taming process loses its hegemonic position in the tomboy narrative. In Abate, as well as other studies dealing with tomboyism, tomboy taming is considered as the ultimate closing element in the narratives. The tomboy, per force or of her own decision, transforms into a properly-gendered girl, and her story is over.

As I will show in my analysis of McCullers’s tomboys, there is another possible reading, inspired by Butler. If we accept that gender is not fixed, we can see the phases of the tomboy’s development as fluid and transitional, not settled or progressive. Tomboy taming might then be perceived as a trigger, leading the tomboy towards the employment of masquerading and performative strategies. The final transformation of a tomboy into a proper adolescent girl is nothing but a camouflage, upsetting the heteronormative discourse. In some cases, of which McCullers’s *The Member of the Wedding* is representative, the narrative closure fails to operate fittingly and instead of sealing off the story, it opens it to radical rereadings in terms of performative and highly hybridized existence.

[155] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* 188.

4. TOMBOYISM IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH – PLAYING IN THE DARK AND DIRT

I was a solemn watchful child with long thin bones and a cloud of wild black hair;[156] […] black Indian eyes[157] […]; black as midnight; […] the strangest girl-child we got.[158] […] my cheeks were high and strong; […] [m]y teeth were white and hard, sharp and gleaming. I was strong all over. Turned sunshine into muscle;[159] […] stubborn-faced, unremarkable, straight up and down, and as dark as walnut bark.[160]

So far, I have been discussing tomboyism exclusively from the perspective of gender. I have defined it as a gender-bending phenomenon open to a variety of conceptualizations, with a wide array of appearances in American culture of the 19th and 20th centuries. As I will be dealing with tomboyism in Carson McCullers and films made from her works in the following chapters, I would now like to locate tomboyism within a specific region where both her novels, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding*, are situated – the American South.

The quotation above, taken from a novel by another southern writer, Dorothy Allison, and describing the novel's tomboyish protagonist, suggests that to meaningfully address tomboyism within the frame of the American South, it will not be sufficient to work with gender perspective alone.

What is most striking about the description in fact, apart from the clearly voiced masculinity of Allison's tomboy (hard, sharp, strong all over), is the emphasis put on color and darkness, which, in the context of southern history, immediately calls race to mind. Bone, the protagonist of Allison's novel is, technically speaking, white, but the imagery used in her description betrays easy distinctions between whiteness and non-whiteness and reveals a complex and complicated history of race relations in the South. While the usual girl in southern fiction always has undeniably white skin, and tries hard to make it

[156] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992; New York: Plume, 1993) 18.
[157] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 25.
[158] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 27.
[159] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 205.
[160] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 206.

translucent, the tomboy is always described as having a dark edge to her appearance.

Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* is crucial in yet another aspect – its tomboy Bone is not only dark, she is also very poor. Her being "white trash" activates the issue of class divisions in southern society, and the ways these divisions are translated into culture and manners. Taking inspiration from Allison, I will proceed in this chapter to review tomboyism from the perspective of its work with other facets of identity, i.e. not only gender, but also race, class and sexuality.

I will deal with tomboyism against the backdrop of a set of canonical figures associated with the South and their representations in mainstream culture – the southern belle and lady, the figure of the black mammy or domestic help, as well as "white trash." I will therefore approach the South more as a myth, a unified place created as such for a specific purpose, than as a historical region, a group of states with their distinct and diverse social and cultural histories and presents. The reason is simple – the tomboy's difference, as I will demonstrate in my analyses of a few southern literary works, is always defined and measured against an ideal form of femininity, which the tomboy should strive to achieve.

The southern belle and lady have embodied this ideal for most of the 20th century, and have done so predominanly on the screen – *Gone with the Wind* (1939), dubbed several times as "the greatest film ever made," as well as its many remakes and sequels, made this ideal, among many others of the "Old South" practically immortal.[161] In contrast to the immutable images of these canonical figures I want to posit the tomboy as a deconstructive viewpoint, allowing for an alternative reading of the history of southern self-representation.

4.1. The Shadow of the Lady and Belle: Rebels With a Southern Cause

The specific form of the southern tomboy's gender-bending takes place in the distinct frame of southern femininity. Figuratively as well as literally, the

[161] For more on the unfailing appeal of *Gone with the Wind* as book and film, see Helen Taylor, "The Phenomenal *Gone with the Wind,*" *Scarlett's Women:* Gone with the Wind *and Its Female Fans* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1989) 1–21.

southern tomboy grows up in the shadow of the lady. Be it in the form of a mother, a relative or a neighbor, the presence of the lady sets the paradigm of proper feminine behavior, and it is against this set of rules that the tomboy fights. However strict and old-fashioned the rules of proper conduct may seem to be, their force and effect upon the tomboy are unchallenged in most tomboy narratives.[162]

The relation of the tomboy to the lady is complicated by inherent contradictions in the ideal of the lady itself. While her authority over the forms of southern femininity is immense in the works I will deal with, the effort to become one in the real world is futile and destined to fail. As Anne Goodwyn Jones points out in the introduction to her book on southern women writers,

> real southern girls who aspired to become ladies found behind the rhetoric a complex and sometimes contradictory set of values. For the image wearing Dixie's Diadem is not a human being […]. Rather than a person, the Confederate woman is a personification, effective only as she works in others' imagination. Efforts to join person and personification, to make self into symbol, must fail because the idea of southern womanhood specifically denies the self.[163]

The fact that the South has to such an extent been defined through the myth of southern womanhood profoundly hindered any radical change. Instead of exploding the ideal as harmful, the southern lady came to cover opposing notions – she became the symbol of strength (required of her as a mother and the lady of the house) as well as gentleness.

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[162] Most southern tomboys that I will deal with in this chapter and further on, from Miranda in "Old Mortality," "The Old Order," and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," by Katherine Anne Porter (1939, 1944), Mick Kelly from *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter by* Carson McCullers (1940), and Scout Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1960) to Bone Boatwright from *Bastard Out of Carolina* by Dorothy Allison (1992) feel inferior for not complying with the models their surroundings expect them to follow. Miranda hears about the unsurpassable beauty of Aunt Amy, Scout is guided alternately by her neighbor Miss Maudie and her aunt Alexandra, and Bone's first and natural feminine ideal is her mother Anne. The tricky exception to the rule is Frankie, from Carson McCullers's *Member of the Wedding*, who has internalized all rules of southern femininity as if by herself, and whose feminine role models alternate between his brother's fiancée and their African American cook.

[163] Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Tomorrow Is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859–1936* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981) 4.

According to Jones, the first big challenge came with the Civil War, when women had to play an active role at home after the men left. This change did not bring an end to the ideal; on the contrary, it increased its effect by enriching it:

> This newly revealed experiential strength brought fear into the hearts of men who worried about the 'Amazon' and the 'strong-minded female.' But the concept of southern womanhood simply incorporated the new strength to create the oxymoronic ideal of the woman made of steel yet masked in fragility. […] Thus the threat was apparently removed and the concept of southern womanhood retained its patriarchal character.[164]

Journalist Florence King humorously connects this pressure to embody opposing roles with insanity:

> 'The cult of southern womanhood' endows the woman with at least five different images and asks her to be good enough to adopt all of them. She is required to be frigid, passionate, sweet, bitchy and scatterbrained – all at the same time. Her problems spring from the fact that she succeeds.[165]

In this situation, when the southern lady embodies such a wide array of characteristics, it becomes increasingly difficult to define the tomboy in opposition to her.

What further complicates the efforts to determine the tomboy's position in southern culture and its subversive potential, is the fact that "southern women speak through the mask," as many feminists, including Goodwin Jones have noticed.[166] I was arguing above that tomboyism can be approached as a form of masquerade. In the frame of southern studies masquerade is rarely used in the connection with cross-dressing and masculinity and almost exclusively as a theoretical model to explore ways southern girls and women relate to southern femininity, the "social and discursive construction that nonetheless has real material effects," as Tara McPherson calls it.[167]

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[164] Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Tomorrow Is Another Day* 13.
[165] Florence King, *Southern Ladies and Gentlemen* (New York: Bantam, 1976) 32.
[166] Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Tomorrow Is Another Day* 37.
[167] Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined*

On one hand, masquerade is employed by southern women to gain power over men, and hide it under a layer of charm, performing the role of the puppet master. On the other hand, masquerade functions as a survival strategy which allows southern women to rely on their social status and gain voice in the public sphere, their respectability and countenance covering the radical content of their enterprise. Masquerade might thus be approached as a conscious strategy to gain public voice and speak against the status quo. McPherson, though, is very skeptical in this respect:

> My grandmother was fond of the old southern adage 'you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar,' highlighting the strategic artifice of southern femininity, but femininity in the South is historically secured in very specific ways, and simply revealing the constructedness of gender does not necessarily render those constructions (or the other social relations they underwrite) any less secure.[168]

4.1.1. Beauty and the Belle – Rebellion Postponed?

The issue of masquerade brings forth the question of rebelliousness, which, in southern fiction, is characteristic of the lady's younger, unmarried predecessor, the southern belle. Rebelliousness, or transgression, are important notions in tomboyism. It is thus necessary to see how these notions are played out in the southern belle. The first major difference is evident from the very name of the figure – the emphasis upon beauty. Beauty and its definition in southern culture haunts many southern girls, tomboys nonwithstanding. Let us look now how beauty and rebelliousness work together in southern belles and how they are approached by the tomboys.

In Katherine Anne Porter's short story "Old Mortality," the beauty and translucent skin of Amy, the exemplary belle of the narrator's family, is what serves as an excuse for her constant rebelliousness against the rules of southern femininity. The story, told from the perspective of Miranda, Amy's tomboyish niece, contrasts Amy with other women in the family and posits true southern

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South (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) 21.

[168] Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie* 23.

beauty conveniently to the past; at the same time it undermines it by a link to sickness and, ultimately, death:

None of them resembled Aunt Amy in the least, nor the kind of beauty they had been brought up to admire. There were points of beauty by which one was judged severely. First, a beauty must be tall; whatever color the eyes, the hair must be dark, the darker the better; the skin must be pale and smooth. Lightness and swiftness of movement were important points. A beauty must be a good dancer, superb on horseback, with a serene manner, an amiable gaiety tempered with dignity at all hours. Beautiful teeth and hands, of course, and over and above all this, some mysterious crown of enchantment that attracted and held the heart. It was all very exciting and discouraging.[169]

The mystery of southern beauty in "Old Mortality" is bolstered by the tragic fate of Amy who refuses to replace her status of the belle with that of a lady and her recklessness brings about her death. The figure of Amy as a family legend, despite blatant incongruities in her real character, works as a powerful spell on all girls of the family, a role model in femininity and a tragic example at the same time. All the girls, including Miranda, wish to please their fathers and grow up as belles, as there are women in the family who did not become belles and their life is far from admirable:

Even then it was pretty plain that Eva was an old maid, born. Harry said, 'Oh, Eva – Eva has no chin, that's her trouble. If you had no chin, Amy, you'd be in the same fix as Eva, no doubt.' Your Uncle Bill would say, 'When women haven't anything else, they'll take a vote for consolation. A pretty thin bedfellow,' said your uncle Bill.[170]

The contrasting stories of Amy and Eva, the rebellious and tragic belle and a self-sufficient, bitter feminist and especially their rendition by the family patriarchs, opens in full the ambiguity of southern femininity and the severely limited scope of life options for southern girls. Hoping to become beautiful and doubting it at the same time, Miranda has hard time coming to terms with her

[169] Katherine Anne Porter, "Old Mortality," *Collected Stories* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979) 176–77.
[170] Katherine Anne Porter, "Old Mortality," *Collected Stories* 183.

own image, and even harder time imagining a future in positive terms for a girl like her:

> Miranda persisted through her childhood in believing, in spite of her smallness, thinness, her little snubby nose saddled with freckles, her speckled gray eyes and habitual tantrums, that by some miracle she would grow into a tall, cream-colored brunette.[171]

The pressure of family traditions and expectations finally lead Miranda to an unpardonable transgression – she runs away and gets married without her father's consent. While he punishes her by his cold behavior towards her, she does not repent; on the contrary she decides to leave her family as well as her husband:

> She did not want any more ties with this house, she was going to leave it, and she was not going back to her husband's family either. […] She knew now why she had run away to marriage, and she knew that she was going to run away from marriage, and she was not going to stay in any place, with anyone, that theatened to forbid her making her own discoveries, that said 'No' to her.[172]

In the last story of the "Miranda Stories" sequence, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," we see Miranda as an independent theatre critic in a presumably northern city during the First World War, the 'new' woman her family dreaded and despised.

The peculiar connection of rebelliousness and beauty in the fate of Amy might be used as a commentary on the canonical southern belle, Scarlett O'Hara from Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936). Both Amy and Scarlett are positioned in the world of clear-cut ideals of femininity and women's role in society, both refuse to submit to them and both use their beauty to get away with their rebellion and to gain access to the male sphere. But while Scarlett exaggerates her femininity and hides her cunning, intelligence and ambition behind the facade of a simple-minded coquette, Amy cuts her hair, shocks her

[171] Katherine Anne Porter, "Old Mortality," *Collected Stories* 176–77.
[172] Katherine Anne Porter, "Old Mortality," 220.

upper-class milieu by a too-short carnival dress, and rides away to Mexico with her brothers.[173]

Southern femininity works as a weapon for Scarlett, by means of which she can get whatever she wants; for Amy, femininity is a trap she longs to flee from, but cannot. For Scarlett, to be beautiful is an impetus for her audacious plans, while Amy's rebelliousness is contained by her beauty, and Porter seems to indicate that is no way out for her besides self-destruction.

4.1.2. Tomboy and the Belle: the Jekyll/Hyde of Southern White Girlhood

The interplay between rebellion and beauty which has been at the heart of the southern belle ever since Scarlett O'Hara was made the epitome of southern femininity, might strive to undermine the popular image, as is the case with Porter's Amy. This interplay is reflected in the description of Scarlett and embodied in alternating notions of light and darkness:

> Scarlett O'Hara was not beautiful, but men seldom realized it when caught by her charm. […] Her eyes were pale green without a touch of hazel, starred with bristly black lashes and slightly tilted at the ends. Above them, her thick black brows slanted upward, cutting a startling oblique line in her magnolia-white skin – that skin so prized by Southern women and so guarded with bonnets, veils and mittens against hot Georgia suns. […] The green eyes in the carefully sweet face were turbulent, wilful, lusty with life, distinctly at variance with her decorous demeanor. Her manners had been imposed upon her by her mother's gentle admonitions and the sterner discipline of her mammy; her eyes were her own.[174]

The interplay reveals a strategy of accomodation discussed above in the connection with the lady – however contradictory the two notions might seem, they can be accomodated within the same ideal and work to sustain each other. Pointing out the immense role of *Gone with the Wind* on contemporary audiences, Susan K. Kahn comments in her discussion of southern girlhood in

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[173] The cutting of her hair is commented by Amy's suitor as an act of mutilation. The long-standing association of traditional southern femininity with long hair is mirrored in the tomboy's insistence on a short-cropped look.
[174] Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (1936; New York: Macmillan, 1964) 3.

the first half of the 20th century on the peculiar mixture of rebellion and conformity that attracted southern girls:

> *Gone with the Wind* provided a fantasy in which teenage girls could imagine themselves as both the classic southern belle, emblematic of goodness and beauty, and a modern girl who might pursue her impassioned desires without being expunged from the roster of respectable girls and marriageable women.[175]

This strategy of accomodation narrows the set of life options available for southern girls. As the belle/lady gains dominance over the image of southern girlhood and womanhood, other gender alternatives are either contained into the image or recede into obscurity. The belle/lady is very much a classed and raced product, thus, alternatives that get erased are especially those that stand on opposite poles – to the experience of lower class white girls, who are dubbed as "trashy" or "common" and African American women, is given no voice in the regime of the belle/lady. In her memoir, Margaret Jones Bolsterli complicates the clear-cut distinctions between upper- and middle-class, and the working-class, which is often associated with the notion of "white trash" by introducing another label – common – joining class and race in an elaborate mental construction, reminding one that these categories never feature separately from one another:

> Northerners seem to think that, in the South, white trash is a term used frequently for people on the lowest rung of the social ladder. The rung was certainly there and the term was understood to define it, but in my house it would have been considered common to use the words white trash. Common was the worst you could say without sounding common yourself. You could be dirt poor and landless and still not be common, while common people could get hold of both land and money. […] The term common was applied to blacks as well as whites, by both blacks and whites.[176]

Kahn argues that "[t]he canonical status of *Gone with the Wind* in popular culture engendered a lasting image of the southern belle, updated through time

[175] Susan K. Kahn, *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) 4–5.
[176] Margaret Jones Bolsterli, *Born in the Delta: Reflections on the Making of a Southern White Sensibility* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991) 13, 14.

as the fashionable debutante. This mythic picture overpowered other representations of southern girlhood."[177] Although Kahn does not explicitly mention it and focuses on the working class and African American community, I want to argue that one of these overpowered, or rather contained options is tomboyism.

Whereas tomboyism is often linked to rebelliousness, its relation to beauty and southern femininity sets it off from southern belledom. The tomboy responds to the refined masquerade of the belle who covers her lack of control over her fate by a cunning manipulation and maneuvering, with anger, physical strength and stubborness, perceiving the belle as weak and empty. In her essay discussing the oppression that lesbians have faced in the South, Laura Milner views southern womanhood as ever compliant to the dominant rule in the area of gender, sexuality, race or class, unable to change anything by the masquerade, effecting in the coalescence of the mask with the body, and the disappearance of the very strength that motivated the masquerade in the first place:

> This tendency to obey and play stupid did not die when the slaves were freed or when women won the right to vote or went to work. In the new millenium, belles continued to be formally trained and displayed in debutante balls, cotillions, sororities, and Sunday schools across the South. Like her predecessor, today's belle appears shy as she quietly checks her image in her mirror; she speaks softly and expresses nothing but admiring opinions about any subject, and most importantly, she smiles.[178]

This view conveys exactly what many tomboys in southern narratives think about the belle.

To see the tomboy against the background of the belle serves yet another purpose – the two concepts seem to exist in a strange interdependency. Not only does the presence of the belle or lady foreground tomboy's transgressions and the belle's rebellions enter the tomboy's territory of social impropriety, but in some cases, with the onset of tomboy taming, the tomboyish girl is brought to conform exactly to what she fought against.

[177] Susan K. Kahn, *Sexual Reckonings* 3–4.
[178] Laura Milner, "From Southern Baptist Belle to Butch (and Beyond)," *Out in the South,* ed. Carlos Lee Barney Dews and Carolyn Leste Law (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001) 192.

This might not be surprising, given the fact that tomboyism as a concept has long been identified with white middle-class girls, and the belle is the model for white southern middle-class girlhood; it however tells something about the dynamics of gender, class and race working in the figure of the tomboy, the hypothesis being that in the South gender issues play less significant role, or, rather, that her class and her whiteness lock the tomboy in a specific position which she is unable to escape on the basis of gender transgressions only.

What remains to be answered is whether this act of conformism that accompanies tomboy narratives, results in a reinscription of southern femininity, introduces a new form of masquerade, or upends and challenges the notions of gender, race, and class in the South.

4.2. The Southern Tomboy as the Paradoxical Other

In many tomboy narratives, the tomboy plays the role of the Other. From her position of the member of a white, middle-class family, the tomboy is paradoxically linked to marginal groups, as, for instance, African Americans, lesbians, or "white trash." This ideology of commonality in difference is a pervasive strategy used in countless tomboy narratives, especially those forming the tomboy canon, authored by white women writers.[179]

A similar approach is evident in some of the retrospective narratives of real-life former tomboys. Summing up their position, Yamaguchi and Barber write in their introduction to a collection of tomboy reminiscences: "As tomboys, we were 'other' then; as lesbians, we are 'other' now."[180]

Though this is a dubious strategy in that it often usurps the place of the real Other, imposes hegemony, and obliterates many crucial differences in the name of a precarious similarity, for many liberal authors as well as social activists it was a useful way to address several forms of injustice under one

[179] It is significant that this strategy does not appear in books with non-white characters that are sometimes included in the tomboy tradition, i.e. *Sula* by Toni Morrison (1973), *Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston (1975), and *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (1984).
[180] Lynne Yamaguchi and Karen Barber, Introduction, *Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-Do* 13.

umbrella and voice a need to unite one's powers in the name of a common goal. And although in retrospect it may seem utopian and harmful in many respects, it is impossible to analyze most tomboy texts, those with a southern setting in particular, without acknowledging the existence of this frame of mind, persistent among 20th century intellectuals.

4.2.1. Playing in the Dark: the Tomboy's Non-Whiteness

Michelle Ann Abate links the tomboy to one particular form of otherness in her analysis – non-whiteness. This connection may have been caused by several agents, one of the most evident explanations being the fact that the tomboyish lifestyle was related to outdoors, where the skin might get a naturally tanned tone. The image of the tomboy, a healthy and athletic future wife and mother, stood in sharp contrast to that of the ghostly and sickly Victorian woman.[181]

The issue, however, is more complex. The racialization of the tomboy reveals for Abate a "hidden history of this code of conduct," that has, by extending the scope of whiteness, worked to fulfill a definite objective:

> During an era in which the health of middle- and upper-class young white women had become imperiled from equating femininity with frailty, tomboyism emerged as an antidote. Calling for sensible clothing, physical exercise and a wholesome diet, this code of conduct was designed to improve the strength and stamina of the nation's future wives and mothers and, by extension, the offspring that they produced. In this way tomboyism was more than simply a new childrearing practice or gender expression for the nation's adolescent girls; it was a eugenic practice or, at least, a means to help ensure white racial supremacy.[182]

The tomboy's "playing in the dark" is then nothing more than a game for Abate, as any work always strives to reclaim the tomboy's position in the white society by the end of the narrative. This fact is a staple of the genre, reflecting the supremacist nature underlying the concept.

Abate's line of reasoning touches the issue of the South at several points. For her, southern tomboyism is no different than in other parts of the country.

[181] See Michelle Ann Abate, Introduction, *Tomboys* xxiv–xxviii.
[182] Michelle Ann Abate, Introduction, *Tomboys* xii-xiii.

The first literary work she analyses as launching tomboyism in American literature and culture is *The Hidden Hand* (serialized in 1859, published as a book in 1888) by E.D.E.N. Southworth, a southern woman writer and she does not fail to mention the specificity of the setting – after the novel's protagonist overcomes many obstacles due to her tomboyish strength and cunning, she inherits a large plantation and becomes a lady. In this way, as Abate sums up, tomboyism "by fortifying one imperiled white woman" helps "fortify an equally imperiled white South."[183] By advancing their gender via tomboyism, southern women thus secure their race as well.

Although Abate does not mention class issues, it seems to go without saying that the imperiled white South is the planter, upper-class South. Abate unfortunately does not follow the southern tomboy beyond the initial stage of this phenomenon, though she later discusses McCullers's Frankie as documenting the shift in tomboyism towards the "freakishly queer and queerly freakish."[184]

The class and race issue in relation to southern femininity complicate the clear-cut logic of Abate's argument. Following the Civil War and especially during the period of Reconstruction, the southern lady, defining the feminine ideal ever since, came to represent the region as a whole, its past, glory and traditions. The southern upper-class lady, or rather, the myth of such a lady, working hand in hand with the mythicized version of the region's ante-bellum past, played a major part in maintaining a fixed class and racial order. The implementation of this vision into the region's mythology helped substantially to contain racial tensions imminent after the war, as the safety and purity of southern womanhood required racial segregation. The mythical figure of the southern lady was thus put on the pedestal and worked as a convenient (and often participating) pretext to the disenfranchisement of the African American population, of lynching, and perpetuating the rigid social stratification of southern society.

The connection of southern femininity with racism has been revealed from several points of view – in *Reconstructing Womanhood* Hazel Carby

[183] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 9.
[184] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 145.

debunks the long-nurtured myth of southern women suffering under the burden of southern patriarchy, thus sharing their inferior position with African Americans, and uses the example of late 19th-century women organizations:

> Individual white women helped publish and promote individual black women, but the texts of black women […] are testaments to the racist practices of the suffrage and temperance movements and indictments of the ways in which white women allied themselves not with black women but with a racial patriarchal order against all black people.[185]

Similarly, Tara McPherson points out the active role of women in the creation of the southern lady myth in the post-Civil War South:

> If the patriarchal culture of the postwar South deployed the figure of the southern lady to discipline both white women who were enjoying the new freedoms born of wartime and the freed slaves claiming space and rights in the public realm, many white southern women were finally unwilling to question white privilege, buying into a return to the pedestal on which southern femininity was popularly situated.[186]

In this frame, i.e. in the South at the time of a careful articulation of racial difference, the connection of tomboyism with non-whiteness to uphold whiteness, as is Abate's point, makes little sense. It is significant in this respect that the protagonist of Southworth's novel acts like a tomboy while growing up in New York but gives up her rambunctious ways, along with her racialization, once she returns to the South. Abate describes this change as follows: "Although the tomboyish girl traffics in various forms of blackness and blackface minstrelsy, she adamantly refuses to be treated as anything other than a white Southern aristocrat."[187]

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[185] Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 6.
[186] Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie* 19. In her summary, Anne Godwin Jones links gender not only to race, but also to class: "[T]he function of southern womanhood has been to justify the perpetuation of the hegemony of the male sex, the upper and middle classes, and the white race." Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Tomorrow Is Another Day* 10.
[187] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 21.

4.2.2. Whitewashing as the End of Tomboyism?

The association of white, middle to upper-class tomboys with various forms of non-whiteness, does, according to Abate, serve the purpose of sustaining whiteness by a constant appropriation (and often misinterpretation) of non-white forms and norms. This is the reason why, for instance, in the 1920s flappers were enthusiastic about jazz and other elements of African American culture, played with them, yet retained their racial superiority.[188] Tomboy taming seems to strengthen this view, portraying the play with non-whiteness as a temporary and harmless pastime and assuring the audience that gender as well as race transgressions will be uprooted in the end.

In the 1990s, the tomboy in Abate's analysis becomes dissociated from non-whiteness – she often has blonde hair and fair eyes and does not seek interracial contact. If the tomboy's playing in the dark was caused by the need to sustain whiteness, does this "whitewashing" of the tomboy mean whiteness is no longer under threat at the end of the millenium? Abate argues that this "whitewashing" started in the 1970s, when, mainly due to the gains of the Civil Rights movement, "it became increasingly unacceptable to present gender-bending white characters with such blatant elements of blackness."[189] Tomboys found themselves in the state of "both change and stasis," became fair-skinned and blonde, and their traditional association with nonwhiteness was supplied by "racialized environment."[190]

This kind of racialization got lost altogether in the 1990s, a period of "tomboy boost" that, according to Abate, also witnessed its "ultimate bust."[191] Although the work with whiteness that the racialized tomboy performed during the 150 years of its existence as a cultural and social phenomenon was supposedly aimed at the preservation of white supremacy, the picture of the demise of the phenomenon that Abate draws in her discussion of New Queer Cinema of the 1990s does not signal a positive change. Abate clearly fails to

[188] See Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 128–36.
[189] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 213.
[190] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 213, 214.
[191] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 221.

imagine the concept taking on a different role in the interracial interaction it brings into existence and thus announces its death.

The fact that the tomboy becomes "whitewashed" in the 1990s may bring about a breach in the concept though it by no means signifies its end. The need to reframe tomboyism follows from the very choice of works that Abate analyses – otherness of tomboyism is no longer linked to non-whiteness in them, but to same-sex desire. The emergence of films that imagine tomboys as butch lesbians in the 1990s is definitely part of a wider frame, and it can be seen for instance on the background of the "pretty tomboyism," exemplified by "a young girl who plays softball instead of baseball and whose hair is pulled back in a long pony tail rather than cropped in a short crew cut, […] tied to femininity and, perhaps even more importantly, heterosexuality."[192]

To sum up, while Abate sees the tomboy's association with non-whiteness as a necessary component of the phenomenon, I want to argue that tomboyism operates rather as a concept allied to various forms of otherness. This position then reveals its potential for simultaneous subversion and containment of subversive forces. And it is exactly this ambiguous and dynamic position that stands at the heart of my effort to theorize the tomboy in the frame of the American South.

4.3. Visual Economies of Race – Tomboyism and the Lenticular Postcard

Abate's note on the changing racial dynamics in post-Civil Rights American culture resonates with that articulated by Tara McPherson. Discussing popular southern narratives after the Civil Rights movement, McPherson warns against our "inability to conceptualize what racial contact might even look like."[193]

She starts with the example of a lenticular postcard featuring the southern lady at her plantation at one time and the smiling mammy at the other, and outlines an approach to race and gender that gained dominance in the second half of the 20th century. She identifies two forms of racism – overt and covert. Overt racism depicts racial contact to stress the difference. It is well

[192] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 223.
[193] Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie* 6.

represented in the relationship of Scarlett O'Hara and her black nurse and help Mammy in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* where Scarlett is very dependent on Mammy in many respects. Overt racism, according to McPherson, was gradually superseded by the covert version, or lenticular, in the post-Civil Rights South which "tended to repress the relations between white and black."[194] This form of racism is present in the sequel to *Gone with the Wind*, Alexandra Ripley's *Scarlett* (1991). McPherson comments on Ripley's treatment of race as follows:

> Although Ripley was praised by a few critics for capturing the essence of Mitchell's style (and roundly hated by most), the two novels deploy strikingly different economies of visibility in regards to race. […] *Scarlett* finally deals with the interrelation of black and white by erasing blackness.[195]

Where in this changing landscape of visual economies of race that McPherson and Abate draw in their respective works is the southern tomboy situated? As a phenomenon coming from white culture, is the tomboy located behind the wide skirts of Scarlett O'Hara, alongside mammy, or is she missing from the postcard altogether? Does her gender-bending performance mirror a race-bending one as well? How can we approach tomboy's link to otherness in this frame?

Although McPherson deals mostly with images depicting southern antebellum aristocracy, her delineation of two modes of racial visibility is pertinent in relation to McCullers as well, and particularly to the films made from her novels. In *The Member of the Wedding,* the mammy stereotype with all her middle-aged, dark-skinned, over-weight warmth, is brought back in the character of Berenice, the African American cook and surrogate mother of the tomboy Frankie, mostly in the first film version from 1952; the film version of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* presents a blonde tomboy with no contact with African Americans at all.

[194] Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie* 7.
[195] Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie* 65.

4.3.1. Tomboyism and Masquerade against the Traditional Image of the South

In this context, the problem with the southern lady and her masquerade is that they tend to foreground issues of gender and obfuscate others. Deconstructing the work of femininity as masquerade in *Gone with the Wind*, McPherson analyses masquerade against the backdrop of race and demonstrates how southern feminine performance often takes place on the back of black labor, how it is, in fact, possible only by means of it.

The figure of the black maid, the mammy, and her role in the production of southern femininity in popular southern fiction is often a harsh misrepresentation of actual racial conditions and tends to perpetuate false images. Mammy in *Gone with the Wind* polices and protects Scarlett, being seemingly in charge, while heightening the difference between her and Scarlett, and thus her own unwomanliness. McPherson describes the complex relationship between Scarlett and Mammy concisely, pointing to the underlying absurdity of Mammy's situation:

> Mitchell consistently represents Mammy as the enforcer of southern etiquette, thus supporting her narrative claim that Mammy has authority over Scarlett and the whole plantation. But Mammy's 'power' is only the power to labor in the maintenance of white femininity. […] Paradoxically, Mammy is here figured as a chief coconspirator in the production of a system of femininity that simultaneously works to deny her own status as a bearer of priviledged womanhood.[196]

If the performance of southern femininity is possible only by contrast to the unwomanliness of African American women, or by erasing them altogether from the picture, what happens when the notion of the masquerade is adopted by the tomboy? In many of the narratives, the tomboy puts on a dress on various occasions. Above, in analyzing *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I have shown how this situation deconstructs any notions of natural femininity, and strips the dress of any primary significance.

[196] Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie* 55.

The tomboy, masquerading as a nice girl to create an impression of order brings another important feature into play. While generally, as we have seen in Riviere, masquerade belies the notion of fixed gender properties and behavior, it does so only in the realm of femininity. The tomboyish gender play impairs both femininity and masculinity as fixed gender identities – she is neither a proper girl, nor a boy, though she mimics both at times. Tomboyish masquerade thus presents gender as fluid and malleable.

McPherson has demonstrated how firmly southern femininity is linked to race, how it is possible only by the help of African American servants and how it excludes them from femininity on the basis of their race. Southern femininity was not only withheld from African American women, but from poor white women as well.

In her work on southern women's organizations, historian Anastatia Sims notes this strategy to bar lower class women from the possibility of ever becoming ladies: "While all white southern girls might aspire to be ladies, before the Civil War only those of the upper class could achieve that status."[197] As Sims moves towards the turn of the century and deals with the role of the idea of sisterhood in women's social and political activism, it becomes clear that this attitude towards women of lower classes did not stop with the end of the Civil War. White priviledged women,

> acknowledged in theory that working-class and poor white women could be ladies, in practice, however, they often viewed these women as their wards, to be protected and enlightened. […] their attitude […] was more like that of a kindly aunt toward an ignorant and sometimes misguided niece.[198]

The tomboy's distance from the southern feminine ideal separates this character from the belle's and lady's race and class as well. As I will show below, the tomboy's gender masquerade puts other identity facets into motion, situating the

[197] Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880–1930* (Columbia: South Carolina University Press, 1997) 6.
[198] Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity* 52–53.

tomboy on neither side of McPherson's lenticular postcard but melting the rigid distinctions that keep its logic in operation.

4.3.2. *To Kill a Mockingbird* and White Middle-Class Queerness

One of the most popular tomboy narratives is Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). It is narrated by the five-to-nine-year-old Scout Finch, a motherless daughter of the city lawyer and a prototypical tomboy – motherless, she has a male monicker (her real name being Jean Louise), wears overalls most of the time, is adventurous, spends her time with boys, and her aunt tries hard to make her into a lady.

Gender issues interweave with race, class and sexuality throughout the novel in an intricate way. At the very beginning, grown-up Scout recalls the time of the trial against Tom Robinson, an African American accused of rape whom her father defended, and the train of events that followed, culminating with her brother Jem's broken arm. She tries to pinpoint the moment when it all started: "I maintain that the Ewells started it all, but Jem, who was four years my senior, said it started long before that. He said it began the summer Dill came to us, when Dill gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out."[199]

The Ewells are a white-trash family whose daughter Mayella (motherless as Scout is) accuses Tom Robinson of rape; her accusation leads to a trial in which Scout's and Jem's father Atticus defends Tom. While he proves the accusation false, Tom is found guilty by the jury, as he crossed the race boundary anyway, by expressing pity and sympathy towards Mayella's dismal fate, and dies while trying to escape from prison. Dill is a sissy boy who comes to the town to spend summers at his aunt and immediately becomes friends with Scout and Jem.

Boo Radley is a mysterious person who lives on the same street as Scout and Jem and who has not left his house for many years; the metaphor of coming out clearly refers to Boo's potential homosexuality. Boo plays a crucial role in

[199] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960, New York: Harper Collins, 2006) 3.

the climax of the story when he saves Scout and Jem from being killed by Bob Ewell, the father of Mayella.

Scout is white and comes from a middle-class family, and therefore is free to move across the racial boundary dividing whites and blacks in the South of the 1930s without compromising her privileged social position. The family has a black cook Calpurnia, who functions as a surrogate mother and once takes the children to her church. Scout and her brother watch the trial against Tom Robinson from the "Colored balcony," where they are taken by the reverend of Calpurnia's church and from where they can "see everything."[200] The description of the way the children get to the balcony reveals an ambiguous mix of racial transgressiveness and white supremacy that is characteristic of the whole novel: "Reverend Sykes came puffing behind us, and steered us gently through the black people in the balcony. Four Negroes rose and gave us their front-row seats."[201]

Tomboyism is presented as positive throughout the novel, which is not only due to the fact that the novel is a first person narration. In one scene, Scout's fearlessness serves to condemn racism, as she fights her schoolmate for saying that Atticus "defended niggers."[202] In another one it saves the city from lynching – Scout asks one of the lynchers questions about his son and his legal troubles and embarasses the whole crowd.[203] This treatment of her violation of gender norms complies with the novel's approach to gender norms in general and thus deserves a closer look.

Dealing with homosexuality in southern literature, Gary Richards highlights a specific aspect of *To Kill a Mockingbird*:

> Unlike [Truman Capote's] *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and [Lillian Smith's] *Strange Fruit*, in which homosexuality is markedly at variance with cultural norms and gay or lesbian individuals face overwhelming forces of homophobia, *To Kill a Mockingbird* ultimately imagines southern community to be already queer and permeated with transgressions of gender and sexuality.[204]

[200] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 187.
[201] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 186.
[202] See Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 85.
[203] See Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 173–75.
[204] Gary Richards, "Harper Lee and the Destabilization of Heterosexuality," *Harper Lee's* To Kill a Mockingbird, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers,

Richards points to the absence of functioning heterosexual relationships in the novel which may impose heteronormative matrix and to the character of Aunt Alexandra, who, despite being the very representative of heteronormativity, is depicted as unsympathetic and racist:

> Lee underscores that she, unlike Smith, does not consider southern white women less racist than their male counterparts because of an inherent female morality, and tempts readers to dismiss all that these women value and represent, including traditional white southern femininity.[205]

While this might be true on the level of femininity, it is not the case with masculinity, not mentioning other identity facets – Atticus may seem rather feminine, but at the same time he does not hesitate to shoot an infected dog; he polices Scout's gender expressions and views her tomboyism as a childhood thing. Boo Radley also does not come out of his homosexuality, although he at least comes out of his house in the end.

Lee deconstructs southern ladyhood by openly exposing the bond between southern femininity, white supremacy and racism. One woman in the novel is an exception though and brings forth issues of queerness mentioned above. Scout's neighbor and another role model Miss Maudie is the only sympathetic grown-up female and introduces Scout into the art of masquerade. She is described as a "chameleon lady," switching between her work overalls and a dress with total ease:

> Miss Maudie hated her house; time spent indoors was time wasted. She was a widow, a chameleon lady who worked in her flower beds in an old straw hat and men's coveralls, but after her five o'clock bath she would appear on the porch and reign over the street in magisterial beauty.[206]

Due to Lee's dismissal of traditional southern ladyhood, there is little left of tomboy taming; although Atticus tries to stop Scout from fighting and other boyish stuff, it is not exactly the traditional southern lady she wants her to grow

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2007) 187.

[205] Gary Richards, "Harper Lee and the Destabilization of Heterosexuality," *Harper Lee*'s To Kill a Mockingbird 162.

[206] See Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 47.

up into. Scout's situation discloses the limited range of options a girl like her (white and middle-class) has in southern society but Lee offers a way out – while being tomboyish is considered as childish in Scout's community, southern ladyhood is deconstructed as racist and patriarchy remains untouched in the God-like figure of Atticus, masquerade is Scout's only option.

Soon she discovers that it is a strategy used by most of the ladies of her town, including her aunt, though they reveal it only in private. To one of the tea parties her aunt organizes Scout wears a dress, inciting wonder among the ladies: "Miss Maudie's gold bridgework twinkled. 'You're mighty dressed up, Miss Jean Louise,' she said. 'Where are your britches today?' 'Under my dress.' I hadn't meant to be funny, but the ladies laughed."[207] The laughter of the ladies confirms their approval of Scout's unplanned masquerade. Masquerade in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not only treated as a form of "upgraded" femininity, but a source of hidden strength as well. At the same tea party, Scout, her aunt and Miss Maudie learn about the attempted escape and death of Tom Robinson but show nothing in front of the other ladies:

> And so they went, down the row of laughing women, […] refilling coffee cups, dishing out goodies […]. I carefully picked up the tray [of cookies] and watched myself walk to Mrs. Merriweather. With my very best company manners, I asked her if she would have some. After all, if Aunty could be a lady at a time like this, so could I.[208]

The split of consciousness that Scout experiences, a singular occurence in the whole novel, epitomizes the death of her former tomboyish self, and her entry into the world of feminine calculation.

The code of southern femininity as a masquerade which dismantles any sudden defiance and which is displayed in *To Kill a Mockingbird* follows what Shirley Abbott calls a "code of reticence," a legacy passed down generations of female relatives. Abbott describes this legacy as follows: "Nobody would say a thing. My mother's oldest sister, Vera, did not learn what menstruation was until

[207] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 262.
[208] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 271.

her elderly great-uncle explained it. […] According to the tribal wisdom, women were supposed to learn from experience, not words."[209]

She believes that this legacy was brought about by the South's "lady myths combined queasily with the half-forgotten attitudes of the frontier" and explains why feminism was not popular in the South:

> If the women's movement of the 1970s has passed right over their heads, however, it is not because Southern women are dimwitted or born reactionaries […] but because this complicated legacy passed from mother to daughter sternly forbids open confrontations.[210]

Masquerade is an ideal tool for keeping appearances and avoiding conflicts of any sort, however transformative such conflicts might be. And while masquerade might be used as a subversive strategy, as I have shown in the preceding chapter, in *To Kill a Mockingbird* it works to contain any serious transgressions, deeming them unnecessary.

Masquerade in *To Kill a Mockingbird* becomes a daily strategy and thus a predictable, common performance that fails to disturb any expectations or rules. As Richards notes: "One does not have to agree to believe in gender's expressivity Lee offers, so long as one condescends to perform as if one does at strategically appropriate times."[211] The novel thus portrays a most unusual form of queerness – a habitual and accepted attitude which is not discussed in public and supports the status quo.

The peculiar nature of southern femininity in *To Kill a Mockingbird* becomes more evident when seen at the intersection with race and class issues. Discussing the representation of Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*, Tara McPherson highlights her paradoxical role in the novel – as Scarlett's personal servant, Mammy helps her with her masquerades, and scolds her for her youthful misdemeanors, at the same time she is described as "a huge old woman

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[209] Shirley Abbott, *Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) 151.
[210] Shirley Abbott, *Womenfolks* 149.
[211] Gary Richards, "Harper Lee and the Destabilization of Heterosexuality," *Harper Lee*'s To Kill a Mockingbird 165.

with the small, shrewd eyes of an elephant […], shining black, pure African," outside of the scope of femininity itself.[212]

The same blueprint could be applied to the representation of the poor whites in Mitchell's novel, the Slatterys, for whom "true femininity is little more within the reach […] than it is achievable by Mammy." Femininity and masquerade, McPherson concludes, must not be read as an issue of gender only. This reading, according to her, allows to "forget that this narrow view of the southern belle erases the historical specificity of many poor and working-class white women in the South. It also denies the suppression of black femininity that helped produce Scarlett's masquerades."[213]

Although McPherson connects this scenario to the reactionary plantation setting, it is perfectly applicable to the world of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Just like Mammy, though here at least with a name of her own, the family cook and caretaker Calpurnia is described by Scout as a depersonalized monster: "She was all angles and bones; she was nearsighted; she squinted; her hand was wide as a bed slat and twice as hard."[214] At the same time, the Finch family are portrayed as an island of racial tolerance in the town, with Atticus taking up the defence of Tom Robinson and explaining to Scout that Tom and his family are "clean living folks," and that she should not say "nigger," as it is "common."[215]

Traditional gender norms embodied in the southern lady figure may be deconstructed in Lee's novel, allowing Scout to reconcile her tomboyism with the demands of femininity, but traditional racial divisions remain fixed. In his closing speech to the jury, Atticus highlights this when he points out that Mayella Ewell, by inviting Tom to her house and trying to seduce him, "has merely broken a rigid and time-honoured code of our society, a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst as unfit to live with."[216]

The fate of Mayella, raped and abused by her father, with no further investigation, though this is dislosed during the trial, betrays the novel's major problem with issues of class. Scout sums it up bluntly:

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[212] Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* 22–23.
[213] Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie* 57.
[214] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 6.
[215] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 85–86.
[216] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 231.

As Tom Robinson gave his testimony, it came to me that Mayella Ewell must have been the loneliest person in the world. She was even lonelier than Boo Radley […]. She was as sad, I thought, as what Jem called a mixed child: white people wouldn't have anything to do with her because she lived among pigs; Negroes wouldn't have anything to do with her because she was white. […] Nobody said 'That's just their way,' about the Ewells. […] Tom Robinson was probably the only person who was ever decent to her. But she said he took advantage of her, and when she stood up she looked at him as if he were dirt beneath her feet.[217]

Queerness in the novel is strictly limited: it applies not only to whites, but just to middle and upper-class ones. This is also the ethos that runs beneath the novel's peculiar title – in the end of the novel, Boo Radley "comes out," defending Scout and Jem from the attack of Mayella's father and kills him. While discussing the situation, the sheriff convinces Atticus that there will not be any legal process, because it would be a "sin" to "drag" Boo "with his shy ways into the limelight," and Scout instantly understands: "Well, it'd be sort of like shootin' a mockingbird, wouldn't it?"[218]

Initial reviewers have paid little attention to racial issues. In one of the few book-length studies of the book, R. Barton Palmer claims that

American reviewers in general read *Mockingbird* more as an intimate chronicle of family life in the tradition of *Little Women* (1858), than as a trenchant examination of the politics of Jim Crow, in the manner of William Faulkner's *The Intruder in the Dust* and Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit*. […] What is most striking about the critical response to the novel is the almost complete absence of reference to the Tom Robinson case and its violent aftermath." [219]

Reviewers nevertheless did notice class aspects of the novel, especially in relation to its ending. Brendan Gill in a *New Yorker* review writes explicitly:

[217] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 218.
[218] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 317. The mockingbird theme appears for the first time in the novel when Scout and Jem get air rifles and their father forbids them to shoot at mockingbirds, because mockingbirds, as Miss Maudie explains, "don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy." Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 103.
[219] R. Barton Palmer, *Harper Lee's* To Kill a Mockingbird*: The Relationship Between Text and Film* (London: Methuen, 2008) 238–40.

"The moral of this can only be that while ignorant rednecks mustn't take the law into their own hands, it's all right for *nice* people to do so."[220]

Although this is a legitimate interpretation, there might be another angle from which to approach the novel's ending – the ideology of tolerance towards minorities, which the novel represents. Scout is brought up to respect African Americans as well as homosexuals (or to leave them alone at least), and her own gender bending teaches her to appreciate difference in this realm as well. This connection of three different minorities within one sweeping embrace of tolerance exposes an overwhelmingly middle-class white-supremacist perspective, which understands all tolerances (and oppressions) to be congruent, "that is, if one is tolerant of racial otherness, one will of course be equally tolerant of gendered otherness and even that difference that can only be speculated about, as in the case of Boo Radley."[221]

"White trash" is not approached as a minority, as the novel defines minority as a group of people who are unjustly oppressed, but otherwise "nice," and "clean-living." The poverty of the Ewells is read as something they caused themselves and, therefore, all that Scout can feel towards Mayella is pity. *To Kill the Mockingbird* thus demonstrates the liberal attitude I was discussing at the beginning of this chapter and it shows very well the limits of this attitude and its underlying ideological conservatism. Gender transgressions which Scout performs may help reveal the queer potential of the novel's treatment of gender and sexuality; but they do nothing to alleviate class and racial injustice. These remain locked in the white middle-class superiority, undiscussed and unchallenged.

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[220] Brendan Gill, "To Kill a Mockingbird," *New Yorker*, 23 Feb. 1963: 126. Quoted in Colin Nicholson, "Hollywood and Race: To Kill a Mockingbird," *Harper Lee´s* To Kill a Mockingbird, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2007) 74. Italics in the original.

[221] Gary Richards, "Harper Lee and the Destabilization of Heterosexuality," *Harper Lee's* To Kill a Mockingbird 167–68. A 2000 article from *Los Angeles Times* reviews critical approaches to the novel, including responses from African American scholars and reveals exactly this perspective. According to Richard Yarborough, an associate professor of English and a faculty research associate at UCLA's *Center for African American Studies* quoted in the article, "black characters exist largely as tools to help white characters successfully test their ethics." Scott Martelle, "Educators Take a Hard Look at *To Kill a Mockingbird*," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 June 2000: 2.

4.3.3. White Trash Talks Back – Tomboyism from Below

Quite another story of growing up an unruly girl in the South, about two decades later than Scout, is told in Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*, published in 1992. Although the major character Bone does not call herself a tomboy nor is considered as one by her family, she displays many qualities that link her to the tradition – she wears mannish overalls and jeans, knows well how to handle a knife, and organizes a break-in to the local Woolworth store. Even though Bone is not called a tomboy, she uses the word to describe her sister Reese, when she starts to dress and behave like Bone, thus legitimizing the label in the working class environment:

> After years of wearing finger curls and ruffled dresses, Reese had turned tomboy with a vengeance, wrestling and spitting with the boys and refusing to wear anything Mama bought her. She'd begged a couple of pairs of Butch's old coveralls from Deedee and wore them all the time, but what she really wanted was a pair of blue jeans like the ones I'd bought myself with my dishwashing money.[222]

Bone's mother tries hard for her family not to be associated with "white trash," "[*n*]o-*good*, *lazy*, *shiftless*,"[223] and she learns to counter it by putting on a mask, a defense tool that grants her with a kind of opaque remoteness: "There was only one way to fight off the pity and hatefulness. Mama learned to laugh with them, before they could laugh at her, and to do it so well no one could be sure what she really thought or felt."[224] These efforts on the part of Bone's mother situate Bone into an ambiguous class position – being "trash" connects her with the rest of her family, denying that sets her apart without actually moving her upward on the social ladder as her surroundings still perceive her as "trash."

The class conflict is firmly linked to the issue of Bone's abuse by her stepfather Glen who masks it behind his efforts at Bone's upbringing. As he comes from a middle-class background, Bone's mother agrees although it turns her against her own family: "Glen was right, Mama told me, she didn't want me

[222] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 173–74.
[223] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 3. Italics in the original.
[224] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 10.

to grow up as wild and mean as Earl or Beau or even Raylene."[225] At the same time, the abuse is motivated by Glen's dissatisfaction with his own downward social movement from middle-class to working-class to the "white trash" milieu of the Boatwrights.

The clash of the real and desired social position of the novel's protagonists is reflected in the novel's fluctuation between two modes of narration: on one hand there is the story of Bone's childhood in a 1950s South Carolina town, connected with shame and abuse, on the other hand, there is storytelling within this story, which creates the family myth, forms their sense of belonging, uniqueness and pride in who they are.

Allison often mentions the therapeutic potential of storytelling for Bone who turns her experience into fiction to maintain "a sense of power in a situation where she has none," as well as for herself as a white trash author. In an interview with Carolyn E. Megan she emphasizes the ontological dimension of writing and storytelling: "When I couldn't find my story, I wrote it. […] I made my own story, writing it down so that it would be real."[226] Allison interweaves the two narrative modes and makes them comment on each other, often ironically, sometimes playfully, and turns the novel into an intertextual testimony on the southern tradition of boasting and mythmaking, the concurrent life in myth and the real world.

It is through this lens that we see Bone struggling with southern femininity. Her mother's upward social ambitions reframe beauty as a fundamental characteristics of any girl. Bone is haunted by the image of the proper, i.e. beautiful, girl at various stages of her childhood and early adolescence, revealing the pervasiveness of the ideal of southern femininity, where "ugly" is the worst one can say to a girl, quite as bad as "trash." Bone's short-lived friendship with a middle-class girl Shannon ends with the two exchanging exactly these invectives:

[225] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 110.
[226] Carolyn E. Megan, "Moving Toward Truth: An Interview with Dorothy Allison," *Kenyon Review* 16.4 (Fall 1994): 72–73.

‘Listen to you. You … you trash. You nothing but trash. Your mama’s trash, and your grandma, and your whole dirty family ...’
[…] ‘You’re ugly.’ I swallowed my tears and made myself speak very quietly. ‘You’re God’s own ugly child and you’re gonna be an ugly woman. A lonely, ugly old woman.’
Shannon’s lips started to tremble, poking out of her face so that she was uglier than I’d ever seen her, a doll carved out of cold grease melting in the heat.[227]

Beauty is redeeming and equals being loved in Bone’s view, while her ugliness is the main reason why her stepfather abuses her.

Femininity and masculinity intersect in complex and often contradictory ways in Bone, ways that comment on the concept of tomboyism from the intriguing perspective of a working class girl. The more grown up Bone is, the more she longs to be beautiful, watching herself hatefully:

My teeth were white and hard, sharp and gleaming. I was strong all over. Turned sunshine into muscle, Mama swore. She was proud of how sturdy I was, what I could lift and how fast I could run, but I was suddenly self-conscious and awkward. I had shot up in the last year, so much so that my bones seemed to ache all the time. […] I didn’t want to be tall. I wanted to be beautiful. […] Gawky, strong, ugly – why couldn’t I be pretty? I wanted to be more like the girls in storybooks, princesses with pale skin and tender hearts. I hated my short fingers, wide face, bony knees, hated being nothing like the pretty girls with their delicate features and slender, trembling frames.[228]

Negotiating her position in the southern class system, Bone naturally links beauty with middle- and upper-class, with history and value. Ugliness, on the other hand, is characteristic of poverty, violence, lack of opportunities and a distorted public image.

The Boatwright family leaves its mark in local history only through violence and it must be outrageous enough to make it to the newspapers. Bone’s Aunt Alma keeps a family album with newspaper clippings featuring members of the family having accidents of all sorts. The album is part of the family tradition and a source of pride, but Bone hates the way the family look in the black-and-white pictures, “like a figure from a horror show, an animated corpse

[227] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 171.
[228] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 205–06.

[…]. [I]t seemed to me nobody looked quite like my family. Worse than crazy; we looked moon-eyed, rigid, openmouthed, and stupid."[229]

What is important for my discussion of tomboyism is that Bone perceives ugliness as linked with strength and masculinity, which she hates in herself, as it buries her deeper and deeper into her trash background. Tomboyism is something Bone needs, as it makes her more independent and able to survive in her surroundings, yet it is something she detests, because it moves her away from the ideal of middle-class femininity.

Bone's surroundings, although low-class, are unmistakably patriarchal. She is fascinated by her uncles and realizes with a mixture of envy and outrage their dominant position in the family hierarchy in contrast to that of her aunts:

> Men could do anything, and everything they did, no matter how violent or mistaken, was viewed with humor and understanding. […] What men did was just what men did. Some days I would grind my teeth, wishing I had been born a boy. I begged my aunts for Earle's and Beau's old denim workshirts so I could wear them just the way they did […] with the front tucked in and the tail hanging out. […] I followed them around and stole things from them that they really didn't care about – old tools, pieces of chain, and broken engine parts.[230]

The world of her uncles, as Bone sees it, is full of carefree adventure, they are strong and feared in the community. She longs to have their strength and power to be able to fight back and have her way. Again, this wish of hers is connected to her abuse: "My own hands were so small, my fingers thin and weak. I wished they were bigger, wider, stronger. I wished I was a boy so I could run faster, stay away more, or even hit him [Daddy Glen] back."[231]

Once Bone learns that "[g]rowing up [is] like falling into a hole,"[232] as it gives her no opportunities or more control over her life, she becomes angry and feels trapped. Anger propels the "man-type part" of her, "[r]ock-hard and nasty and immune to harm,"[233] which nevertheless allows her to tackle her ever-

[229] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 293.
[230] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 23.
[231] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 109.
[232] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 178.
[233] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 54.

present feeling of shame. Anger also reconnects her with her imagined Indian origins and makes her powerful, a dangerous warrior:

> I kept looking for something special in me, something magical. I was growing up, wasn't I? But the only thing different about me was my anger, that raw boiling rage in my stomach. Cherokee maybe, wild Indian anger maybe, like Shannon's anger, bottomless and horrible. […] I've got my great-granddaddy's blood in me, I told myself. I am night's own daughter, my great-grandfather's warrior child. Dangerous, I told myself. I could be dangerous, oh yes, I could be dangerous.[234]

There is no taming of Bone's masculine inclinations, despite her self-imposed torture about being beautiful. On the contrary they are presented as positive, life-saving and nurturing throughout the novel.

Whenever some of the Boatwright women have trouble, they send their children to Aunt Raylene, a butch lesbian, who, as the family legend goes, once ran off and worked at a carnival in male disguise, and who grows vegetables and feeds the family with her chow-chow and home-made whiskey. Bone spends a lot of time with Raylene while her own family falls apart; her tough reclusive aunt becomes her role model and, finally, her surrogate mother. Bone's aggressivity and masculine inclinations, as well as her fight with the specter of southern female beauty, puts her firmly into the tomboy tradition, the taming being replaced by the lesbian frame indicated by Bone's staying with Raylene in the end.

There is another feature which signals the possibility of reading Bone as a tomboy – her alleged Native and African American heritage. Bone's grandmother tells her about her family's roots and maintains that

> [m]y granddaddy, your great-great-granddaddy, he was a Cherokee, and he didn't much like us, all his towheaded grandchildren. […] I've always thought he'd have liked you, Granddaddy would. You even got a little of the shine of him. Those dark eyes and that hair when you was born, black as midnight.[235]

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[234] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 207–08.
[235] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 26–27.

Although other family members, especially men, doubt Bone's Native American heritage, Bone is proud of it as it makes her different and stronger. Considerably less proud is she of her African American heritage which Raylene maliciously promotes:

> Raylene was always telling people that we had a little of the tarbrush on us, but the way she grinned when she said it could have meant she was lying to make somebody mad. […] 'What's it mean?' I asked Ruth's youngest boy, Butch. 'Means we got some colored people somewhere back up the line.' […] I thought about that a while, and then asked anyway. 'Do we?' I watched his smile widen softly into a smirk.[236]

Although she is uneasy about her possible African American ancestors, Bone admires African American gospel singers and her defence of them causes a big fight and break-up with her friend Shannon who despises them: "The way Shannon said 'nigger' tore at me, the tone pitched exactly like the echoing sound of Aunt Madeline sneering 'trash' when she thought I wasn't close enough to hear."[237]

While visiting her aunt in a colored section of the town, Bone experiences a transcendental feeling of unity with a black girl in the opposite window whose gender she is unable to identify at first:

> I couldn't tell if it was a boy or a girl – a very pretty boy or a very fierce girl, for sure. The cheekbones were as high as mine, the eyes large and delicate with long lashes. While the mouth was small, the lips puffy as if bee-stung, but not wide. The chocolate skin was so smooth, so polished, the pores invisible. I put my fingers up to my cheeks, looked over at Grey and then back down. Grey's cheeks were pitted with blackheads and flushed with sunburn.[238]

Bone's fascination with, and openness to racial otherness is unique and not shared by her environment. Her mother and her aunts strive to move up socially, and therefore conform to the middle-class ideals of beauty, propriety and racial purity:

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[236] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 53.
[237] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 170.
[238] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 84.

People were crazy on the subject of color, I knew, and it was true that one or two of the cousins had kinky hair and took some teasing about it, enough that everyone was a little tender about it. Except for Granny, people didn't even want to talk about our Cherokee side.[239]

This direct link to non-whiteness on the part of Bone, be it imagined or real, is the more striking as it complicates an assumption voiced by Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray in their book *White Trash*, that "white trash is, for whites, the most visible and clearly marked form of whiteness."[240] In the South, race priviledge of the white trash has been the only source of their pride, though this notion of racial purity was often more a wish than reality. In *Womenfolks* Shirley Abbott calls attention to the Indian heritage of the South which has often been overlooked:

In our selective memory, there is only one Indian in Southern history – Pocahontas. […] But there were other Indians, too, less remote and much less acceptable socially. And there were other white connections with them, too. […] But it does go against a cherished piece of Southern conventional wisdom – the lunatic old myth of racial purity, that piece of self-delusion that takes pride in the absence of foreign names and alien blood in the South. […] This notion has never stood up very well where black people are concerned, since large numbers of them have white ancestry. […] But until a remarkably late date, the South was not only biracial but triracial.[241]

The dream of racial purity is nevertheless fiercely pursued and maintained by southern society regardless of social position. The Ewells from *To Kill a Mockingbird* naturally stick to their claim at racial superiority and it is on this basis alone that Tom Robinson gets condemned.

Bone's fascination with her racial otherness rips the myth open and works as an indictment of the system grounded in unquestioned white middle-class superiority on the one hand, and shame and inferiority on the other. Bone's attitude, so different from her mother's, is indispensable from her masculinity and anger, in short, her tomboyism.

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[239] Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* 54.
[240] Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray, Introduction, *White Trash: Race and Class in America,* eds. Matt Wray, and Annalee Newitz (New York: Routledge, 1997) 6.
[241] Shirley Abbott, *Womenfolks* 53–54.

As a character who falls right into the tradition of tomboy narratives, Bone is the most revolutionary, as she impersonates various liminal positions simultaneously – she is a proto-lesbian, "white-trash" masculine girl, with Native- and African American ancestry, growing up in the Deep South in the 1950s.[242] Her multi-racial roots differ her from her tomboy predecessors, who were only able to approach racial difference by means of their identification with African Americans around them, and who were always reclaimed as white in the end.

In contrast with this narrative practice, Bone remains other in all the above-mentioned respects, though this means her total separation from her core family (her mother leaves with her abusive stepfather) as well as the city itself – she stays in the house of Aunt Raylene, situated on the very edge of the town, in a no-man's land next to the highway. Bone thus accepts and embraces her liminality as a permanent condition of her life.

4.4. Intersectional Analysis and the Tomboy's Hybrid Identity

The analysis of *Bastard Out of Carolina* raises a series of new questions. If we agree on Bone's mixed identity, touching on several "marginalized subject-positions," as Katrina Irving describes her,[243] how is it possible to address such an identity? What is the relation among individual aspects? Is there any catalyst which propels these positions, or do they exist simultaneously from the very beginning? Does Bone's social position allow her to pursue her tomboyism? Does her gender push her in the direction of same-sex desire?

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[242] Bone's lesbianism is nowhere explicitly stated in the novel, it is nevertheless often discussed by the author as well as her critics. See for example Moira P. Baker, "Dorothy Allison's Topography of Resistance," *Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review* 5.3 (Summer 1998): 23–26; or Katrina Irving, "Writing It Down So That It Would Be Real: Narrative Strategies in Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*," *College Literature* 25.2 (Spring 1998): 94–107. Irving sees *Bastard Out of Carolina* as part of the representational shift in lesbian literature – instead of positive images, lesbian desire is "most succesfully gestured to as an absence, its evanescence forcing a breakdown in normative representational structures." Katrina Irving, "Writing It Down So That It Would Be Real" 95.

[243] Katrina Irving, "Writing It Down So That It Would Be Real" 95.

Multiple identity facets that Bone accentuates are extremely difficult to approach from a single perspective, as their force and influence often change and their interrelations are not clear – at some points, class aspects seem to overshadow gender ones while at other points Bone's racially-mixed origin seem to dominate her self-image and her gender and class step into the background.

Single-perspective analyses of the novel abound, focusing on one or another aspect of identity which they approach as central – be it Bone's budding lesbian sexuality, her abuse, or "white trash" shame. For J. Brooks Bouson, for instance, Bone's gender transgressions, her wish to have been "born a boy," as well as her racially-mixed origin, operate under the rubric of "white trash" shame and are part of Bone's rage which is a reaction to this shame.[244]

Lesbian reading is developed by Moira P. Baker who suggests that the novel presents a "lesbian space of resistance," which allows Bone to "construct a positive identity as a working-class woman."[245]

The unresolved liaison between lesbian/queer and class reading is examined by Jillian Sandell who adds the complexities of public reception and Allison's own view of her position:

> *Bastard Out of Carolina*, for example, was received primarily as a novel about southern working-class families […]. Allison's other work, on the other hand, despite covering similar territory to that addressed in *Bastard*, has been almost universally claimed as books about and for women. […] When *Bastard Out of Carolina* is categorized as a queer text, it is typically because Allison herself is lesbian […]. For Allison, however, '[*Bastard Out of Carolina*] is not a lesbian novel, it's a working class novel. But it's *about* a lesbian, there is certainly the aspect of that hidden reality there.[246]

A different reading is pursued by Irving who views Bone's identity as nothing innate, but relational, a product of her surroundings:

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[244] See J. Brooks Bouson, "'You Nothing but Trash.' White Trash Shame in Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*," *Southern Literary Journal* 34.1 (Fall 2001): 107–08.
[245] See Moira P. Baker, "Dorothy Allison's Topography of Resistance," *Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review,* 5.3 (July 1998): 23–26.
[246] Jillian Sandell, "Telling Stories of 'Queer White Trash,'" *White Trash: Race and Class in America* 223. Italics in the original.

> Bone's identity is created through her positioning by a system of civil and political institutions, including the legal apparatus, the welfare state, the church, and the nuclear family with its oedipal mandate. At the same time, Bone's simultaneous rejection of this positioning is equally crucial to her identity formation. This mode of representing the construction of her protagonist's subjectivity enables Allison to eschew essentialist versions of identity.[247]

Irving in her analysis foregrounds Bone's sexuality and deconstructs essentialist theories of identity from this position: "Since the 'lesbian' is only one of the negative positions created by the institutions of patriarchy, embracing that position is the precursor toward recognizing one's kinship with a whole series of other marginalized groups."[248] There is, however, another perspective from which it is possible to examine Bone's multifaceted identity and which does not require to prefer one subject position over another, but allows to follow their interaction – intersectional analysis.

Growing from the criticism of white middle-class feminism by African American women theorists, intersectionality theory has become an umbrella term for the study of the ways various systems of oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, class, religion etc., interlock. In her founding article, in which the term "intersectionality theory" was used for the first time, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw strives to suggest "a methodology that will ultimately disrupt the tendencies to see race and gender as exclusive or separable," and notes that "[w]hile the primary intersections that I explore here are between race and gender, the concept can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age and color.[249]

Although she approaches intersectional analysis as "a provisional concept linking contemporary politics with postmodern theory,"[250] Crenshaw does not call for the total dismissal of identity categories, as do some of her contemporaries, but argues that it is necessary to shift the attention to the complex, individual, nature of identity, and focus on sites where identity

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[247] Katrina Irving, "Writing It Down So That It Would Be Real" 97.
[248] Katrina Irving, "Writing It Down So That It Would Be Real" 97–98.
[249] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (July 1991): 1244–45, note 9.
[250] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"1244, note 9.

categories come together and their meaning is negotiated: "Recognizing that identity politics takes place at the site where categories intersect thus seems more fruitful than challenging the possibility of talking about categories at all."[251]

In this context, Leslie McCall sums three possible methodological approaches to the complexity of intersectionality, depending on the scholars's view of the nature of analytical categories and categories of identity (gender, race, class etc.). The first is anticategorical complexity which denotes a methodology deconstructing categories as social fictions, born in the 1980s when "hegemonic feminist theorists, poststructuralists, and antiracist theorists almost simultaneously launched assaults on the validity of modern analytical categories."[252] The second approach is intracategorical, arguing that although social categories are fictions, they have real implications in the social world and focusing on particular social groups "at a neglected point of intersection of multiple master categories," i.e. people whose identity is produced at the intersection of traditional groupings.[253] Finally, intercategorical approach uses categories provisionally and brings forth the issue of "relationships of inequality among already constituted social groups."[254] From the three methods outlined by McCall, my discussion of tomboyism will follow the intracategorical approach.

Within women studies, intersectionality was taken up by feminists of color, as it allowed them to deal with race and gender in a new way which included women of color as the site where these two categories meet. Patricia Hill Collins widens the scope of intersectionality in "black feminism" and includes class and sexuality into the mix of "mutually constructing systems of oppression."[255]

While it is possible to approach tomboyism strictly from the perspective of gender and explore the changing position of this concept on the masculine-feminine axis, such a perspective necessarily fails to account for issues of race,

[251] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins" 1299.
[252] Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30.3 (2005): 1776.
[253] Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality" 1780.
[254] Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality" 1784–85.
[255] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (1990, New York: Routledge, 2009) 245.

class and sexual orientation and is thus unable to answer many questions that arise from the study of tomboyism in American literature and culture. I want to argue that intersectional analysis, though originally used in the context of law and social sciences, is a helpful methodological tool for the study of tomboyism, and it allows to reconceptualize tomboyism as a site where elements of multiple identities converge.

This view of tomboyism legitimizes the employment of liminality, as it is precisely the convergence of multiple, sometimes antithetic, identities which push the tomboy to the margin of various discourses – her age, for instance, disqualifies her from becoming the subject of "girls' studies" dealing mostly with adolescence,[256] as well as women studies in general; her (usually) middle-class status contains her race transgressions, her fluid race deconstructs as well as upholds social divisions based on color.

The use of intersectional theory, focusing on how various identity facets operate in tomboyism, will allow me to look into ways gender, race, class and sexuality operate on the tomboy's body and create its identity. As we have seen in *Bastard Out of Carolina*, identity facets are interweaved and difficult to be separated or hierarchized. While Irving sees lesbian sexuality as the starting point, I want to argue that it is the dynamic coalescence of all these facets which position Bone at the very margin of the community.

Not only marginal subject-positions play a role, but all positions within the intersections of gender, race, class and sexuality. In case of many tomboys their white middle-class position works to redeem their gender transgressions – while gender is shown as bendable, often through masquerade, other identity facets are fixed and contain violations of gender rules. From the perspective of

[256] Girls's studies or girlhood studies is a relatively recent sphere of academic interest, putting together scholars from fields as diverse as sociology, media studies and pedagogy. In mid-1990s collections of girls-authored writing appeared, followed soon by scholarly analyses voicing concern with girlhood not as a dull phase on the way to adult womanhood, but "a part of the volatile and ongoing process of forming a gendered identity," as Lisa Parks wrote in her 1997 article for a special issue of *Feminist Collections*, focused on girls. Lisa Parks, "Give Me That Camera!: Playing with Gender in Videos about Girls," *Feminist Collections* 18.2 (Winter 1997): 13. For more on girls's studies see Sinikka Aapola, Marnina Gonick and Anita Harris, *Young Femininity: Girlhood, Power and Social Change* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) or Elline Lipkin, *Girls's Studies* (Berkeley, Perseus Books, 2009).

intersectional theory, tomboyism thus becomes a much more diversified concept than Abate depicted it. In *Bastard Out of Carolina*, there is no masquerade at all, and Bone transgresses the southern system of white, middle-class femininity in all respects. Therefore, she is a radically liminal character who exposes all the conditions and limitations of gender, race, and class rules in southern society; she is nevertheless not able to change them, only to live on their margin.

Above in my discussion of the queer perspective in the thinking about tomboyism I have shown that gender malleability, deconstructing essential nature of identity categories, might operate on other identity facets, be it race, class and/or sexuality. Through the lens of intersectional theory, these categories are viewed as fixed and immutable. Therefore, I want to combine intersectional analysis with queer theory to see what happens when not only gender, but also sexuality, class and race become fluid and performed. The tomboy's playing in the dark which for Abate was aimed to "help ensure white racial supremacy"[257] may, in this perspective, strive to undo fixed racial positions and policies.

This is exactly what happens in *Bastard Out of Carolina* – while being part of the "white trash," Bone is by no means only white, and her Native/African American roots not only make her special, but point towards a more complicated racial contact in the South. The tomboy's playing in the dark in southern fiction works as a reminder of this history in which racial contact, or miscegenation was not only the activity of lower-classes, as the myth of the southern lady and belle tries to convince us, but middle and upper-classes as well; more importantly though, it shatters the long-held ideals of racial purity and separated ethnicities as totally preposterous and a matter of social performance.

4.5. Growing Up a Girl in the South

There is yet another aspect of tomboyism that requires a closer look – the issue of growing up, which is the subject matter of most tomboy narratives. I have so far focused on the variations of gender, race and class in southern tomboyism

[257] Michelle Ann Abate, Introduction, *Tomboys* xii.

and in the following paragraphs, I would like to point out that growing up a girl in the American South has been historically different from growing up in the rest of the United States and that these differences are crucial for understanding how the concept of tomboyism took shape and worked in this specific culture.

Despite diversity in opinions and lifestyles among various groups (plantation states vs. backwoods communities, for instance, in the white community), certain ideals were held in common. Among the most persistent, focused on southern girls, is the ideal of the southern belle/lady, which seems to cut across strictly held class distinctions. Shirley Abbott writes about the influence this ideal had on her:

> In a corner of the South as remote as Arkansas […] and in a little town such as I came from, which hardly even existed before 1880, it is a miracle that anybody had ever heard of the idea anyway. There are, after all, plenty of other ways to find a man. And yet, the old notions hung as heavy in the air as the fume of Blue Waltz cologne around the cosmetic counters at the Kress store. No matter how lowly your origins or plain your person, you were expected to be a belle.[258]

At the same time the backwoods region produced a special kind of girls with a childhood very far from that of the plantation belle. While Abbott's childhood was filled with *Gone with the Wind* imagery, the early life of her mother, very much a woman of the 19th century, was very different:

> By the time she was four, she had a younger brother to look after. By the time she was eight, she could cook a passable meal and clean house. […] And yet her childhood was joyous, not grim. She'd finish her work and burst out of the house to roam the woods […] She learned to climb trees and fight. She never combed her hair. […] She may sound like one of those ingratiating little Southern tomboys out of Carson McCullers or Harper Lee, but no one thought of her as a tomboy. She was merely a wild little girl.[259]

This note corresponds with Louise Westling's view of tomboyism as a "tradition […] specially prevalent in the American South."[260] Westling refers to historian

[258] Shirley Abbott, *Womenfolks* 111.
[259] Shirley Abbott, *Womenfolks* 154–55.
[260] Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 156.

Bertram Wyatt Brown, who in one of the chapters of his book *Southern Honor* tracks the paradoxical nature of the ideal of the southern lady, the fact that she is supposed to be delicate and steely at the same time, back to childhood:

> Toughness beneath the soft exterior had its origins in childhood. Girls […] were raised without much sexual differentiation from their male peers from birth to the boys' 'clothing stage.' […] At an earlier time in Southern history mothers were not so solicitous about ladylike appearance and behavior. […] Fathers took their girls fishing. Sometimes they went on hunting trips, too.[261]

The passage from liberal childhood to adolescence and adulthood was marked in the Old South by a distinct social rite – once the girl outgrew her old clothes and her body began to change with the onset of puberty, she adopted a new style of clothing which entailed a change in behavior, as it prescribed specific forms of movement and banned others. As southern historian Anya Jabour puts it in her analysis of the peculiarities of growing up a girl in the antebellum South, "[l] ike long skirts, corsets and hoopskirts both symbolized adult status and enforced ladylike behavior. […] Encased in corsets and enclosed in layers of heavy fabric, young women were unable to engage in vigorous outdoor activity."[262]

Three aspects are important in these analyses of the forms of upbringing in the 19th- and early 20th-century South: first, that girls were allowed to enjoy outdoor activities freely during their childhoods; second, that these were accompanied by emphasis upon household duties and indoor activities, which, as Jabour notes, segregated children along the gender and race axis, and third, that the passage from childhood to adolescence seemed fluent for most upper-middle class girls who are the subject of Jabour's and Bertram Brown's books, as well as lower class ones, captured in Shirley Abbott's memoir. Jabour captures well the balance and segregation principle of southern girls's childhood:

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[261] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 232.
[262] Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) 34.

> Girls combined such spirited play with more sedate pursuits, such as reading novels and 'fairy tales,' holding tea parties, picking flowers, drawing or painting, and playing with dolls. Such activities set elite girls apart not only from boys, who avoided such feminine play, but also from slaves, who lacked the education and the tools to engage in these types of leisure activities. Unlike outdoor play, indoor play segregated children by both gender and race.[263]

Indoor leisure segregated the girls not only from boys and African Americans of the same age, but also from lower-class girls, whom Jabour fails to mention. Their leisure time was replaced by work which made them less feminine in return. Abbott describes the matter-of-fact attitude of backwoods women toward their femininity: "These farm women were unwilling to think of their femininity as any kind of special condition in need of discussion. Sex was like the seasons of the year. What was there to discuss?"[264]

Although there might be reluctance on the part of antebellum southern girls, to take on the prescribed role, expressed by "the extended and contested process of coming-of-age," as Jabour writes,[265] most girls "regarded the transformation from girl to lady as both inevitable and desirable."[266]

This tradition of tomboyish childhood gradually eroded, revealing discrepances in the concept of gradual development from the tomboy into a lady/working class woman, with the establishment and expansion of the adolescent consciousness. Echoes of the tradition nevertheless resound in many literary works, including *Gone with the Wind*, and help explain the widespread occurence of tomboyish childhood among American women.

[263] Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters* 21.
[264] Shirley Abbott, *Womenfolks* 151.
[265] Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters* 13.
[266] Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters* 45.

5. TOMBOYS IN CARSON MCCULLERS'S *THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER* AND *THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING*

In this chapter, I will deal with the tomboy characters in two novels by Carson McCullers, Mick Kelly in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940) and Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), from the perspective of the intersections of gender, race, class and sexuality in an effort to reconstruct them as potentially subversive characters who reshape the gender-race-class dynamics and de-familiarize the setting of the American Bildungsroman. This analysis will serve as a matrix for approaching the film versions of the two novels that I will address later.

5.1. The Invention of Tomboyism through the Feminist Lens

The critical attention paid to *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding* has a diverse history of its own, I will therefore sum up only those moments that are crucial for the tomboy characters in question.[267] Although tomboyism was not a foreign concept at the time McCullers published her two major novels with tomboy characters, it was not treated as an important aspect by literary critics until the 1980s, when the influence of feminist criticism directed attention toward the gender of McCullers's protagonists and allowed them to be seen, in Ann Carlton's words, "in the context of their culture as they attempt to know and act on their needs and react to the cultural forces around them, thereby moving […] beyond the labels of gothic, grotesque, freak and queer."[268]

Feminist critics of McCullers, most notably Barbara A. White and Louise Westling, "focus on McCullers's adolescents as female," and thus read tomboyism from a specific perspective – as a form of rebellion against the

[267] The most exhaustive and insightful overview of McCullers criticism was done by Judith Giblin James in *Wunderkind: The Reputation of Carson McCullers, 1940–1990* (Columbia: Camden House, 1995).
[268] Ann Carlton, "Beyond Gothic and Grotesque: A Feminist View of Three Female Characters of Carson McCullers," *Pembroke Magazine* 20 (1988): 54.

patriarchal model of southern femininity, embodied by the lady and belle.[269] White concentrates solely on the character of Frankie from *The Member of the Wedding* and examines the novel on the background of the genre of the adolescence novel. Westling compares the two characters, Frankie and Mick, and locates them firmly in the frame of tomboyism. She notices the absence of mothers as models of proper femininity as well as the importance of African American women in both novels, and sums the tomboys's trajectory in both novels as follows:

> Carson McCullers's heroines […] live in a world practically devoid of traditional Southern femininity […] The only warmth provided by women comes from Negro cooks. […] Without mothers, these feminine protagonists define themselves most comfortably in masculine terms. […] The crisis for each of them comes as social pressures force them to abandon masculine independence and accept a feminine identity.[270]

Feminist reading of McCullers, exemplified in Westling's work, has two consequences for the interpretation of the novels. First, tomboyism in McCullers becomes a temporary concept, an attempt at gender rebellion hampered by the patriarchal rule. Ann Carlton, another feminist critic of McCullers, describes the division clearly: "The muted culture, the female, doesn't offer Mick adventurous and exciting dreams. This also explains her boyish behavior – to do these things one has to be male."[271] This, however, also entails the second consequence of feminist reading of both *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the*

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[269] Judith Giblin James, *Wunderkind* 6. See Barbara A. White, "Loss of Self in Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*," *Growing Up Female: Adolescent Girlhood in American Fiction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985) 89–111; Louise Westling, "Carson McCullers's Tomboys," *Southern Humanities Review* 14 (1980): 339–350; Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity,"*Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens: The Fiction of Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985) 110–32; and Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers*, ed. Beverly Lyon Clark and Melvin J. Friedman (New York: G.K. Hall; London: Prentice Hall, 1996). My quotes throughout the chapter will be from the last Westling article which is, in fact, a reprint of the former two.

[270] Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 155.

[271] Ann Carlton, "Beyond Gothic and Grotesque" 57.

Wedding – the interpretations of the endings of both novels undergo a radical transformation.

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary here to provide some insight into the two narratives. The tomboy in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Mick Kelly, gets a considerably smaller amount of attention, as she is only one of four major protagonists of the novel and thus has a limited number of chapters devoted to her story. The center of the narrative is John Singer, a deaf-mute who becomes a home-made Christ for the other four characters. They invest their deepest thoughts in him in a blind faith that he is the only one who understands them; Singer nevertheless has no idea why they keep coming to him and what they want. Apart from Mick, there is Biff Brannon, an androgynous keeper of the only all-night café in town, Jake Blount, an alcoholic labor agitator who works as a merry-go-round operator in a deserted place between white and African American neighborhood, and Dr. Benedict Mady Copeland, an African American physician, whose daughter Portia works at Mick's family as a cook.

The Member of the Wedding, on the other hand, is fully focused on the tomboy, Frankie Addams, and her development over one specific summer. Frankie feels alone, "a member of nothing in the world"[272] and spends most of her time in the kitchen of her house with her cousin John Henry and the African American help Berenice.

Both characters have much in common and follow a similar narrative trajectory. Both have a tomboyish name, wear boys' clothes and have their hair cropped short. Both have audacious plans and an ambition to make something out of their lives. McCullers broadens the tomboy portfolio by foregrounding ambitiousness – while her tomboys are adventurous and undaunted, what defines them best are their aspirations. According to Westling, "ambitions are psychological equivalents for the physical assertiveness of the tomboy."[273]

Mick and Frankie undergo a transformation in the novels – at first, they have their plans and dreams (Mick wants to become a pianist and a composer, Frankie wants to join her brother and his bride and leave the town with them),

[272] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*, *Carson McCullers: Complete Novels*, ed. Carlos L. Dews (New York: Library of America, 2001) 461.
[273] Louise Westling," Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 157.

and in both cases these plans and dreams are shattered and remain unfulfilled. Mick Kelly is forced to give up school and work full-time, and she hears no music in her head anymore, even though she still harbors some hope that one day she will save for a piano and start anew:

> It was like she was cheated. Only nobody had cheated her. […] But maybe it would be true about the piano and turn out O.K. […] Else what the hell good had it all been – the way she felt about music and the plans she had made […]? It had to be some good if anything made sense. And it was too and it was too and it was too and it was too. It was some good. All right! O.K.! Some good.[274]

The ending of *The Member of the Wedding* is more ambiguous. After her plan to join her brother's wedding fails, Frankie decides to run away from home. She is stopped by the police and taken back home. She feels that the world is no longer "cracked and loose and turning a thousand miles an hour," but "enormous and still and flat. Between herself and all the places there was a space like an enormous canyon she could not hope to bridge or cross."[275] The coda to this story takes place about three months later. Frankie uses a different name, Frances, does not mention the wedding any more, is about to move out of their old house, has a new friend, Mary Littlejohn, who is two years her senior, and plans to be "a great poet – or else the foremost authority on radar."[276]

There is a feeling of change in her, but the change is not specified. We are thus left perplexed and questioning – how did Frankie overcome her fears and feelings of alienation? Did she overcome them or does she still see the world as "enormous and still and flat?" The past months are recounted as if they had passed in a haze, leaving no traces behind and we have no idea what kind of impact the events had upon Frankie.

It is exactly the endings of the novels and the meaning of the transformation the tomboy characters undergo which has been most passionately discussed by McCullers critics. The debate has been going on ever since the novels were published, and while several positions were taken by scholars, at

[274] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 302.
[275] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 600.
[276] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 602.

this point of my analysis two of them are most crucial. The first position is historically older and it interprets the tomboy's story as a universal story of adolescence and natural though sometimes painful growing up from unrealistic dreams and ideas to become part of the adult world. Ihab Hassan's essay published in 1960 epitomizes this approach:

> Mrs. McCullers beautifully disposes of the wedding itself in a few lines and devotes the rest of the book to convert the initial bitterness of, not Frankie or F. Jasmine, but Frances now, to a final affirmation of youth's resilience. Frances, entitled at last to her full name, outgrows the humiliation of her first defeat. […] And with the heedlessness of youth, she takes up new friends and other illusions.[277]

This approach is neither limited to a certain epoch of literary criticism nor to particular gender of the reviewer – in her 1987 Ph.D. dissertation comparing three versions of *The Member of the Wedding* from the structuralist perspective, Neva Evonne Burdison sees the ending in a similar way: "Frankie's twelfth year has been violent, aimless, disillusioning, full of rejection and sexual disgust. Finally there is the appearance of serene femininity."[278]

Critical evaluation of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and Mick Kelly in particular follows a similar path. Jack B. Moore compares Mick's journey in the novel to the initiation myth and concludes on a heroic note:

> Mick Kelly is then a real girl in a real Southern town, a fairytale princess, and a hero. She learns about sex, experiences a transcendent and temporarily beautiful awakening, and faces her difficult entrance into the adult, real world heroically. The world she enters – as a woman or princess or hero – is a strange and terrifying one, yet it is to be hoped an occassionally satisfying new world with its own wonders.[279]

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[277] Ihab Hassan, "Carson McCullers: The Alchemy of Love and Esthetics of Pain," *Modern Fiction Studies* 5.4 (Winter 1959–1960): 322.
[278] Neva Evonne Burdison, "The Making of the Member of the Wedding: Novel, Play and Film," Diss. University of Mississippi, 1987, 66.
[279] Jack B. Moore, "Carson McCullers: The Heart Is a Timeless Hunter," *Twentieth Century Literature* 11.2 (Jul. 1965): 80–81.

On the other hand, Richard Wright describes the fate of Mick Kelly at the end of the novel, far from any optimism, as "doomed to a life of wage slavery."[280]

The second position, present in some of the earliest reviews but gaining prominence only when the critics started to focus expressly on the adolescent girl characters, describes the ending of both novels in much bleaker tones, as "tragic capitulation rather than acceptance or affirmation."[281] These interpretations see a rupture at the end of *The Member of the Wedding.* As Westling writes with a tone of disapprovement:

> McCullers has rather ruthlessly removed the 'deviants' from Frances's life so that safe conformity can triumph. The price for this relief from the tensions of strangeness has been high, perhaps too high. Frances is less attractive at the end of the novel than she was as frightened tomboy Frankie.[282]

Frankie's story, as well as Mick's, thus becomes an exemplar of the negative effect of patriarchy upon the lives of young women in the South.

5.1.1. McCullers's Incomplete Androgynes

Though conflicting in their interpretation of the end of both novels, both positions share their view of tomboyism as a temporary state that the characters grow out of, willingly or not. There are, however, other perspectives in McCullers criticism that approach the issue from a different angle. Parallel to the first feminist studies on McCullers, several essays appeared which debated her novels' relation to the concept of androgyny. This approach was inspired not only by the work of Carolyn Heilbrun, discussed above but also by McCullers's own bisexuality, revealed in an influential book *The Lonely Hunter: A Biography of Carson McCullers* by Virginia Spencer Carr, published in 1974.

Mary Roberts explores androgyny in McCullers's novels in connection with the feeling of incompleteness and ambivalence that her characters often

[280] Richard Wright, "Inner Landscape," *New Republic*, 5 Aug. 1940: 195.
[281] Judith Giblin James, *Wunderkind* 7.
[282] Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 164.

experience. As androgyny in Heilbrun represents union and completeness, a state that is imagined but never achieved in McCullers, Roberts dubs McCullers's characters incomplete androgynes:

> Since she is haunted by the incongruities and contradictions of human existence, her world contains no true androgynes […] her concern is rather with a figure whom I have chosen to call *the incomplete androgyne*: a person possessing an ambiguous sexuality, potentially but not actually androgynous, which produces a strangely asexual mode of being. Incarcerated within a dualistic nature (where the masculine and feminine, though strongly present, are fractured), he or she attempts in desperation or frustration to achieve an androgynous self by imagining a beloved who can make him or her whole.[283]

Love in McCullers is always a one-way relation, androgyny as a state of wholeness cannot therefore be accomplished.

Roberts's approach is worth a closer examination here, as it affects the way the endings of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *Member of the Wedding* are read. Mick passes in her interpretation through three stages in the novel: the tomboyish one, embedded in her name and activities, the confused and ambiguous one, when she decides to give a party at her house "where 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles are to be appropriately acted out,"[284] which fails and shifts her to "a more extreme sexual limbo,"[285] and finally, the feminine one. This last stage "must crush any potential for androgyny,"[286] but, significantly for my analysis of the novel, Roberts calls this last identity of Mick "parodic," thus opening the door to a more performative reading of the character, although she herself does not develop the idea further.

A similar structure is followed in her interpretation of *The Member of the Wedding.* The main character goes through three phases reflected in the three variations on her name: "Frankie (dissatisfied), F. Jasmine (expectant), and Frances (disillusioned)."[287] The very adjectives used with the names impose

[283] Mary Roberts, "Imperfect Androgyny and Imperfect Love in the Work of Carson McCullers," *Hartford Studies in Literature* 12 (1980): 76–78. Italics in the original.
[284] Mary Roberts, "Imperfect Androgyny and Imperfect Love" 80–81.
[285] Mary Roberts, "Imperfect Androgyny and Imperfect Love" 82.
[286] Mary Roberts, "Imperfect Androgyny and Imperfect Love" 82.
[287] Mary Roberts, "Imperfect Androgyny and Imperfect Love" 89.

judgement upon the phases and echo the feminist interpretation of the novel's closing, Roberts nevertheless challenges such an easy conclusion:

> The novel's ending, though, is not entirely gloomy, for Frances at least can retreat from unbearable knowledge – 'The world was too far away, and there was no way any more that she could be included' – into an adolescent passion for a member of her own sex in which the wonder and mystery of love is still present.[288]

5.1.2. Frankie Addams as a Closeted Lesbian

Though it does not explicitly link androgyny with specific sexual orientation, Roberts'conclusion seems to anticipate numerous debates emerging in the 1990s on the relationship of Frankie and Mary Littlejohn and the lesbian potential of *The Member of the Wedding*. As these debates offer yet another view of the "acceptance/submission" argument and move it further, I will briefly introduce them here.

The first critic to talk about McCullers's characters as lesbian, was Leslie Fiedler who argued in *Love and Death in the American Novel* that McCullers was the first author who delved into the lesbian implications of the tomboy figure, "projecting in her neo-tomboys, ambiguous and epicene, the homosexual's sense of exclusion from the family and his uneasiness before heterosexual passion."[289]

Lori J. Kenshaft traces homoerotic themes hidden behind "coded" descriptions of characters: according to her, the boyish outlook and self-representation are allusions to the classics of lesbian literature[290] She also notices the abundant usage of the word "queer" in connection with Frankie and sees it as a signal to the lesbian/gay community of the day:

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[288] Mary Roberts, "Imperfect Androgyny and Imperfect Love" 91.
[289] Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960; New York: Dell, 1969) 333.
[290] See Lori J. Kenschaft, "Homoerotics and Human Connections: Reading Carson McCullers 'As a Lesbian,'" *Critical Studies on Carson McCullers* 220–21.

In 1946, when *Wedding* was published, 'queer' (like 'gay') was a code word known to many 'in the life' but to few outside. It was frequently used to identify oneself to another discreetly, under the public eye but without public knowledge.[291]

McCullers's being "in the life" is taken for granted by Kenshaft.

Jan Whitt offers a very specific explanation of another commonplace of McCullers criticism, her preoccupation with loneliness, when he writes that "the loneliness of many McCullers' characters is rooted in their being lesbian or gay in a world that considers their love perverse."[292]

Same-sex desire is nowhere explicitly stated in *The Member of the Wedding* and Kenschaft offers an intriguing explanation linking androgyny with queer sensibility. She argues that McCullers wanted to imagine a world beyond the male/female – hetero/homosexual divide, a universe of fluid identities:

McCullers's characters are not […] simply identifiable as lesbian or gay, identities that would be more culturally explainable than the shifting, neither-nor, multiplicitous desires that McCullers portrays. […] [T]hese characters might experience same-sex desires, but […] these desires might be linked […] to a more general rebellion against what it means to be a culturally encoded 'woman' or 'man.'[293]

The very possibility of reading Frankie through the lens of same-sex desire significantly affects the image of Frankie as a submissive woman at the end of the novel. As Kenschaft writes:

By the end of the story, Frankie goes by the adult form of her name, Frances. She has accepted the prohibitions of the adult world, at least enough to begin to understand them, but she has not necessarily internalized these prohibitions. 'Frances' might be less aggressively boyish than 'Frankie,' but it is nevertheless androgynous when spoken. […] Frankie learns the discretion that is necessary for survival in a world where she is, indeed, a freak, but she does not in the process renounce her freakishness.[294]

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[291] Lori J. Kenschaft, "Homoerotics and Human Connections" 221.
[292] Jan Whitt: "Living and Writing in the Margins: Lesbian Desire and the Novels of Carson McCullers," *Reflections in a Critical Eye*, ed. Jan Whitt (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008) 87–88.
[293] Lori Kenschaft, "Homoerotics and Human Connections" 231.
[294] Lori Kenschaft, "Homoerotics and Human Connections" 228–29.

In her analysis of Frankie, Kenschaft here introduces an important aspect of a conscious play on the part of McCullers's character, which opens the interpretational field for the concept of masquerade, performance and the queering of identity. This approach to gender also allows to include race and class into the debate of McCullers's protagonists and produce a more complex image of tomboyism in her work.

5.1.3. Masquerading Femininity – Being Adult Without Being a Woman

As I have shown in the previous chapter, masquerade is a highly relevant concept in the culture of the American South, of which McCullers is an integral part. Although, as Westling point out, the world of her novels is "devoid of traditional Southern femininity,"[295] her tomboy characters know painfully well what a proper lady should do, wear and say.

Mick Kelly has a clear example in her older sisters, whom she despises at the beginning, and from whom she borrows dresses in the end; Frankie has all the demands thoroughly internalized. Both Mick's and Frankie's breach from the feminine ideal is written on their bodies and touches especially on their height. Frankie reaches gigantic proportions in her imagination:

> This August she was twelve and five-sixths years old. She was five feet five and three quarter inches tall, and she wore a number seven shoe. […] Already the hateful little summer children hollered to her: 'Is it cold up there?' And the comments of grown people made Frankie shrivel on her heels. If she reached her height on her eighteenth birthday, she had five and one-sixth growing years ahead of her. Therefore, according to mathematics and unless she could somehow stop herself, she would grow to be over nine feet tall. And what would be a lady who is over nine feet high? She would be a Freak.[296]

Mick, also anxious about her height, has found a peculiar cure:

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[295] Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 155.
[296] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 475.

She knew what he was thinking. It used to worry her all the time. Five feet six inches tall and a hundred and three pounds, and she was only thirteen. Every kid at the party was a runt beside her […]. No boy wanted to prom with a girl so much taller than him. But maybe cigarettes would help stunt the rest of her growth.[297]

Mick's and Frankie's attitude to femininity is rather complicated. On one hand, they both fear growing too tall, on the other hand, they despise impersonations of southern femininity. Mick's sisters, the epitomes of southern girlhood in the novel, are presented in a very negative, almost repulsive light:

Etta was like she was full of worms. All she thought about was movie stars and getting into the movies. […] Etta wasn't naturally pretty like Hazel. The main thing was she didn't have any chin. […] Sometimes Etta would hold her face with her hands and cry in the night about it. Hazel was plain lazy. She was good-looking but thick in the head.[298]

For Frankie, femininity is something absolutely alien, belonging to a different world, impermeable and bathed in mystery. When she sees it, impersonated by a club of neighborhood girls passing her yard, she falls silent and speechless:

John Henry wailed and F. Jasmine banged around the kitchen in the wedding dress and Berenice got up from the table and raised her right hand for peace. Then suddenly they all stopped at once. F. Jasmine stood absolutely still before the window […]. Four girls were crossing the back yard. They were girls of fourteen and fifteen years old, and they were the club members. […] The long gold sun slanted down on them and made their skin look golden also, and they were dressed in clean, fresh dresses. […] F. Jasmine stood motionless. […] [S]he watched them quietly, without jealousy.[299]

There are several instances in both books when proper femininity is revealed as a construct and debunked. Most of these "moments of masquerade" concern clothes, very powerful and tangible signs of gender compliance and social stratification. Having only a few friends at her new school, Mick decides to give

[297] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 95.
[298] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 36–37.
[299] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 545.

a prom party at her house. She literally wipes out her tomboyish self, scrubbing the dirt off her heels, knees and elbows, and puts on her sister's best dress, high-heel shoes and makeup. Mick's make-over for the party resembles an initiation ritual, the result of which is not a new content and social role but self-alienation: "She didn't feel like herself at all. She was somebody different from Mick Kelly entirely."[300]

McCullers here displays all the power traditional femininity can exercise, yet undermines it by the use of irony. The party is supposed to complete the transformation of Mick from a tomboy into an adult woman and open the door to the world of her schoolmates: "She felt so different from the old Mick Kelly that she knew this would be better than anything else in all her life – this party."[301] The event fails though, as it is invaded by a local children's gang which immediately turns it into a farce. This invasion awakes the childhood part in the dignified guests and the rest of their decorum is gone:

> The idea of the party was over entirely now. This was just a regular playing-out. […] The kids had caused it. They were like a catching sickness, and their coming to the party made all the other people forget about High School and being almost grown. […] Everybody was a wild kid playing out on Saturday night – and she felt like the very wildest of all.[302]

Clothes here fail to exercise their transformative power and become masks that can be put on and taken off at will. Mick learns her lesson at the party – her new schoolmates are no different from other kids – and adopts a distinctly pragmatic approach toward femininity. She uses clothes to make herself look old enough to get a job at Woolworth's and while it seems that her mask devoured her self in the end, with her music ambitions thwarted and her days wholly consumed by her tedious work, her order of a chocolate sundae and a beer in the café where she goes after work to rest, seems to suggest that the world of childhood freedom on one hand and adult responsibility on the other did not totally merge into one.

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[300] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 91.
[301] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 92.
[302] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 98–99.

The detachment of Mick from her role did not go unnoticed by the critics. Keith E. Byerman compares the endings of both novels: "...unlike Frankie, who […] comes to identify her self with the role of appropriate daughter, Mick maintains a distinction between the role and the self."[303] Feminine clothes, or Mick's "costume of a shop girl," as Byerman calls it,[304] perform a deeply paradoxical role in the novel when they join forces with other aspects, namely class – they lock Mick in the position of the provider for her family, a very unfeminine task by the gender-role standards of her time.

Masquerade features even more prominently in *The Member of the Wedding*. Here, Frankie Addams freely changes her name from masculine to feminine-sounding and expects an immediate change in herself and the way people around perceive her. Her encounter with feminine clothes produces nothing of the spell Mick experienced; her choice of the dress for her brother's wedding reveals her total unawareness of what is proper and what is not and betrays femininity as something very complicated to learn. Ironically, again, it is Berenice, the African American cook, no representative of white southern femininity by any standards, who explains to Frankie what is wrong with her dress:

> You had all your hair shaved off like a convict, and now you tie a silver ribbon around this head without any hair. It just looks peculiar. […] And look at them elbows. […] Here you got on this grown woman's evening dress. Orange satin. And that brown crust on your elbows. The two things just don't mix.[305]

Frankie performs a deconstruction of femininity in the novel, unwillingly and perhaps unknowingly. One of the finest of many examples of this deconstruction, introducing the very possibility of forgetting about one's femininity, is Frankie's attitude to the wedding, the feminizing (and heterosexist) institution par excellence. Utterly ignoring its social role, Frankie decides to join the wedding as the third member besides the bride and the bridegroom. She

[303] Keith E. Byerman, "The Daughter as Outlaw in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding*," *Reflections in a Critical Eye* 23.
[304] Keith E. Byerman, "The Daughter as Outlaw," *Reflections in a Critical Eye* 23.
[305] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 540.

vigorously points out that she has no intention to disrupt the wedding or even to replace the bride; she wants to form a triangular relationship in which each member would profit from the union and together they would achieve great fame. Frankie's plans for the threesome, which she announces to Berenice, are in no way humble or ordinary:

> When we leave Winter Hill we're going to more places than you ever thought about or even knew existed.[…] Here today and gone tomorrow. Alaska, China, Iceland, South America. […] Things will happen so fast we won't hardly have time to realize them. Captain Jarvis Addams sinks twelve Jap battleships and decorated [*sic*] by the President. Miss F. Jasmine Addams breaks all records. Mrs. Janice Addams elected Miss United Nations in beauty contest. […] And we will meet them. Everybody. We will just walk up to people and know them right away. […] We will know decorated aviators and New York people and movie stars. We will have thousands of friends, thousands and thousands and thousands of friends. We will belong to so many clubs that we can't even keep track of all of them. We will be members of the whole world.[306]

Frankie's vision of the life of the threesome entails an intriguing division of roles of the individual members – while her brother Jarvis and his wife Janice are portrayed as embodiments of the masculine/feminine stereotypes of the time, heroic and active vs. decorative and caring; Frankie sees herself as closer to the masculine mode of existence, yet somewhat beyond that – as a record breaker she is also a trail blazer, a forger of new categories. Marriage then becomes a space of self-remodelling, and even though the wife and the husband do occupy their traditional roles, the presence of a third member profoundly animates their life.

Much has been written about Frankie's fear of growing up into a woman, which necessarily involves conformity to a prescribed role and abandonment of certain behavior; many critical debates have focused on Frankie's loneliness and her sense of not-belonging, which she feels acutely during the summer described in the book. While feminists claim that Frankie's fear of growing up is motivated socially, by the gender roles that are available to her, the psychoanalytical reading links Frankie's apprehensions to her personal history –

[306] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 565–66.

her mother's death in giving birth to her. In Katherine Dalsimer's words, "Frankie's assertions of boyishness are primitive attempts to deny what the processes of puberty are every day making more apparent: that she is becoming a woman. […] in becoming a woman she is approaching death."[307]

Frankie's idea to join her brother and his fiancée and leave the town with them is a solution of her loneliness which terrifies here, as is aptly conveyed by her famous "we of me" monologue:

> [A]ll the twelve years of her life, she had only been Frankie. She was an *I* person who had to walk around and do things by herself. All other people had a we to claim, all others except her. […] Now all this was suddenly over with and changed. There was her brother and the bride, and it was as though when first she saw them something she had known inside of her: *They are the we of me*.[308]

Frankie's idea to join her brother's wedding may have additional implications, as Barbara A. White shows: "Frankie's plan to join the wedding is also a desperate attempt to *preserve* her identity. […] Her wedding fantasy is a symbolic way of resolving her conflict of wanting to be an adult but not wanting to be a woman."[309]

Although her plan to become a member of the wedding fails, Frankie, or Frances in the much-discussed coda does not seem reconciled to her feminine future – she declares to travel around the world with Mary Littlejohn and to become either a poet or a radar specialist, neither of them very feminine professions. Although she no longer fears to become a freak and the world no longer makes her feel queer, Frances gives the impression of yet another impersonation, yet another role/mask that the protagonist of the novel tries on. Viewing the novel's end through the lens of masquerade also explains the fact that Frankie/Frances does not seem to have taken any lesson from what happened to her, a fact that puzzled and enraged several critics of the book.[310]

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[307] Katherine Dalsimer, "From Preadolescent Tomboy to Early Adolescent Girl: An Analysis of Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 34 (1979): 447.
[308] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 497. Italics in the original.
[309] Barbara A. White, "Loss of Self in Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*," *Growing Up Female* 104. Italics in the original.
[310] In her book on McCullers, Margaret B. McDowell condems Frances exactly on these

5.1.4. Gangling Tomboys and Transvestite Little Boys. Freakishness, Nomadic Identities and a Silent Crazy Jungle Under Glass

Reading gender as masquerade in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding* invites a number of revisions. In the light of masquerade, gender no longer needs to be fixed and discrete but can become fluid and performative. Mick and Frankie not only belie the notion of femininity as something essential and inherent, they queer it by their performances. Feminine clothes – which they don at several moments – fail to help create the proper, and promised, identity. The result of this situation is that their bodies become a place of multiple signification, a queer space where identity is heterogeneous and mutable and does not evolve in neat phases. The "we of me" thus may not only define Frankie's relation to the world outside her, but also her three personas, as Sarah Gleeson-White claims:

> while the 'we of me' might refer to a hunger for community with others, it might also refer to a community, a multiplicity of selves, so richly expressed in the three differently gendered Frankies […] none of which alone makes up the 'real' Frankie. […] For, the 'we of me' might be reflective of the many masquerades and performances that we every day make and that every day makes us. In this way, McCullers is thoroughly radical: […] she describes in her writings subtly nuanced and nomadic modes of being, busily engaged in the endless activity of creation.[311]

As much as Frankie tries to abandon her previous identity when adopting a new one, the result is far from neat and separate – it is rather a pastiche, with parts of discarded identities resurfacing at most unwelcome moments. At the wedding, for instance, Frances is treated like Frankie by the adults, and therefore she is unable to find courage to explain the "we of me" vision to her brother and the bride, and is left behind:

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grounds: "[Her] willingness, finally, to ignore all unanswered questions at the close of the book suggests that she has, in fact, failed to develop in any genuine sense. A superficial self-assurance, along with heightened insensitivity and complacency, pass for maturity." Margaret B. McDowell, *Carson McCullers* (Boston: Twayne, 1980) 82.

[311] Sarah Gleeson-White, "'Calculable Woman,'" *Reflections in a Critical Eye* 55.

They were all lovely to her in Winter Hill, except that they called her Frankie and treated her too young. It was so unlike what she had expected, and […] there was, from first to last, the sense of something terribly gone wrong.[312]

The performative nature of Frankie/F.Jasmine/Frances's identity is highlighted by the comparison of the wedding to a show taking place on the stage where events take place without any direction:

The wedding was like a dream outside her power, or like a show unmanaged by her in which she was supposed to have no part. […] The rest was like some nightmare show in which a wild girl in the audience breaks onto the stage to take upon herself an unplanned part that was never written or meant to be. You are the we of me, her heart was saying, but she could only say aloud: 'Take me!'[313]

The very word "queer" appears profusely in McCullers, especially in *The Member of the Wedding*, where Frankie uses it to describe something that seems strange and incomprehensible to her; it is necessary to add that almost everything during the summer seems strange and incomprehensible to her. The first appearance of the word is a perfect example. Recalling the visit of her brother and his future wife, Frankie is overwhelmed by a feeling she cannot name: "'It is so very queer,' she said. 'The way it all just happened.' […] 'When they walked into the house today it was so queer.'"[314] It is telling that it is a heterosexual couple, announcing their intention to legally sanction their relationship, what is queer to Frankie.

The whole novel is permeated by queerness, which, although nowhere defined, has an ability to cut across all categories of identity. McCullers does not use "queer" strictly in relation to non-normative sexualities and desire, it helps her create a narrative space in her novels which is in constant motion and permanent self-creation and refashioning. Queerness embraces masquerade and performance as perfect tools to occupy the confines of the normal and normative. As I will show below, the queer perspective is also a viable method for examining the intertwined nature of gender, race and class in both novels.

[312] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 590.
[313] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 591.
[314] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 461–62.

According to Adams, queer theory can be applied to McCullers not only to find out that she anticipated contemporary issues but because it "offers an ideal vocabulary for the understanding of previously closeted aspects of her fiction." At the same time, "her understanding of the conjoined histories of race and sexuality is important to queer theory's interest in exploring interlocking forms of difference."[315]

The invasion of queerness challenges the configuration of power in the novels. The neat metamorphosis of the tomboy into a lady with the onset of adolescence is invalidated and the protagonist finds herself in a position which the dominant structure is no longer able to describe. Adams foregrounds this aspect in her study:

> If homosexuality, and corresponding terms such as gay and lesbian, describe a same-sex desire grounded in a politics of identity, queer counters a range of normalizing regimes and calls into question the knowledge/power system from which identity-based categories are derived. Queer, as McCullers deploys it, poses a persistently messy obstacle to any systematic codification of behavior or desire.[316]

Mick's and Frankie's tomboyism, queered by its immersion in masquerade and the concept of gender fluidity and performance, emerges as a transgressive force at the end, erasing any possibility of a narrative closure. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Mick is the only character who does not capitulate and/or leave the town, her last words being an angry comment on her current situation: "All right! O.K.! Some good."[317] She opens her mind to the reader and we can see her confusion mixing with rage, resolution, and, finally, denial of defeat, expressed by her extravagant order as well as her effort to stop a running stocking with a chewing gum, which both dissociate her from the vision of proper southern femininity.

Queerness permeates *The Member of the Wedding* to a much more substantial degree, involving not only the characters, but the very setting and style of the book. Adams examines the queer in relation to McCullers's use of

[315] Rachel Adams, "A Mixture of Delicious and Freak" 554.
[316] Rachel Adams, "A Mixture of Delicious and Freak" 556.
[317] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 302.

"freaks" and points out that these characters do not symbolize human isolation and loneliness, as they have often been interpreted, but have a very specific meaning as well as historical framework – they "defy imposition of normative categories of identity […] [and] point to the untenability of normative concepts of gender and race at a moment when these categories were defined with particular rigidity."[318]

McCullers relies on the tradition of the freak show, which was fading at the time when she wrote the novel but which nevertheless was still a potent metaphor of the relation of the normal and abnormal in American society. Adams outlines the crucial role freak shows have performed in popular consciousness:

Although they have often been treated as an emphemeral form of amusement, freak shows performed important cultural work by allowing ordinary people to confront, and master, the most extreme and terrifying forms of Otherness they could imagine, from exotic dark-skinned people, to victims of wars and disease, to ambiguously sexed bodies. […] As it delves into the field of serious politics and history, the freak show maps the anxieties and fantasies that undergird collective responses to contemporary events.[319]

The sideshow has also historically served to reinforce the difference between likeness and otherness. In his study of the sideshow, Robert Bogdan stresses the relation between "us" and "them" as constitutive of the very notion of the freak: "'Freak' is not a quality that belongs to the person on display. It is something that we created: a perspective, a set of practices – a social construction."[320] In a similar vein, Rosemarie Garland Thomson describes the freak as "a figure of

[318] While McCullers uses the terms "freak" and "queer" rather interchangeably, Adams distinguishes between them: "The queer refers loosely to acts and desires that confound the notion of a normative heterosexuality as well as to the homosexuality which is its abject by-product. Freaks are beings who make those queer tendencies visible on the body's surfaces." The specific historical context mentioned includes the end of World War II, the onset of Cold War conformity and the increasing discontent of racial and sexual minorities. Rachel Adams, "A Mixture of Delicious and Freak" 552.
[319] Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 2.
[320] Robert Bogdan, Introduction, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) xi.

otherness upon which the spectators could displace anxieties and uncertainties about their own identities."[321] Leslie Fiedler adds an important aspect in his *Freaks* which explains the long-lasting public interest in these figures as well as Frankie's fear of them:

> The true freak, however, stirs both supernatural terror and natural sympathy, since unlike the fabulous monsters, he is one of us, the human child of human parents, however altered by forces we do not quite understand into something mythic and mysterious, as no mere cripple ever is. Passing either on the street, we may be simultaneously tempted to avert our eyes and to stare; but in the latter case we feel no threat to those desperately maintained boundaries on which any definition of sanity ultimately depends. Only the true Freak challenges the conventional boundaries between male and female, sexed and sexless, animal and human, large and small, self and other, and consequently between reality and illusion, experience and fantasy, fact and myth.[322]

The "House of the Freaks" appears in *The Member of the Wedding* and the attitude of the protagonists toward the freaks determine their position on the normal/abnormal divide. While Frankie is afraid, yet irresistibly attracted to the freaks and feels a connection with them, John Henry is simply charmed and makes no distinction between the performers and the audience. To Berenice the show is plainly repulsive. Neither of the three is indifferent to the freaks which affirms their great symbolic power, expressed with special force in Frankie's feelings:

> She was afraid of all the Freaks, for it seemed to her that they had looked at her in a secret way and tried to connect their eyes with hers, as though to say: we know you. […] And all the year she had remembered them, until this day.[323]

Most of the characters in the novel tend toward the freakish/queer in the sense of some bodily abnormality. The central threesome is quite accurately described by Louise Westling as "a living freak show peopled by a transvestite boy, a black

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[321] Rosemary Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 61.
[322] Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978) 24.
[323] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 476–77.

cook with a left eye of bright blue glass, and a gangling tomboy,"[324] Berenice's foster brother Honey is seen as "a boy God had not finished." While there has been a debate in McCullers's criticism about Honey's unfinishedness standing for his homosexuality, Frankie comes with a different explanation, much in line with the freakish tone of the novel: "Such a remark put her in mind of a peculiar half-boy – one arm, one leg, half a face – a half-person hopping in the gloomy summer sun around the corners of the town."[325]

Not only do the characters resemble freaks from the fair, but also the space in the novel is extensively marked as freakish. The fair where Frankie and John Henry saw the freaks, is connected with the very room where they spend summer together with Berenice. John Henry, the transvestite boy from Westling's description who plays with Frankie's doll and likes to wear Berenice's clothes, paints the walls of the Addams kitchen with "queer, child drawings, as far up as his arm could reach. This gave the kitchen a crazy look, like that of a room in the crazy-house."[326]

The omission of the freak show in the novel's coda – Frances describes going to the fair with Mary Littlejohn and leaving the Freak Pavilion out as Mary's mother considers it "morbid to gaze at Freaks"[327] – along with the death of John Henry has often been thought to signify Frankie's final acceptance of her feminine role. It is, however, worth noting that Frankie/Frances becomes a total enigma at the end of the novel. We are suddenly shut off from her consciousness and while Berenice is shaken by the death of John Henry and the arrest of her foster brother Honey, Frankie/Frances seems at ease, untouched by the horrible events of the past months. This prevents the narrative from sealing up, and leaves the readers puzzling about the meaning of the narrative gap on their own.

Queerness and freakishness of the novel's characters and space extends to include the temporal frame as well. Beside the coda, there are a few time

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[324] Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 181.
[325] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 575–76. For more on homosexuality and Honey see, for instance, Rachel Adams, "Mixture of Delicious and Freak" 567.
[326] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 463.
[327] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 604.

shifts in the novel which challenge the narrative coherence and flow. I agree that these may be explained simply as the author's mistakes or the narrator's momentary unreliability, a different view is nevertheless inspiring because it supports my reading of Frankie and tomboys in general as characters with a performed rather than stable identity and shows how the tomboy's presence in a work may challenge fixed categories.

The basic events of the story are supposed to take place during three days of one summer weekend – on Friday, Frankie's brother Jarvis is coming home to present his fiancée Janice whom he is to marry the coming Sunday. Gradually, this temporal frame is disrupted – in a recollection of the events that happened to Frankie before the weekend, McCullers alters the day of Jarvis and Janice's visit from Friday to Sunday: "So that Sunday, when it happened, when her brother and the bride came to the house, Frankie knew that everything was changed."[328] This shift creates a gap in the narrative, which is never filled up. Similar temporal gap appears in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter.* When introducing the night when Mick learns about the job at Woolworth's and decides to take it, the narrator situates it into late June. Four pages later, Mick gets the job after an interview the next day and is supposed to start the work on "June the fifth."[329]

Although *The Member of the Wedding* has a distinct setting – a small Southern town in 1944, three (to seven) days in late August, the emphasis upon repetition blurrs familiar contours:

> The three of them sat at the kitchen table, saying the same things over and over, so that by August the words began to rhyme with each other and sound strange. The world seemed to die each afternoon and nothing moved any longer. At last the summer was like a green sick dream, or like a silent crazy jungle under glass.[330]

Frankie might be afraid of becoming a freak, she nevertheless resists any normalizing efforts, wears boyish clothes, trains knife-throwing and avoids the company of people her age. She wants to leave the town and the stifling feeling

[328] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 483.
[329] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 274.
[330] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 461.

it gives her and imagines a new social order under which people could freely change from males to females whenever it suited them: "She planned it so that people could instantly change back and forth from boys to girls, whichever way they felt like and wanted."[331] A trace of this new order is present in Frankie's becoming F. Jasmine and Frances, as well as in her calling her cat Charlie and Charlina alternately.

Queering the novel's narrative space and time allows not only to look at the "freaks" in a positive frame and interpret the ending as open; it also invites to rethink southern tomboyism as a fluid identity and calls into question prevalent feminist interpretations. Many of the feminist critics adopt Frankie's fear and view the freaks negatively, as a warning of what might become of Frankie in case she would not accept the feminine role. Westling, for instance, writes:

> [I]mages of sexual ambivalence are carefully cultivated throughout the novel […] Always such hermaphroditic or androgynous references are placed in a negative frame, for the novel's entire movement is toward Frankie's ultimate submission to the inexorable demand that she accept her sex as female.[332]

Most feminist critics also perceive the novel's ending as Frankie's submission. Even Gleeson-White, who sees gender in McCullers as performative rather than prescriptive, concludes her analysis on the same note as her feminist predecessors:

> [B]y the end of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Ballad of a Sad Café*, the females are either pressured into conforming to some kind of socially sanctioned womanliness, or punished for transgression.[333]

Just as "freaks" can become models for a new world (both Frankie and John Henry build their visions on figures from the Freak Pavillion), and thus are no longer fixed as "markers of ab-normality," so can tomboyism cease to signify a

[331] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 547.
[332] Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 160.
[333] Sarah Gleeson-White, "'Calculable Woman,'" *Reflections in a Critical Eye* 48.

socially permissible form of gender nonconformity, limited to age and race, to which the label can be meaningfully applied (childhood, white); and become an arena where these labels no longer operate. As Gleeson-White notes: "Rather than being merely a part of the machinery of gender division, the tomboys […] suspend such categories."[334]

In both *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding,* tomboyism, apart from offering the characters freedom of movement they would not be allowed as properly gendered girls, also disrupts rigid identity categories and unveils the technology at work in their production as well as maintenance.

5.2. Glass Blue Eyes and Apartment A – Queering Race and Class

Reading tomboyism in McCullers through the queer lens does not stop at issues of gender but generates a vast body of new issues. Once we approach gender identity in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding* as fluid and malleable, it affects our perception of race and class in the novels as well. Before I will develop this, I will take a brief look at the issue of race and class in the McCullers criticism to see what frames were applied in the analyses.

5.2.1. Kinship with African Americans as a Threat to Segregation?

As race is always an issue in southern society and culture, it has gained much more attention from McCullers's critics than the class background of her characters. The tone had been set, to a great extent, by the review of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* by Richard Wright, where this African American writer claimed that "the most impressive aspect of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is the astonishing humanity that enables a white writer, for the first time in Southern fiction, to handle Negro characters with as much ease and justice as those of her own race."[335] Despite this positive assessment, Wright was the first, as well as one of the last African American critics to deal with McCullers. As Giblin Jones writes:

[334] Sarah Gleeson-White, *Strange Bodies* 75.
[335] Richard Wright,"Inner Landscape," *New Republic* 103 (5 Aug. 1940): 195.

> Only a small number of African American women are represented among the total number of academic women in the United States who have written on McCullers. The number of African American men writing on McCullers is even smaller."[336]

A very influential idea which needs to be considered here was coined by (white) feminist critics of McCullers. Working to revise the marginal position of tomboyish characters in McCullers criticism, they noticed that the tomboys follow a similar path as African American characters in her novels, i.e. they move from hope to despair, or worse. Hence, Westling concludes that

> McCullers is making a traditional association between the oppression of women and that of blacks, an association most obvious in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the nineteenth century, but also very clear in the relationship of the recent feminist movement to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.[337]

While this view is a simplification, it serves well as an introduction into race and gender in McCullers, as her tomboys do imagine to be kin to African Americans, and violate the taboo of racial integration. While I will focus on the relation of the novels's tomboys and African American characters, I want to point out that many other characters contribute profoundly to the deconstruction of race in both *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. John Henry, for instance, is named after a black folklore legend, a worker drilling tunnels in the beginnings of the railroad, who became a legend because he had won a race against a steam-powered hammer (dying only shortly after).[338]

It is highly informative to look closely into the gender-race-class configurations in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding* and their movement across the narrative, as some of them can be found resonating in the film versions of both books. I will first look at the way race

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[336] Judith Giblin James, *Wunderkind* 47.
[337] Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 163.
[338] See McKay Jenkins, "The Sadness Made her Feel Queer: Race, Gender and the Grotesque in the Early Writings of Carson McCullers," *South in Black and White: Race, Sex and Literature in the 1940s* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1999) 166.

and/or class get mobilized in some characters, and then I will look into how fluid gender identity interacts with race and class in these characters.

The most discussed connection is the tomboy's feeling of affinity with African Americans. Frankie Addams, for instance, describes a strong attachment to Berenice's foster brother Honey: "'Sometimes a boy like Honey feel like he just can't breathe no more. He feel like he got to break something or break himself.' […] 'Yes,' F. Jasmine said. 'Sometimes I feel I want to break something, too.'"[339]

Frankie not only crosses the racial divide physically, by going to the African American neighborhoods and mentally, by relating her situation to that of Honey; she also ignores the miscegenation taboo at the roots of southern culture, when she wants to donate blood to everybody regardless of their race:

> She decided to donate blood to the Red Cross; she wanted to donate a quart a week and her blood would be in the veins of Australians and Fighting French and Chinese, all over the whole world, and it would be as though she were close kin to all of these people.[340]

Although Frankie's idea is to literally melt into other people and thus become close to them, perhaps one of them, her wish to spread her blood throughout the world can also be read as a picture-perfect colonial fantasy, an unparalleled expansion of whiteness. The novel allows such a double-edged interpretation at several points, which reinforces its open and opaque architecture.

Furthermore, Frankie longing for connectedness with the world makes her unable to distinguish between African Americans and whites altogether and she mistakes two black, perhaps gay boys for her brother and his fiancée:

> It was a mysterious trick of sight and the imagination. […] There was something sideways and behind her that had flashed across the very corner edge of her left eye; she had half-seen something, a dark double shape, in the alley she had just that moment passed. And because of this half-seen object […] there had sprung up in her the sudden picture of her brother and the bride. […] And what was there? […] There in the alley were only two colored boys, one taller than the other and with his arm resting on the shorter boy's shoulder.[341]

[339] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 567–68.
[340] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 480.
[341] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 526.

McCullers's manner of the racialization of her white tomboys can be read against the grain of the segregation myth, showing the insistence on race boundaries and race difference in the South as hypocritical and based on wishful thinking, rather than reality. McKay Jenkins even claims that McCullers, breaking down race as a rigid category by means of the feeling of connection that goes across race boundaries, endows her white characters with mixed blood. Employing miscegenation, though on metaphorical level, disturbs, according to Jenkins, "myths of racial and personal identity," and reveals "the absurdity of marking identity strictly by skin or eye color in a country already marked so deep by miscegenation."[342]

At the same time, McCullers's tomboys are no longer dark, in the tradition traced by Abate, but distinctly white, almost as if bleached – Frankie has blond hair and grey eyes, Mick is described as a "gangling, towheaded youngster" with "whittish hair."[343] In her chapter on *The Member of the Wedding* Abate still pursues her thesis that tomboys are racialized by their appearance and though she mentions Frankie's "strong identificatory link with nonwhite people and cultures," as one aspect of this racialization, she maintains as well that Frankie has "dark white" skin.[344] This idea is probably derived from one moment in the novel when Frankie stays alone in the house in the evening without any lights on, puts on her father's hat and looks "at her dark ugly mug in the mirror."[345]

What is revolutionary about McCullers is that she does not make her tomboys look dark. The emphasis on whiteness which is at the heart of southern middle-class feminine beauty, is counterpoised by the shadow of dirt – Frankie has brown crust on her knees and elbows and Berenice advises her to get "clean for a change" for the wedding.[346] Dirt not only recalls the spectre of low class and poverty, realized later in Mick, but also pushes the tomboys far from proper southern girldom and leave them in a no man's land not only gender-wise, but

[342] McKay Jenkins, "The Sadness Made her Feel Queer," *South in Black and White* 165.
[343] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 16.
[344] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 159.
[345] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 495.
[346] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 478.

also race-wise. Hence, McCullers's tomboys are used as epitomes of general "otherness," be it gender, racial, class or sexual.

Racialization in McCullers is fuelled by deeper, more imaginative channels than mere appearance. Not only do the tomboys feel kin to African Americans, but the relation is mutual. As Portia says to Mick: "'[I]t sometimes seem to me you favor my Father more than any person I ever knowed. […] I don't mean in the face or in any kinds of looks. I was speaking about the shape and color of your souls." Mick's restlessness also echoes that of Frankie and Honey Brown from *The Member of the Wedding* and is described with similar imagery. In the same scene, Portia says to Mick: "This afternoon you going to roam all over the place without never being satisfied. […] And then some day you going to bust loose and be ruined. Won't nothing help you then.'"[347]

African American characters in McCullers transgress racial boundaries in imagining white tomboys kin to them which metaphorically makes their blood mixed. Many of them also do not fit their nominal race category in the first place. Their liminality concerns their appearance and "skin color," as well as their gender, class and sexuality. Frankie's surrogate mother is the African American cook Berenice, as her mother died in her birth and her father is absent most of the time. Berenice becomes Frankie's only caretaker, her guiding figure and the voice of common sense in the novel. Berenice feels a strong bond toward Frankie, and tries to warn her from disappointment, using her own emotional history as an example, further further the idea of affinity. This makes her, metaphorically speaking, Frankie's white mother and the voice of middle-class complacency – she advises Frankie to get "a nice little white boy beau" and "speak sweetly and act sly" to solve her identity problems.[348] Berenice also has one blue eye, which, although artificial, influences her look profoundly: "[H]er left eye was bright blue glass. It stared out fixed and wild from her quiet, colored face, and why she had wanted a blue eye nobody human would ever know."[349]

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[347] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 44.
[348] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 533.
[349] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 463.

Other African Americans in McCullers are also positioned on the verge between blackness and whiteness – the fortune teller Big Mama, Berenice's mother, is half black and half white, purportedly due to a skin disease. Portia does not identify with her being "colored" and criticizes her father for calling people "Negroes" and hurting their feelings: "Take Willie and me. Us aren't all the way colored. Our Mama was real light and both of us haves a good deal of white folks' blood in us. And Highboy – he Indian. He got a good part Indian in him. None of us is pure colored."[350]

The very description of Portia, scattered throughout *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, does not attribute one fixed skin color to her. In her first appearance, Portia is portrayed as having "dark brown skin."[351] In comparison with her father, her skin becomes "very light;"[352] yet she is also said to resemble very much her mother, whose "skin had been the beautiful color of dark honey."[353] For Portia, though, "Mama was real light."[354] This brings to mind Berenice's vision of a better world in which "there would be no separate colored people […], but all human beings would be light brown color with blue eyes and black hair."[355]

McCullers's strategy is to complicate difference based on race even to the point of erasing it as a distinguishing criterion, creating a liminal space where the characters are free to exchange their experience and feel a common bond. Hence, an African American servant can be seen as providing objective perspective, Mick's soul can have the same color as an African-American doctor's, and Frankie is able to mistake two black boys for a white heterosexual couple.

African American characters and whites may feel close in common suffering and existential misunderstanding but there is a strict race policy at work in McCullers which keeps the propensity to share such feelings at bay. I was arguing above that McCullers's tomboys get racialized by their feeling of

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[350] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 67–68.
[351] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 41.
[352] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 62.
[353] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 69.
[354] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 68.
[355] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 546.

connection with African Americans who are in exchange queered and their race wavers. At the same time though, the tomboy's aversion to femininity transcends racial boundaries, makes African American women into stereotypical characters and thus maintains distance from them. This is most apparent in Berenice from *The Member of the Wedding* with whom Frankie never identifies and who is modelled after the blatantly stereotypical mammy. The emergence of such a figure in McCullers, outside the plantation frame, is surprising, given her acclaimed portrayal of African Americans in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. Berenice undergoes a profound transformation in the theatre, film and TV versions of the book, I will therefore briefly introduce her here.

Berenice's countenance and physiognomy is instantly reminiscent of the plantation mammy:

> She was very black and broad-shouldered and short. She always said she was thirty-five years old, but she had been saying that at least three years. Her hair was parted, plaited, and greased close to the skull, and she had a flat and quiet face.[356]

Berenice's monstrous body reappears later when she tries to comfort Frankie, who "could feel Berenice's soft big ninnas against her back, and her soft wide stomach, her warm solid legs."[357]

Just as in the plantation narratives Berenice – the mammy – is in charge of the household, which grants her some form of authority. At the same time, she is not in the position to give orders or even see her advice followed. Neither does she have any power to help her foster brother Honey when he gets into trouble, and her control over her own life is also quite small – although she does not initially want to marry T.T., with whom she goes out regularly, explaining that "he don't make me shiver none,"[358] she succumbs in the end, after leaving her job at the Addamses.

Up to this point, Berenice shares nearly all the characteristics of the plantation mammy, as described by Tara McPherson and many other southern historians – she is big, loving and loyal to the white family where she works.

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[356] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 462–63.
[357] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 567.
[358] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 543.

Berenice's compliance to the patriarchal rules of white society and her efforts to pass them onto Frankie, have been noticed by several critics. Neva Evonne Burdison notes in her dissertation that "Berenice, in many ways, represents a middle class perspective – in spite of her own class and race," and she even sees the servant as "a character that provides an objective perspective on Frankie's behavior."[359]

Berenice is different in one respect and it is exactly where her character gains some depth and allows for a reconceptualization in later film versions. Unlike the plantation mammy who neglects or ignores her own family and is completely asexual, Berenice has a life of her own and often talks about it, especially about her first husband Ludie, fittingly named Freeman, and the happiness she never found since his premature death. In fact, her recollections of her life with Ludie are one of the very few delightful and serene moments in the whole book, and Frankie quickly identifies with them.

The stereotypical portrait of Berenice disturbs the queer tone of the novel and introduces the question of how the characters's plea for mutual connectedness and their visions of a better world are fulfilled. Their lives are, paradoxically, very lonely and isolated, and stay that way. The call for a community in suffering remains a dream, if not an outright illusion. The oscillation between a community across gender, race and class boundaries, and alienation caused by these very boundaries, is one of the major themes of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay on *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter.*

The major problem of all the characters in this book, according to Spivak, is their inability to join in their individual struggles concerning their gender, sexuality, race and class, to see beyond their respective differences. Instead, they take refuge in the room of Mr. Singer, the deaf-mute who does not understand them, pour their problems onto him, and leave happy to have finally found a kindred spirit.

Spivak calls this a "failure of collectivity" and explains it by the split between the "micro-" and "macro-structural," the former refering to the "daily intercourse between and among the sexes in public and private" and to the "way

[359] Neva Evonne Burdison, "The Making of the Member of the Wedding" 88.

power is exercised in personal relationships and the way in which the ruling sex explains it away," the latter pertaining to race and class.[360] The misunderstanding among the characters of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* stems for Spivak from the fact that "the micro-structural dimension is not understood as an arena of politics and the exchange of power, but as the individual soul."[361] Their struggles thus remain theoretical and separated, and strangely unattached to their own lives.

Spivak's reading of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* has significant implications for the debate of the intersections of gender and race in McCullers, as it offers a different perspective upon the argument of the early feminists. While McCullers's tomboy characters see affinities between their fate and that of African Americans around them, Spivak seems to be well aware of the difficulty, if not unfeasibility, of any collective plan based only on the general notion of deviance from social norms.

Spivak also does not share the focus on Mick as a gender bender caught in the patriarchal rule which her feminist predecessors originated. For her, Mick is "an adolescent girl victimized by her class."[362] Highlighting Mick's employment at Woolworth's and the financial situation of her family at the end of the novel, Spivak concludes that "[i]t is not her sex-predicament but her class-predicament that finally defeats her."[363] Spivak does take Mick's gender into account, seeing her tomboyism as clearly linked to the issue of power, but she does not consider it such a progressive issue as the class struggle:

> The 'inside room'[where Mick retreats to compose music] is the way to the real outside – the man's world where the only viable female commodity is sex. It is not surprising that Mick uses music to identify with her elder brother and to distinguish herself from her sisters, who are

[360] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Feminist Reading: McCullers's *Heart is a Lonely Hunter*," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 129.
[361] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Feminist Reading," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 140.
[362] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Feminist Reading," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 140.
[363] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Feminist Reading," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 133.

typically 'feminine.' […] The book laments not so much her loss of innocence as her entry into the work force.[364]

5.2.2. Dirt and Cotton Stockings: Poverty, Commonness and the Invisibility of Class

Mick's class is definitely an important aspect in her story, but it is nothing stable. She is neither middle-class, nor "white trash" and her status changes throughout the book, making it even more elusive. Her childhood as well as her tomboyism clearly propels her toward the middle-class, which is underlined by the presence of Portia Copeland as the family cook and the big house where the family lives. The family rents much of the house though, and strives hard to make ends meet – Portia mentions early in the novel that Mrs. Kelly is often unable to pay her and that they are "barely keeping one jump ahead of the sheriff."[365]

After Mick's father has to stay out of work and her brother injures a neigborhood kid, whose medical bills the family has to pay for, the situation gets worse and Mick's sisters and her older brother have to find a job. Finally, even Mick has to quit school and start working, and Portia is dismissed.

The changes in Mick's class status are written in her very movements in the house – at first she has her own room upstairs which she has to leave after her father's injury; it is rented. She then lives downstairs with her little brother. Her love of classical music again leads her upstairs, as that is where she can listen to the boarders's radios. At last, when there is no more music running through her head and she seems defeated by her "class predicament," as Spivak has put it, Mick gets promoted at Woolworth's from the Pots-and-Pans department to Costume Jewellery and gets a room of her own and Singer's radio. The fluctuation of her whereabouts in the house, as well as that of her meager possessions, refuse to pinpoint her class status and leave it open until the very end of the novel. It also reshapes class in the South as a complex issue, not only a matter of economic status and job or a level and type of education.

[364] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Feminist Reading," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 132–33.
[365] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 72.

Although the Kellys are deep in debt, the house is no longer theirs, and sometimes the kids go "downright hungry for two or three days,"[366] Mick's class consciousness is unmistakable. Mick explains that even if they are "mighty near as poor as factory folks," the advantage of their position is that nobody can "look down on them."[367] After a long day at work, she ponders upon a run in her stockings and her worn shoes, but makes the reader sure that she is no "common girl that would wear cotton stockings."[368]

Commonness haunts Mick as a possible result of her situation, and the family seems not to be far from it – before her party, Mick takes away an old family photo because it looks common to her. The description of the photograph is striking in its underlying connection of class (i.e. the spectre of commonness) and race (i.e. dirt):

> This was a photo of her Mama's grandfather. He was a major back in the Civil War and had been killed in a battle. Some kid once drew eyeglasses and a beard on his picture, and when the pencil marks were erased it left his face all dirty. That was why she called him Old Dirty-Face.[369]

When her younger brother Bubber asks her whether the family is common, when the picture is common, Mick replies in a way recalling the reasoning of Bone's mother from DorothyAllison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*: "*I'm* not.'"[370]

The class status of Frankie Addams is more stable, and definitely higher than that of Mick Kelly – her father owns a jewellery store, they keep Berenice, and she has a room of her own, being the only child in the family. While Berenice is dismissed at the end, just as Portia Copeland, it is not caused by the family's dire economic situation, nor does it impair her own social position. On the contrary, the Addams family moves to a better house in the suburbs and Berenice plans to get married and establish her own household.

There are instances though, in which Frankie's class becomes less invisible than middle-class usually is. The house where she lives is a very good example of this occurence – not only is it queered by John Henry's drawings all

[366] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 204.
[367] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 204.
[368] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 340.
[369] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 90.
[370] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 90. Italics in the original.

over the kitchen walls, it is also rather small. Frankie's room is "an elevated sleeping porch which had been built onto the house, with a stairway leading up from the kitchen," which is a far cry not only from the layout of usual southern middle-class houses, but also from the house of the Kelly family.[371]

The Addamses also rent the front bedroom to boarders at one point – the Marlowes have to leave after Frankie sees them through the door making love and interprets it as Mr. Marlowe having a fit. Berenice then calls them common, which is supposed to explain away the whole thing. When Frankie goes to buy a dress for the wedding, she gets it from the bargain basement, which gives the grown woman's orange satin gown a tacky touch, unsettling her social level.

McCullers's strategy of obfuscating and blurring the contours of gender, race and class, described above on several examples from both novels, has been interpreted by her critics as a distinctly queer technique. The purpose of her characters' "queer transgressions of sexed, gendered and racial boundaries," according to Rachel Adams, is to "enable a productive reconsideration of normative social relations." This reconsideration is a

> project of social criticism that, at its most penetrating, reveals the links between between sexual intolerance and racial bigotry, and, at its most hopeful, recognizes […] the queer inconsistencies and excesses at the center of the social order that contain the possibility for its refashioning.[372]

While this approach has been fruitful in refocusing the web of power relations in both novels and granting some of it to characters who have "an invisibility in white, male-dominated culture," as Burdison has put it,[373] it mixes three very distinctive forms of difference without any discussion of their mutual relations.

To understand better the ways gender, sexuality, race and class interlock with one another in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding* and the way they influence the characters' decisions and the outcomes of the novels, it is necessary to look beyond the queer configurations.

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[371] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 468.
[372] Rachel Adams, "A Mixture of Delicious and Freak 553–54.
[373] Neva Evonne Burdison, "The Making of the Member of the Wedding" 70.

5.3. Neither Queer Paradise Nor a Triumph of Safe Conformity

Although McCullers shows identity as an arena of experimentation the effect of which can be a fluid and ever-changing self, she prevents the characters from actually realizing this revolutionary agenda and returns them to their proper places in the end of both novels. Mick wears stockings and heavy earrings, Frances has found a girlfriend and moves to the suburbs, Berenice establishes her household obviously in the African American neighborhood, John Henry dies and Honey is in jail. The queer "paradise" is somehow abruptly ended, and though I have argued above that this sharp change of tone may not signify any replacement of liminality by a definite structure and that Frankie's new persona Frances is rather another mask than her final feminine self, there are changes in the distribution of power across gender, race and class, which cannot be explained by masquerade.

These changes do not necessarily support the conservative layout that feminist critics ascribed to the ending of both novels, but merely endorse the interconnected and shifting nature of power configurations based on gender, sexuality, race and class. They expose these identity facets as not existing separately, but interacting with one another and sustaining or detering one another with surprising ease.

There is evidence of this interaction and inseparability of identity layers earlier in both books. I have already indicated how the house where Frankie lives serves to counter many of the initial expectations of her race and class, and how it reflects, through the image of the kitchen walls covered with queer drawings and her room pasted onto the house, her liminal position vis-a-vis the notion of white, middle-class girlhood as well as heterosexual femininity. I have also shown above that southern femininity is far from being a notion of gender alone, that is implies specific forms of sexuality, race and class.

In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* a perfect example is Mick's party, by means of which she tries to bolster and uplift her class and sexuality through gender. She, as well as the house where she holds the party, undergo a radical makeover. Mick makes herself into a woman, i.e. "somebody different from

Mick Kelly entirely,"[374] cleans the house from all things common, renames it in the invitations to "Apartment A" because it sounds "swell" to her, and despite the infamous end of the party, she meets Harry Minowitz there, whom she starts to date later in a heteronormative effort at gaining some control over her life.[375]

Frankie as Frances at the end of *The Member of the Wedding* may feel no connection to African American culture anymore, as her interest in Tennyson and Michelangelo demonstrate, along with her move to the suburbs, but her fascination with her new friend Mary Littlejohn, along with her gender masquerade, bespeak a buddying non-normative sexuality which goes hand in hand with a blurred class position. The suburbs, being historically "a bastion of racial and class privilege […] of white middle-classness," as Catherine Jurca claims,[376] are counterpoised by Frankie's relationship with Mary, who in no way represents gender or class propriety, not mentioning southern beauty or charms:

> Mr. Littlejohn had been connected with a tractor company and before the war the Littlejohns had lived abroad. […] Berenice had spoken of Mary as being lumpy and marshmallow-white, and Frances had defended fiercely. Mary had long braids […], of a woven mixture of corn-yellow and brown, […] brown eyes with yellow eyelashes, and her dimpled hands tapered at the fingers to little pink blobs of flesh, as Mary bit her nails.[377]

Although the connection Frankie/Frances feels for Mary is nowhere explicitly named as sexual, its characterization is far from a simple friendship – Mary is a Roman Catholic and "for Frances this difference was a final touch of strangeness, silent terror, that completed the wonder of her love."[378] "Tensions of strangeness" have thus not been removed from Frankie's life, nor has her world become devoid of "deviants," as Westling concluded in her analysis.[379] The fact that Frankie does not go to see the Freaks at the Fair does not mean she is no longer connected to them; on the contrary. Following Garland Thomson's claim

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[374] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 91.
[375] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 90.
[376] Catherine Jurca, *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century American Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 16.
[377] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 602.
[378] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 603.
[379] Louise Westling, "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 164.

that a freak is "a figure of otherness" which people watch to reassure themselves about their "normality,"[380] the explanation why Frances and Mary did not go to the Freak Pavillion – "Mrs. Littlejohn said it was morbid to gaze at Freaks"[381] – gains a new meaning. It is morbid to gaze at Freaks because they are us.

From this perspective it is impossible to view Berenice as defeated, even though her foster brother Honey had been sentenced for eight years. She quits the Addams household herself, and thus sheds off the specter of the Mammy and talks about marrying T.T., which would move her up on the social ladder, as T.T. owns a restaurant and is rather well-off.

The intersectional analysis offers a tool to look into the interaction of various layers of identity within individual characters and to trace changes in the power dynamics among these layers. This approach goes beyond the all-embracing attitude of queer theory and allows for a more sophisticated analysis transcending the "either-queer-or-heteronormative" trap. McCullers tomboys, under the light of intersectional analysis, put into motion not only their gender identity, but, inseparably, their race, class and sexuality as well; their taming, therefore, does not turn them into conformists, as feminist and queer critics of McCullers have claimed, but shifts their difference onto another identity facet. Neither Mick Kelly nor Frankie/F.Jasmine/Frances Addams outgrow their tomboyism into social conformity, neither of them becomes the proper southern girl. On the contrary, they debunk the gendered, classed and raced nature of southern girldom and continue their lives on the margin, permanently challenging the actual configurations of power.

[380] Rosemary Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 61.
[381] McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 604.

6. HEATING UP RACE, COOLING DOWN SEXUALITY? *THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING* AS PLAY AND FILMS

While Carson McCullers's novels, especially *The Member of the Wedding*, have an unchallenged status within tomboy literature and have undergone several theoretical and critical revisions, the films and TV adaptations based on them enjoy no such attention. Aside from film reviews which appeared immediately after the respective films were premiered, there is only a small volume of later assessments. It is thus impossible to trace and connect fragments of different approaches applied to the films and see through the layers of various interpretations. The films are frozen in the times of their opening runs, bothered occasionally by doctoral students only.

It is nevertheless quite productive to approach the films as a group, to reconstruct the configurations of gender/sexuality, race and class within their tomboy characters, and to see the shifting dynamics of these identity facets from the 1950s, when the play based on *The Member of the Wedding* was produced, followed by a film, up to 1997, the year of the last adaptation. On the following pages I will do exactly this – I will try to disturb the films as much as possible, confront them with one another as well as with theoretical concepts applied to their literary counterparts and other films featuring characters that were considered tomboyish at the time.

I am primarily interested in how the McCullers's tomboys were envisioned in the sphere of Hollywood as well as TV productions, which of their gender specificities outlined above were implemented and to which goals (be it feminist independence, androgynous ambiguity, female masculinity or masquerade), how the issue of gender/race/class intersection was approached, what the role of publicity was in highlighting or subduing these issues, and finally, in which way they were unravelled and re-packaged by reviewers.

Before I embark on the journey through *The Member of the Wedding* as play and films, I need to take up the question of tomboy film as a genre, as it might explain the uneasiness of producers as well as reviewers in their dealing with McCullers's characters. Although Abate gives a long list of tomboy films

preceding *The Member of the Wedding*, some of them even having the word tomboy in the title, there was no distinct and acknowledged tradition to fall back on for the producer and director of *The Member of the Wedding*.[382]

The phrase "tomboy film" appears only in later assessments by Rebecca Bell-Metereau and, followingly, by Judith Halberstam and Michelle Ann Abate. As I have shown above, it is hardly a coherent concept, as it connects films with very diverse characters. Furthermore, at the time of the production of the films, other labels were in use, namely the children's film and the teen film. While these two genres cover the life period of tomboyism (childhood and adolescence), they clearly show the tomboy's liminal position, as well as the liminal position of the films in question. Falling under neither of the two headings, the films emulate features of both and thus expose and twist the building blocks of the genres.

Stanley Kramer's and Fred Zinnemann's *The Member of the Wedding* (1952) uses the coming-of-age scenario in its publicity, bespeaking considerable anxiety about teenage sexuality in the 1950s; the film's 1997 successor features a very puerile-looking Frankie, and touches upon the subject of child molestation. This in-betweenness of the films in question, their movement among various categories and labels, or rather, on their thresholds, might explain the mixed reception followed by oblivion, but it also opens the films to new readings.

6.1. *The Member of the Wedding* as a Filmed Theater Play

The first film version of *The Member of the Wedding* needs to be considered in connection with the Broadway play, McCullers's own adaptation of her novel which served as the basis for the final version of the film script. All three major actors in the play have also been used in the film. I will therefore start with the

[382] See Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 250–54. The first films in the chronology that Abate draws is Lewin Fitzhamon's *Tilly, the Tomboy* series from the 1910s. The word tomboy appears in the film's title very frequently in the 1910s, compared to other decades. The list combines films based on famous tomboy literature with those with no literary predecessors.

play and its construction of gender/sexuality, race and class intersections and then compare these intersections with their film counterparts.

There were only few critical assessments of the novel-to-play-to-film transition, the first penned by Thadious M. Davis, an African American professor of southern studies, the second by McKay Jenkins, a white literary historian writing from the perspective of queer theory. Both of them compare the novel with the play in their essays, especially focusing on the gender/race relations, and their conclusions are relevant not only in relation to the film, but for the overall conception of the McCullers tomboy as a potentially subversive figure.

Davis examines what she calls as the objectification of African American characters in the play. According to her, this objectification results in Frankie's (as well as the spectator's) non-identification with them, and in the triumph of white heterosexual complacency:

> McCullers's play […] dramatically reveals a narrowing down of an author's vision to suit preconceived racial attitudes and prevalent gender notions of the time, as well as to suit the largest possible audience identification of comfortably familiar characters and stereotypical actions.[383]

Jenkins deals with the play from the point of view of fluid identity which she defines as the major achievement of the novel. She offers a different explanation of why McCullers changed the novel the way she did in the adaptation process. According to Jenkins, the changes were a reaction to criticism of the novel, voiced in *The New Yorker* by the reputed literary critic Edmund Wilson, who objected to the lack of dramatic development. McCullers's effort to "satisfy Wilson's appetite for an 'element of drama,'" as Jenkins reasons, led her to

> abandon temporarily the central component of her voice as a writer – a philosophically complex understanding of the fluidity of human identity – and replace it with a series of gross and even pandering caricatures.[384]

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[383] Thadious M. Davis, "Erasing the 'We of Me' and Rewriting the Racial Script: Carson McCullers's Two Member(s) of the Wedding," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 206.

[384] McKay Jenkins, "Dramatizing The Member of the Wedding," *Twentieth-Century*

Both Davis's and Jenkins's judgments of the play are exceptionally harsh, given the fact that the play run 501 performances on Broadway with rather enthusiastic responses as is evident from Josyane Savigneau's summary of the reactions of the audience as well as critics:

> When the players came out to greet the audience after the performance, the entire room rose to its feet. In the wee hours of the morning, […] the first reviews began appearing in the daily papers: all were good, and some were excellent.[…] In the periodicals the reception was no less enthusiastic. […] At the box office the play was an immediate smash, and it continued to sell out for months.[385]

Davis and Jenkins nevertheless touch upon crucial issues which I will follow closely in my subsequent analysis of the films – gender and racial fluidity of the characters, possibilities of performative rendering of the coda, and the use of stereotypes.

Jenkins relates her reservations not only to the play, but to the film as well. The reason is quite simple – much of the play was integrated into the final version of the screenplay written by Edna and Edward Anhalt. The fact that the film was adapted from the play and not from the novel was a target of many critical comments in reviews of the film. William Weaver notes that "[t]he picture has been made from the play with reverential awe by Stanley Kramer, in a virtually verbatim fashion,"[386] while the critic writing for the *American Photography* magazine pinpoints the camerawork as most affected by excessive adherence to the play: "the photographed play remains basically on stage instead of becoming a film. […] Movie audiences rightfully respect a subject that permits more natural exploitation of the camera medium than this."[387]

American Fiction on Screen, ed. R. Barton Palmer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 90.

[385] Josyane Savigneau, *Carson McCullers: A Life*, trans. Joan E. Howard (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001) 196–97.

[386] William R. Weaver, rev. of *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann. *Motion Picture Herald* 20 Dec. 1952: 1645.

[387] DJ, rev. of *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann. *American Photography* 47.3 (Mar. 1953): 15.

Fred Zinnemann, the film's director, reacted to this particular objection by insisting that "if he had had his way he would have preferred to have worked from the novel rather than from the play."[388] He also voiced his hesitation about the chosen approach and anticipated the critical response even before the shooting started. In a letter to Carson McCullers from May 26, 1952, he writes:

> The script is finished now, except for a very few rough spots which need further polishing. Overall, we have adhered very closely to the pattern and dialogue of the play. […] Overall, I feel satisfied with the script. My only regret is the fact that the film will be based almost exclusively on the effectiveness of the dialogue rather than on any imaginative, visual treatment which might have been derived from the novel. I had hoped to capture some of the mood and the quality of the novel as well as the feeling of suspended animation, and to show all of this in visual terms. In other words, my main ambition was to make a motion picture, not a photoplay.[389]

The story is more complicated than this and it reveals in a telling detail the uneasiness on the part of both Hollywood and McCullers about the most proper handling of the novel's theme and characters. Despite the play's immense success on Broadway, which led Stanley Kramer, an independent producer working for Columbia Pictures, to buy rights to the film version of it in 1951,[390] the first draft of the script was based on the novel, not the play. It was written by Ben Maddow, a promising scriptwriter with an experience both in southern themes and literary adaptations – before his work on *The Member*, Maddow adapted Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust* for Clarence Brown's 1949 film.[391] His script was nevertheless assailed both by McCullers and Zinnemann on the grounds of its alleged omission of the central theme, "the will to belong." In her letters to Zinnemann and Maddow, McCullers came with the idea to base the script for the film on the play. On January 30, 1952 McCullers wrote to Zinnemann:

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[388] Henry Hart, "Zinnemann on the Verge: Like All Good Directors, He Plans to Produce His Own Pictures," *Films in Review* 4.2 (Feb. 1953): 81.
[389] Fred Zinnemann, letter to Carson McCullers, 26 May 1952, MS. Box 48, folder 638 (*The Member of the Wedding* – Correspondence), Fred Zinnemann Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[390] See Josyane Savigneau, *Carson McCullers: A Life* 206.
[391] For more on Maddow's work see, for instance, his obituary by William H. Honan,"Ben Maddow, 83, Prolific Writer in Many Genres," *New York Times*, 14 Oct. 1992: 10.

> The quality of my book and play is destroyed in this version […] Fred, I do hope you can persuade the producer and script writer to return to the play because this approach seems so slack and colorless and lacking in necessary tension that creates drama. […] For one thing, the basic theme of the play is missing, that is, the will to belong. Frankie wants to be a part of the wedding because it is her own symbol of togetherness. […] I suggest that the central theme of the play be introduced immediately so that the audience will be able to follow – otherwise it deteriorates to random 'cute' scenes about children which is not what the story is about at all.[392]

Zinnemann adopted her idea even to the point of using the same phrases in his letter to Maddow from March 8, 1952:

> To me, the basic theme is the will to belong, and I feel that it is not properly developed. […] Half the time I don't understand Frankie's behavior […]. At times, she really acts like a damn fool, or like a freak; which she most certainly is not. Under these circumstances, I am certain that her idea of being a member of the wedding will undoubtedly come off as something freakish, special and precious, instead of being moving and universal. […]
> I think it is vitally important to introduce Jarvis and Janice in person right at the start […]. I am afraid that without this focal point in the beginning, most of the script will lack any sort of tension, and will be to a large extent only a collection of more or less cute scenes.[393]

Following this anxious exchange, new screenwriters, the Anhalts, were hired, and they started working from the play. Zinnemann informed McCullers of the change in his letter from April 3, 1952: "By general agreement, the draft which you read, has been discarded. The new approach follows the play very closely in almost every respect, with only such deviations as are necessary to establish the mood and atmosphere of the town and the world outside."[394] McCullers was abroad at the time and either did not receive the letter or did not read it, as on May 2, she wrote to Maddow too and repeated her wish for the production to

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[392] Carson McCullers, letter to Fred Zinnemann, 30 Jan. 1952, MS. Box 48, folder 634 (*The Member of the Wedding* – Final Draft of the Script), Fred Zinnemann Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[393] Fred Zinnemann, notes on the first draft screenplay, MS. Box 48, folder 634 (*The Member of the Wedding* – Final Draft of the Script), Fred Zinnemann Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[394] Fred Zinnemann, letter to Carson McCullers, 3 Apr. 1952. MS. Box 48, folder 638 (*The Member of the Wedding* – Correspondence), Fred Zinnemann Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.

work from the play: "I cannot say too strongly how I feel that the structure and all the dialogue of the screen script should come directly from the play script. […] It is so easy to get off key in this work."[395]

I have been dealing with the historical background of the film script in such detail to reveal the fragile and fluid nature of the adaptation, and also to break away from the tradition of adaptation criticism convinced about the superiority of the literary work, based on its "firstness."[396] *The Member of the Wedding* is an apt example of how different interests interact in the adaptation process, including the author him/herself, and how the author's voice is not necessarily the most relevant one.

6.1.1. Tomboyism and Theatrical Excessivity – Twist and Turn, Run and Twirl

I have indicated above that the concept of tomboyism has its place in literary history, but that there is no such tradition in the dramatic arts; therefore, the impersonation of the tomboy on the screen is malleable, depending on the acting style and directorial approach to the character in question. The collective interpretation of Frankie Addams by Julie Harris, Harold Clurman (who directed her on the stage), and Fred Zinnemann is vital in my analysis of all the films based on McCullers, as it has served as a point of reference for actors and directors (not mentioning the critics) of the future versions not only of *The Member of the Wedding*, but also of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*.

Tomboyism is used as a frame of reference in the film's reviews. One of the reviewers even connects Frankie's tomboyism with liminality: "Miss Harris

[395] Carson McCullers, letter to Ben Maddow, 2 May 1952, MS. Box 48, folder 634 (*The Member of the Wedding* – Final Draft of the Script), Fred Zinnemann Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.

[396] Although this attitude was rather strong in adaptation theory, it needs to be said that it has been countered by most recent efforts on the field. Robert Stam, for instance, declines this approach and points at a blind spot in the moralistic tradition of adaptation criticism: "[L]iterature at its best is compared to the cinema at its worst. Critics lambast filmic 'betrayals' of modernist novels, for example, while forgetting the filmic 'redemption' of many non-modernist novels." Robert Stam, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Malden: Blackwell, 2005) 4.

portrays the girl who is too old for her younger playmates and too tomboyish for her more feminine friends."[397] Others transfer tomboyism from the character to the performance: "Miss Harris […] captures the adolescent characterization in a wistful, tomboyish manner."[398] Tomboyism appears in later assessments of the film as well. Neil Sinyard connects Frankie with other Zinnemann female characters and the bitter experience they have to go through, and depicts her as "a tomboy, but a tormented one, played wholly without cuteness or sentimentality."[399]

Surprisingly in this context, Frankie of the film (as well as the play) is not called a tomboy in the scripts. In the play, she is "a dreamy, restless girl, […] thin and awkward and very much aware of being too tall […], a gangling girl of twelve with blonde hair cut like a boy's […] wearing shorts and a sombrero."[400] The sombrero is quite important, as it emphasizes the play-acting and performance typical for Frankie not only regarding her dramatic talent, but also in the sense of masquerade. Frankie's penchant for theatricality and histrionics is unique to the play and has no precedent in the novel. There is an improvised stage in the backyard of her house, where Frankie used to perform her plays. At the beginning of Act One of the play, Frankie puts on a small piece pretending she is drunk:

> Frankie (sipping her drink): 'You know this lemonade tastes funny. Kind of sharp and hot. I believe I got the drinks mixed up.' Jarvis: 'I was thinking my drink tasted mighty sissy. Just plain lemonade – no liquor at all.' (Frankie and Jarvis exchange their drinks. Jarvis sips his.) Jarvis: 'This is better.' Frankie: 'I drank a lot. I wonder if I'm drunk.' (She gets up and begins to stagger around in imitation of drunkenness.) 'See! I'm drunk! Look, Papa, how drunk I am!' (Suddenly she turns a handspring.)[401]

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[397] William R. Weaver, rev. of *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann. *Motion Picture Herald* 1646.
[398] Howard McClay, *Daily News*, 26 Dec. 1952: 21.
[399] Neil Sinyard, *Fred Zinnemann: Films of Character and Conscience* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2003) 103.
[400] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding: A Play* (New York: New Directions, 1951) 1.
[401] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding: A Play* 5–6.

In fact, all the three central characters are otherized in this way – Berenice is not only said to have a blue glass eye, but she wears a black pirate-like patch over it, "when her socket bothers her," which is quite incongruous with her characteristics as "a stout, motherly Negro woman with an air of great capability and devoted protection."[402]

Berenice also removes the patch several times in the film, revealing a perfectly healthy eye. Zinnemann noticed this incongruity and asked the production to reshoot some scenes. In an undated draft of a telegram to Kramer, Zinnemann writes:

> Believe urgently necessary protect opening sequences with shots of Berenice without eye patch so glass eye scene can be eliminated if necessary stop believe danger audience being confused by subsequent large closeups Berenice which show perfectly normal eyes while audience looking for glass eye stop recommend retakes while Julie Brandon still available and set still standing.[403]

No scenes were reshot in the end and Berenice both with and without the patch remained in the final version of the film.

John Henry's childlike carelessness and joy which gets expressed in the pleasure he has in either the eating of "any scuppernongs he can reach," or in the squelching on them, is at odds with his "gold-rimmed spectacles which give him an oddly judicious look."[404] When Frankie buys her wedding dress and is scolded by Berenice for the purchase, John Henry highlights the theme of feminine masquerade by putting on Berenice's heels and her purse and swinging his hips as he plays up the movements of a grown-up woman. This kind of theatricality which underlies much of the play as well as the film, but goes strangely unnoticed, is used probably to provide a humorous respite from the existential issues that Frankie and Berenice discuss, to balance the tragic and the comic "often co-existent in a single line," as McCullers defined her style.[405] At

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[402] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding: A Play* 1.
[403] Fred Zinnemann, telegram to Stanley Kramer, MS. Box 48, folder 639 (*The Member of the Wedding* – production), Fred Zinnemann Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[404] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding: A Play* 2.
[405] Carson McCullers, "The Vision Shared," *The Mortgaged Heart*, ed. Margarita G. Smith (New York: Bantam Books, 1972) 300. The essay was originally published in

the same time it might be approached as a distinctly queer technique which serves to expose the artificiality of the situations, or rather their openness to any form of refashioning.

Frankie's wild imagination and eloquence allows her to make a grand event out of anything. At the beginning of the the play (and the film), the three are playing cards, and find out that John Henry has stolen the jacks and the queens to cut out their pictures. Frankie's reaction is dramatic: "See? He's nothing but a child. It's hopeless. Hopeless! […] Oh, I am sick unto death!"[406] Her difference is accentuated by yet another element – her excessiveness exploding into fits of anger and aggressivity. Theatricality and excess are in fact unseparable in the film and manifest themselves in broad, impulsive gestures and high-strung facial expressions which form the basis of Julie Harris's acting style and set her body in permanent motion, interrupted only by spasmodic fractions of peace.

Harold Clurman pinpoints precisely the tension in Harris's performance in his notes on the play when he talks about Frankie's "tomboyishness," her "'crazy' intensity," about "the torture that underlies all her efforts," and explains how these features translate into Harris's performance:

> [W]hen I, as director, pointed out that because Frankie was growing with the impulse to get out of herself against unyielding circumstances she would inevitably assume queer shapes – twist and turn, run and twirl – Miss Harris had a clue to her characterization.[407]

Frankie's desire to be "somebody else except me"[408] also effects in her frequent self-attacks, when she hits her head with her hand, tries to pierce a splinter on her foot with a butcher knife, or decides to stretch her hair to make it longer for the wedding. In a later assessment of the film and its position in Fred

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Theater Arts in April 1950.
[406] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding: A Play* 17.
[407] Harold Clurman, "From a Member," *The Collected Works of Harold Clurman* (New York: Applause Theater Books, 1994) 236. Originally published in *The New Republic*, 30 January 1950.
[408] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding: A Play* 18.

Zinnemann's filmography, Neil Sinyard comes with a notion of "the body as trap,"[409] and applies it to Harris in the film:

> In Harris's performance, Frankie is always picking at herself: admonishing, improving, restless, touchy; and everything about her appearance (her rough crew-cut, her grubby elbows) betokens her desperate confusion of identity.[410]

Frankie's/Harris's impulsiveness, demonstrated by quickly alternating bouts of enthusiasm and anger, is tellingly displayed in the film scene in which Frankie spots the "big girls" passing through her yard. She invites them in, over-enthusiastically and with a big smile, but when she learns that they did not elect her as a new member of their club, she immediately turns offensive:

> Hey there! I'm mighty glad to see you. Come on in. […] What are you doing in my yard? You're never to set foot on my papa's property again! You crooks! I could shoot you with my papa's pistol![411]

With these words, she chases the girls out and tugs their hair ruthlessly. Later, when she chases John Henry around the kitchen table with a fly swat and yells "Go home!" at him, or when she threatens Berenice with a knife for teasing her, Harris activates the border between play-acting and serious behavior, only to move back and forth and challenge any possibility to define the contours of Frankie's character.

Frankie's fits of anger are usually intertwined with bouts of self-pity which are supposed to betray her sense of loneliness and uneasiness about herself. Her angry tirade against the club girls ends by her exclaming desperately: "Why didn't you elect me?"[412]

In the light of these examples, Zinnemann's effort at not making Frankie's story freakish and special, but universal, is fanciful and chimerical. Tomboyism, as presented in this film version of *The Member of the Wedding*,

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[409] Neil Sinyard, *Fred Zinnemann* 51.
[410] Neil Sinyard, *Fred Zinnemann* 103.
[411] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann, perf. Julie Harris, Ethel Waters, Brandon De Wilde, Sony Pictures, 2008, DVD.
[412] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann.

reaches its ultimate peak of otherness – manifested by excess, anger, aggressivity, theatricality and freakishness, besides the usual boyish attire and a crew-cut. Frankie is associated with the Freaks not via the Half-Man Half-Woman, as she was in the novel, but via the Pin Head whose attire, described by Frankie, recalls the dress Frankie buys for the wedding: "That little old pin-head at the fair. Head no bigger than an orange. The hair all shaved off and a big pink bow at the top. The bow was bigger than the head."[413]

This form of tomboyism is not welcome by any of the characters in the film and gains Frankie no friends, hence she feels miserable most of the time. Frankie's queerness is commented on by Dorothy Allison, who in her introduction to the 2006 edition of the play compares the character of Frankie with Bone from her novel *Bastard Out of Carolina*:

> Yes, she was a lesbian, in the same way that Bone was in my first novel […]. More to the point, Frankie Addams was queer – decidedly out of step with everything she was expected to be and become. […] queer in the same way that all smart, miserable, rebellious, almost-teenage girls are when they do not want to become the women the world wants them to become.[414]

Frankie's aggressivity was surprisingly ignored in most of the reviews of the play as well as film, an exception being one review linking female masculinity with pathology and distress, defining Frankie as "a disconcerting young egoist, shrill and excitable, who feeds on dreams and is starved for affection;" whose "boyishness is aggressive and almost pathological."[415] The issue of pathology resurfaced in a review of the 2005 staging of the play in Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. Here, the character of Frankie is summed up as "a whirl of petulant behavior that today would be diagnosed as Attention Deficit Disorder […], a lonely misfit […], a study of conflicting adolescent impulses […], a pitiable figure."[416]

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[413] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann.
[414] Dorothy Allison, Introduction, *The Member of the Wedding: A Play*, by Carson McCullers (New York: New Directions, 2006) vii–viii.
[415] John Mason Brown, "Plot Me No Plots," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 47–48. Originally published in *Saturday Review* 28 Jan. 1950: 27–29.
[416] Paul Harris, rev. of *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Marshall W. Mason, *Variety* 16 Feb. 2005: 35.

This bleak image of a tomboyish girl, who has the impudence to wreck her brother's wedding, is nevertheless changed in the end of the film, and Frankie seems to be redeemed. She has a new friend, Mary Littlejohn, she is leaving the kitchen of her stultifying summer behind, and her hair has grown longer. Her manners have lost all anxiousness, anger and aggressiveness. The person who stays lonely and deserted in the end, the absolute outsider, is not Frankie, but Berenice – the racial otherness, touched upon only casually throughout the film, takes its toll here.

6.1.2. Woman in the Middle of the Kiss! Studio Publicity and the Pressure Towards Heterosexual Romance

Before I will proceed further into the realm of race, let me finish my exploration of tomboyism with a probe into the final part of the film, following Frankie's failure to become a member of the wedding, as it reshapes the notion of her final redemption. As I had mentioned before in my analysis of the novel, there is not much development in the character of Frankie, which would allow for a lesson to be taken; the coda with the feminized Frances comes abruptly and with no explanation. The ending of the film is similar to the novel in this respect. Frankie runs from home after the wedding and returns by herself, scared by her obviously first encounter with sexuality, in the form of a soldier who tries to seduce her, this mock-catharsis is nevertheless overshadowed by the illness and following death of John Henry, and thus, no one pays any attention to her.

The Frankie we see a couple of months later, in the coda, is different not in her character, but her outfit. Her feminization has stopped at her dress, a beret and a touch of make-up. She is still haunted by queer feelings: "It gives me a creepy feeling watching them take our things out. Ocassionally, when it gets so quiet like this, I have a strange feeling. It's like John Henry is hovering in this kitchen, solemn-looking and ghost-gray."[417]

Her theatrical excessivity and flowery vocabulary are also comparable to those before her make-over. She describes how she met Mary Littlejohn in a

[417] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann.

rather fancy style:"As the irony of fate would have it, we first got to know each other in front of the lipsticks and cosmetics counter at Woolworth's."[418] When Barney McKean, the adolescent boy in love with Mary, accuses Frankie of writing "M.L. loves B.M." on the sidewalk, she puts on an act of shock and indignation: "I wouldn't do a kid thing like that. I even resent you asking me… Resent you asking me."[419] I would therefore like to argue that Frankie's metamorphosis is not that sudden and profound as it might seem and that her new persona has lost none of the former's theatricality and excess. The only thing that vanished is Frankie's aggressivity. Julie Harris's acting style is also not profoundly changed in the end, only subdued.

Most of the reviews read the ending as the emergence of Frankie's new, healthy adolescent identity, the fortunate product of her arduous coming-of-age process. This view is supported by the script revision from July 11, which adds a description of Frances's appearance in the final scene: "[w]e see that she wears a beret, with longer hair visible beneath it, and a 'Junior Miss' dress. She looks very much the young lady."[420]

Later assessments focus not only on Frankie's gender, but highlight her heterosexuality as well, embodied in the appearance of Barney McKean in the final scene. Jenkins comments this in comparison with the novel: "Barney MacKean, who in the novel was the very source of Frankie's sexual ambivalence and dread, returns as a masculine, heterosexual ideal."[421]

This was exactly the image promoted from the very beginning by the publicity materials to the film. The major slogan on the posters, as well as its variations, connects Frankie's growing up with the beginning of a heterosexual romance: "She becomes a woman in the middle of a kiss!"; "a girl becomes a woman in the middle of a kiss!"; "she comes of age in the middle of a kiss;" "This moment turns a girl into a woman – a woman for the rest of her life!"[422]

[418] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann.
[419] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann.
[420] Edward and Edna Anhalt, *The Member of the Wedding* – final draft of the script, 26 May 1952, 117, MS. Fred Zinnemann Collection, Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California Los Angeles.
[421] McKay Jenkins, "Dramatizing The Member of the Wedding," *Twentieth-Century American Fiction on Screen* 102.
[422] All these slogans are gathered in the film's pressbook which was to be used by the cinemas to promote the film locally.

These slogans are accompanied by an image of a grown-up young woman with medium-long hair, make-up and a white dress sliding off her shoulders, reclining back, who pushes off a young man on top of her trying to kiss her. The man is immediately recognizable as the soldier, played by Dick More, the woman bears only little resemblance to Julie Harris as Frankie in the kissing scene. It is nevertheless supposed to be her – image on page 3 of the Columbia pressbook, presenting the young woman in the hesitating reclining pose, displays a close-up of the couple with the following caption: "A girl turns woman in the middle of a kiss in Columbia's *The Member of the Wedding*, at the ..... theater. She's star Julie Harris; he's Dick Moore."[423]

The woman's reserve towards the kiss imbues the would-be-romantic scene with a distinctly queer potential. First of all, there is no kiss in the film. Although the soldier tries to kiss Frankie in his hotel room after she runs away from home, she hits him with a pitcher before he accomplishes anything, and runs away, frightened. The story about coming of age, let alone becoming a woman, in the middle of a kiss is thus deeply ambivalent; the urgency of the slogans betrays a strange uneasiness about the kissing scene and contribute markedly to the deconstruction of heterosexual femininity which it tries so hard to create.

Becoming a woman, according to the film's promotion, is nothing normal or natural; it is a closely observed experiment to the success of which a heterosexual relation is a necessary component. The woman in the posters obviously does not want to become a woman; the poster opens a space for an alternative story which is insinuated, though unvoiced.

In her analysis of films with adolescent characters which emerged in unprecedented numbers in the 1950s Hollywood production llana Nash mentions their common focus on "the chrysalis moment," which was usually represented by the first kiss, and reveals the central position of this moment in the publicity of the films. According to her, the anxiousness about the kiss results from "an effort to control and contain teen-girl sexuality by ritualizing it,

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[423] Pressbook, MS. *The Member of the Wedding* production file, Core Collections, AMPAS.

subjecting it to the interpretation and narration of patriarchal ideology."[424] Georganne Scheiner in her essay on the star of these teenage films, Sandra Dee, carries Nash's argument further, deconstructing this obsession with the kiss:

> In the fifties, women and girls were bombarded with deeply contradictory messages about sex. On the one hand, erotic depictions of romance were pervasive in popular media sources, and on the other existed what Wini Breines has called "a cultural obsession with virginity."[425]

Although *The Member of the Wedding* can hardly be classified as a teenage film, its publicity materials contain both the obsession with romance and sexuality, and with innocence and timidity which Scheiner identified.

This obsession is one of the major objections Jenkins addresses to the film, in comparison with the novel. In the novel, Frankie is avoiding sexuality not because of fear, but because of her experience with it. Jenkins emphasizes Frankie's memory of committing "a queer sin" with Barney McKean, which made her want to "shoot him with the pistol or throw a knife between his eyes."[426] Both the play and the film, in Jenkins's view, "reinforce not only Frankie's heterosexuality, but her innocence, so fetishizing the rituals of her brother's wedding that Frankie seems desperate only to be a blushing bride."[427]

This interpretation is supported by the official synopsis both versions of which underline the theme of romance and Frankie's innocence. Frankie is described in them as "enraptured by the romance of it all," believing her brother's wedding to be "the most beautiful and romantic thing that has ever happened to her."[428]

Although the image of the almost-kissing couple, described above, forms the core of the publicity of *The Member of the Wedding*, it is not the only image

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[424] Ilana Nash, *American Sweethearts: Teenage Girls in Twentieth-Century Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) 24.
[425] Georganne Scheiner, "Look at Me, I'm Sandra Dee: Beyond a White Teen Icon," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 22.2 (2001): 90. The phrase "cultural obsession with virginity" was coined by Wini Breines, *Young,White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992) 87.
[426] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* 482.
[427] McKay Jenkins, "Dramatizing *The Member of the Wedding*," *Twentieth-Century American Fiction on Screen* 102.
[428] George Lait, *The Member of the Wedding* synopsis, 26 Jun. 26 1952, MS. *The Member of the Wedding* production file, Core Collections, AMPAS.

on the posters. It is accompanied by snapshots from the film which further complicate the "growing-into-a-woman-in-the-middle-of-the-kiss" message. The largest of them is a reference to the closing scene set on the day before the wedding, in which Frankie in white slip embraces Berenice and sits on her lap, discussing the unbearable burden of "being oneself" all the time. The two are then joined by John Henry and sing a comforting blues song together.

Most posters combine both the kiss theme and the threesome embrace and add further images from the film – Honey Brown playing the horn; guests gathered at the wedding; and Frankie being drawn crying from the wedding car – creating a collage background. These posters are rather dynamic, but it is an anxious and despondent dynamism. The image of the unfulfilled kiss evokes aggressivity and rejection, and its link to the embrace image, on which both Frankie and John Henry look sad and hopeless and Berenice is smiling in the middle of them, sends mixed emotions to the viewer.

These emotions are in a strict contrast to the theme of a lucky coming of age, topped by a heterosexual romance, and invite a queer reading which challenges the negative evaluation of the film voiced by Jenkins. There is a previously unaddressed centrality of threesomes in the film which subvert the heterosexual frame introduced by the wedding theme. From the beginning till the end of the film, Frankie is a member of threesomes and her very process of growing up is lined by them. Her childhood pair is Berenice and John Henry, through the liminal phase between childhood and adolescence she is accompanied by Jarvis and Janice, her brother and his bride, and the beginning of her adolescence, which completes the film, is marked by the presence of Mary Littlejohn and Barney McKean.

The implicit link among the three phases is reflected upon in Frankie's habit of adopting other people's utterances. After the visit of her brother and his bride, Frankie parrots a grown-up joke that her brother said, with overwrought intensity:

Did you hear what Jarvis said? […] They were talking about whether to vote for C. P. MacDonald. And Jarvis said, 'Why I wouldn't vote for that scoundrel if he were running to be dog catcher.' Why, I never heard anything so witty in my life.[429]

A similar scene occurs at the end of the film. Frankie here takes over Mary Littlejohn's highflown statement and only reluctantly reveals her source: "Barney puts me in mind of a Greek god. […] Mary remarked that Barney reminded her of a Greek god." [430] Barney also calls Frankie "Frankie," there are no name-changes in the film, accompanying Frankie's growing out of her rough tomboy phase into the ladylike one. Her feminine appearance does in no way imply heterosexuality, but express a convenient disguise for her nonconformity. Frankie did not become a member of the "big girls" club, who tell "big lies about grownup people," but forms her own, rather peculiar club.[431] Tomboyism in its boyishly aggressive form which made Frankie afraid gives way to a more subtle masquerade, theatrically excessive and implicitly queer.

6.1.3. Heating Up Race? Berenice as the Ultimate Outsider

Although race and class are not addressed in the film's publicity, their intersections with gender are worth a thorough inquiry. Frankie's social status is read by some reviewers as "of modest circumstances,"[432] and, similarly to the novel, it is rather puzzling. The house is only scarcely furnished and the close-ups support a feeling of narrow space, verging on claustrophobia. Frankie's wedding dress is described by Frankie as "bargain-basement" again,[433] although in this version of the film, she does not wear it to the wedding. Frankie's gender expression automatically lowers her class status. In comparison to the club girls who pass her yard, she is barefoot and dressed in baggy shorts, and thus, the girls ignore her.

[429] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann. C.P. MacDonald is a local politician invented by McCullers.
[430] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann.
[431] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann. The "big lies" refer to heterosexual intercourse.
[432] Brog, rev. of *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann, *Daily Variety* 15 Dec. 1952: 3.
[433] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann.

On the other hand, Frankie's father, brother and his bride's family are distinctly lower-middle class and the club girls' meeting place is just next to Frankie's house. Thus, the neighborhood is obviously far from poor or lower-class. Also, when Frankie dons a dress in the very end of the film, her class position rises automatically – the family moves from the house, and she becomes friends with Mary, who was elected as a member of the girl's club instead of Frankie.

Frankie's fluctuating and ambivalent social status goes hand in hand with her racialization – in the scene in which she meets the club girls her elbows and knees are dirty and her face is covered with perspiration in a curious contrast to the girls' faces which, although exposed to the same sizzling summer heat, look fresh and clean. Sweat performs a metaphorical function in the film; it not only underlines the existential isolation and loneliness, but the classed and racialized isolation and loneliness. Hence, it is limited to the characters of Frankie, Berenice, John Henry and Honey.

Sweat is rendered visible and significant mainly through close-ups. The abundance of close-ups is noted by the reviewers and criticised by many – Karel Reisz, himself a film director, wrote in his *Sight and Sound* piece that "far from achieving the presumably desired effect of closely identifying the characters' emotions, [the close-up] often only draws attention to the artificialities of dialogue,"[434] while the *Monthly Film Bulletin*'s reviewer argued that "Fred Zinnemann […] uses the close-up to such an extent that, as a dramatic device, it becomes almost meaningless."[435]

The style of the film is rather dynamic and contradictory at times and tells about the directorial and production effort at breaking away from the spectre of the play. Zinnemann here draws on his documentary filmmaking experience going back to Germany, where he participated on the shooting of a semi-documentary film *People on Sunday* (1929, dir. Robert Siodmak), produced by Edgar G. Ulmer. Zinnemann also collaborated with the legend of

[434] Karel Reisz, rev. of *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann, *Sight and Sound* 22.4 (Apr.–June 1953): 197.
[435] P.H., rev. of *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 20.228–239 (1953): 47.

documentary filmmaking Robert Flaherty whom he later claimed as "probably the greatest single influence on my work as a filmmaker."[436]

In 1951, a year before *The Member of the Wedding*, Zinnemann made a short documentary *Benjy* about a handicapped boy, which gained him an Academy Award for the best Documentary Short Subject of the year. In his introduction to a collection of interviews with Zinnemann, Gabriel Miller writes that Zinnemann's "fondness for the documentary/realist aproach pushed him to develop a style that is rich in the use of detail but carefully incorporates detail and setting within the mise en scène."[437] Zinnemann's penchant for realistic detail is expressed in *The Member of the Wedding* by the use of Garutso Balanced Lenses, a special type of lenses allowing for "depth of focus without distortion when shooting wide open."[438]

On the other hand, there are the close-ups, which shatter the realistic illusion, and release the characters from the temporal and spatial frame of the film. This type of shot, and its effect is very well described by Manny Farber in his review for the *Nation*:

> An interesting feature of the film is that it makes use of a television-type shot – the very close close-up of an active breathless face against a blacked-out background. […] With intimate, revealing image-maneuvers like this, the movie attempts both to break its bondage to the play and to penetrate a visual sphere new to movies. It starts drifting in a strange sea made up simply of motion and anatomy on a superrealistic level; you are practically on top of the human figure when, trapped in the most intense motion and feeling, it is cut off from the surrounding things that make life seem ordinary and fairly secure.[439]

The close-ups are important yet in another aspect – as they are reserved solely for Frankie and Berenice, they help create a visual bond between the two.

This link across races does not save the film from overt racial stereotyping. While Frankie's whiteness is challenged via her gender

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[436] Gene Phillips, "Fred Zinnemann Talking to Gene Phillips," *Fred Zinnemann: Interviews*, ed. Gabriel Miller (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005) 37–39.
[437] Gabriel Miller, Introduction, *Fred Zinnemann: Interviews* xii.
[438] DJ, rev. of *The Member of the Wedding*, *American Photography* 47.3 (Mar. 1953): 15.
[439] Manny Faber, rev. of *The Member of the Wedding*, *Nation* 13 Feb. 1953: 105–06.

transgressions, class vacillation and immersion into dirt and sweat, the blackness of African Americans in the film remains unquestioned. In the novel-play-film transition African Americans lose all their queer potential and become disindividualized walking formulas of race as an institution, as imagined and perpetuated by the (white) film industry since its birth.[440] In this respect, Jenkins argues that while issues of sexuality are "cooled down" in the film version, race is "heated up."[441]

I will focus here on the representation of two characters with whom Frankie creates some kind of a bond – Berenice's foster brother Honey and Berenice herself, because their stereotypization disclose complex mechanism operating behind the representation of racial otherness on American screen and challenge Jenkins's claim. Berenice is in fact whitewashed in the film and in the case of Honey, the issue of race is swept under the rug by making racial opression individual rather than systemic.

The bond between Frankie and Honey has a highly ambiguous character. Leaving aside the fact that it is strictly a one-way bond, it can be read either as a transgressive gesture, uplifting the confines of both identity facets, and imagining an alternative space where race and gender oppression can join forces and fight injustice together; or as an implicitly accomodationalist scheme, disqualifying simultaneously Frankie's efforts and Honey's wish not to be a servant anymore. The second reading is paradoxically invited by their common features, above all their masculine anger, as well as Frankie's lack of agenda and Honey's lack of credibility, based on his rather negative characterization (on top of the above mentioned features, Honey smokes marihuana in the play, and drinks gin in the film).

Frankie in the film does not view her masculine inclinations as positive and wants to get rid of them as soon as possible, which she succeeds in the end.

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[440] For more on the representation of African Americans in American movies and the Hollywood industry as such, see, for instance, Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Viking Press, 1973); Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in* Film (Temple University Press, 1993); or bell hooks, *Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class at the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

[441] McKay Jenkins, "Dramatizing The Member of the Wedding," *Twentieth-Century American Fiction on Screen* 99.

Her tomboyishness is rather distressing for her, because it makes her different within her own race and gender confines, and thus lonely. Honey is shown as an exception among African Americans, and therefore, his problems are not caused by inherent race oppression but by his peculiar character. T.T. stresses this in his remark upon one of Honey's clashes with the law. According to his account, Honey is pushed for no reason by a drunken soldier, and when he defends himself, a policeman hits him on the head with his stick. In the play, T.T. defends Honey, saying that "[i]t was one of those accidents can happen to any colored person."[442] In the film, however, the racial background of the attack is erased by T.T., who opposes Honey's conviction of being persecuted for his race: "Your foster brother, Honey, got into a ruckus again. […] It was just one of those accidents. Could have happened to anybody."[443]

Downplaying race oppression in Honey's character goes hand in hand with the downplaying of gender strictures in Frankie and it limits their fight to the personal level, making it a personal problem of each character. This strategy on one hand discloses a method by means of which Hollywood cinema had dealt with difference at the time, on the other hand, it exposes the flipside of the association of race and gender oppression, leading eventually to the whitewashing of institution-based differences.

I have already discussed the major characteristics of the mammy stereotype, as well as the relation of the Berenice character to this stereotype, here I would like to highlight a substantial modification – mammy's religiosity. As the legend goes, making Berenice religious (which naturally influenced other characteristics of hers) was Ethel Waters's condition for accepting the role in the first place. In her autobiography *His Eye Is on the Sparrow*, Waters is quite adamant about it: "I am ten thousand dollars in debt right now, but I still can't be in a play without any God in it."[444] To accommodate her demand, Waters was given relatively free hand with the part of Berenice.

The same story is told in McCullers's biography by Virginia Spencer Carr, only here Waters develops her reservations about the part:

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[442] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding: A Play* 44.
[443] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann.
[444] Ethel Waters, *His Eye Is on the Sparrow* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1992) 263.

It was a 'dirty play,' said the actress, and she did not like her role. The cook was a bitter woman, a chain smoker, a heavy drinker, in short, a sordid, ugly creature who had lost her faith in God, Miss Waters concluded. Although she admitted she was down on her luck, both professionally and emotionally, she was not '*that* down.'[445]

Berenice's religiosity goes hand in hand with selflessness and a sense of capitulation – Waters's interpretation of Berenice thus reshapes the cook as a tragic figure, an embodiment of suffering. I am devoting so much attention to the story behind the character development of Berenice, because it complicates the common opinion about racial stereotypes created by whites only and shows the pervasive power of controlling images, perpetuated by both whites and African Americans in the entertainment industry of the early 1950s.

The relation between Frankie and Berenice is carried by the expectations embodied in the mammy figure which Waters leaves untouched. The mammification of Berenice is accomplished also by the shift in her age – she is said to be about forty-five years old and is played by then fifty-six-year-old Waters whose recognizably grey hair show from below her black cap. Berenice in the film also does not have any family except Honey, who is more a constant trouble to her than support. She spends all her time in the white home of Frankie, and calls John Henry "my little boy."[446] Water's Berenice is Frankie's nurturing surrogate mother, "the only person who fully understands the depths of the child's feelings,"[447] the "voice of reason" who tries to prevent Frankie from suffering. Although the mammy is inevitably a racialized character, representing the racial Other, Berenice is completely whitewashed in this respect and becomes the universal mother, who at the end "feels the universal loneliness every 'mother' feels when her children grow up and leave her."[448]

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[445] Virginia Spencer Carr, *The Lonely Hunter* 330. Italics in the original.
[446] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fred Zinnemann.
[447] Louis D. Giannetti, "Member of the Wedding," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 4.1 (Winter 1976): 36.
[448] George Lait, *The Member of the Wedding* synopsis. Probably aware of the irony of an African American woman imagined as a universal mother, the synopsis puts the word 'mother' in quotes.

At the same time, she is the ultimate outsider, who is left behind in an empty house, with no clear future (her plan to marry T.T. is not mentioned in the film), no longer needed in the Addams family, sadly humming a blues tune, with a perennial smile on her face and tears in her eyes. This final shift in the narrative to Berenice as the universal mother was surprising and baffling to contemporary viewers, as a letter to Zinnemann testifies:

> We were struck by several things – the change of emphasis in the closing, from the girl and her new life, to the lonesome tragedy of the old negress, and by the great effectiveness of the girl's effort to run away from home."[449]

This shift was explained as profoundly racialized in a later assessment of Zinnemann's oeuvre:

> The outsider in American culture is the Negro. This might be the reason that, at the end of the film, Zinnemann, with his sympathy for the outsider, chooses to stay with Berenice rather than with Frankie. Her heavy, motionless melancholy […] casts a doleful shadow across Frankie's newfound stability.[450]

While gender and sexuality are open in the film and allow for radical rereadings, and whiteness and class are contested through gender and sexuality, as I have shown above, non-whiteness is immutable and fixed. The final resignation on the part of Berenice is the only option of African American racial identity the film offers, and it is at the same time the utmost display of racial stereotyping – it is the very image of the nurturing mammy which locks Berenice in the empty house, used up and melancholic. She is not only the caretaker, but also the repository of all guilt and pain produced in the movie. At the same time, Ethel Waters plays the role very convincingly, and her smile through tears is the very incarnation of selflessness.

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[449] Lynn Farnol, a letter to Fred Zinnemann, 24 Dec. 1952, MS. box 48, folder 638 (*The Member of the Wedding* – Correspondence), Fred Zinnemann Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS. Lynn Farnol was a distinguished New York press agent and public relations counsel at the time. See "Lynn Farnol, 63, Press Aide, Dies," *New York Times* 1 Apr. 1963: L 27.

[450] Neil Sinyard, *Fred Zinnemann* 104.

Positioning the image of Berenice as the final shot of the film endows this character with unprecedented significance and offers a final commentary on the nature of race and gender as represented in the film. Despite the avoidance of racial issues by means of their stereotypical representation in all three African American characters, the final shot establishes the interlocking nature of race and gender in the system of oppression and manages to peep coyly beyond the stereotypes it perpetuates – Honey's rebellion against the Jim Crow subservience earns him ten years in prison, the obedience of the identical code of conduct eliminates T.T. from the film completely (his last appearance is as a servant at the wedding), and the combination of humility, blackness and femininity bars Berenice from any future altogether. The three racial options represented in the film are finally exposed as hollow and dysfunctional. Although the film does not venture into imagining different possibilities, its tentative challenge of the status quo functions as an unsettling countercurrent to the official "happy ending," promoted by the publicity campaign.

The stereotypical representation of African American characters is inextricably linked with the presentation of tomboyism in the film. The exaggerated emphasis put on Frankie's ultimate femininity and heterosexuality may be explained not only by the pressures on proper gender socialization, but also by the uneasiness about the image of African Americans. Edward Anhalt declared in an interview that in writing the screenplay, "'we were all very gung-ho about the black situation at the time,'"[451] which the interwiewer translates as a sign of "the emerging racial consciousness of the early 1950s rather than of the legacy of repression hanging on in the late 1940s after World War II."[452] Donald Bogle supports this interpretation by highlighting the pivotal moment of the film's being "the first time a black actress was used to carry a major-studio white production."[453]

At the same time, even though Ethel Waters's name features as the first on the list of actors in nearly all the publicity materials, the publicity itself is

[451] Joanna E. Rapf, "Mythic Figures: Women and Co-Being in Three Films by Fred Zinnemann," *Fred Zinnemann,* special issue of *Film Criticism* 18.3–19.1 (Spring–Fall 1994) 140–154.
[452] Joanna E. Rapf, "Mythic Figures" 149.
[453] Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks* 162.

fully focused on Frankie and the issue of romance, avoiding absolutely the theme of race. Louis Giannetti disagrees with Bogle and claims that no major studio "in this era of Jim Crow" would "permit a black actress to carry one of their own pictures, to serve as the main attraction."[454] Also, the "gung-ho" sentiment involved only the character of Berenice, not into the overall presentation of race in the film.

The impossibility of having an African American actress as the major attraction of the movie guided the discussion of the film's genre, the vagueness of which is said to cause the movie's commercial failure. Louis Giannetti recapitulates this issue precisely:

> There was also the problem of genre. The story revolves around two female characters […]. But the movie isn't a 'women's picture' in the conventional sense of the term. Most examples of this popular studio-era genre featured a glamorous female star, glossy production values, and a strong emphasis on romantic or melodramatic plots.[455]

Columbia, the distributor of the film, was obviously aware of the genre problem, but the attempt at making *The Member of the Wedding* into a romance made the problem only more visible. Neil Sinyard considers the lack of stars that would carry the production as one of the reasons why the romance theme was adopted for the publicity materials:

> [A]t that time, a film without stars was a dubitable box office prospect. […] The advertising's lurid gloss on the heroine's passage from innocence to experience gives a false promise of sexual sensation.[456]

Just as in the novel, race, class, gender and sexuality in the film operate as communicating vessels and are futile to be addressed separately. Nothing is simply "heated up" or "cooled down," without an immediate impact upon other facets of identity. Frankie's gender and sexual ambivalence directly join with her

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[454] Louis Giannetti, "Repeat Business: Members of the Wedding," *The Films of Fred Zinnemann: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Arthur Nolletti, Jr. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) 104.
[455] Louis Giannetti, "Repeat Business," *The Films of Fred Zinnemann* 104.
[456] Neil Sinyard, *Fred Zinnemann* 100.

class and race background and unsettle her position, Berenice's race and gender are intricately linked in the mammy stereotype which Waters manages to disturb only tangentially, but which nevertheless serves as a vehicle to make her into the universal mother despite her race and carry the the multifaceted message of the film, embodied in its last scene.

6.2. Frankie Addams Goes on TV

Though the 1952 version of *The Member of the Wedding* is by far the most highlighted one in McCullers's criticism (and usually the only one mentioned), there are three more productions based on the book or play. Two of them are live-TV plays, the last one is a TV film.

6.2.1. Golden Age of Live-TV and the Atomic Threat

The first of the three versions following the 1952 film was made in 1958 as a part of the live-TV project "The DuPont Show of the Month," and is interesting for its director, Robert Mulligan, who was to direct *To Kill a Mockingbird* five years later, and who ended his film career with yet another film featuring a tomboyish character, *The Man in the Moon* (1991).

Based on the play and divided into four parts according to the days before/after the wedding, the DuPont *Member of the Wedding* has an androgynous Frankie, played by Collin Wilcox, who later appeared as Mayella Ewell in Mulligan's *To Kill a Mockingbird*; and a "de-mammified" Berenice with a blonde/whittish hair-wave on her forehead and a perpetual cigarette in the corner of her mouth (Claudia McNeil).

Frankie's tomboyishness is obviously modelled on Julie Harris's performance and is conceptualized through anger, tension and desperation, in connection with excessive theatricality and violence. What is more, Wilcox in publicity materials looks rather similar to Harris and is captured in the same feminized way – with slightly longer hair, neatly combed close to the skull, delicate, but distinct layer of make-up, looking away from the picture with a

tense and imploring expression.

Frankie's anguish is strongly connected with the issue of scientific progress and the threat of an atomic war – the narrative had been set forward to August 1945 and Frankie appears once with a newspaper announcing the dropping of the bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In this respect, it is remarkable that the commercial breaks of the show, sponsored by a major chemical company, feature various chemical products, including a bomb used in below-sea oil drilling, under the slogan "Better things for better living … through chemistry."[457]

The link between Frankie's anguish and the world after Nagasaki makes her gender rebellion implicitly a universal phenomenon, hiding thus the issue of her gender and/or sexuality under the veil of a general concern for humanity. At the same time, Frankie's excessive behavior is normalized through her involvement in theater, and it makes her into the image of the artist suffocating in a small and narrow-minded community, who is blessed to foresee, and embody, common suffering, rather than being a gender/race/class rebel.

Despite the promising de-mammification of Berenice, noted by one of the critics as the lack of "compassionate dominance and spirit of a substitute mother,"[458] race issues are markedly downplayed in this version of *The Member of the Wedding* – Berenice is in the background, Honey is missing altogether. Racial tensions are obviously seen as too petty a topic to be dealt with in a world on the brink of nuclear extinction. Paradoxically, one of the two *New York Times* articles on the TV play is solely devoted to McNeil. Her comments speak about rather grim conditions for African American actresses in the entertainment business in the late 1950s: "Like most other Negro performers, she has found that acting opportunities are limited. […] 'It's a pet peeve of mine,' she remarked. 'They say we can't play anything but maids.'"[459] McNeil is also critical about the attitude of white directors to African American actors:

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[457] "The Member of the Wedding," *The DuPont Show of the Month*, 12 June 1958. Permanent Media Collection, Paley Center for Media, Beverly Hills, California.
[458] Jack Gould, "TV: McCullers Play. 'Member of Wedding' Given Painstaking Production on DuPont Program," *New York Times* 13 June 1958: 47.
[459] John P. Shanley, "From Lean Years to Stardom," *New York Times* 8 June 1958: X9.

In rehearsing for *The Member of the Wedding*, she has developed respect and admiration for Robert Mulligan […]. 'He's not patronizing, […] That can drive you mad. He doesn't coddle you. He doesn't talk down to you. Some of the others do. This is what you get from them: I'll have to explain things to her because they are like children.'[460]

The fact that race as well as gender issues are significantly silenced in this version might also be the result of a more general tendency in live television, connected to the role of the sponsors, and the wide-spread circulation of the live TV programs. TV historian and theoretician Anna Everett explains this tendency in connection with the particular genre of the live-TV dramas:

Much of the criticism of these television dramas concerned the power sponsors often exerted over program content. Specifically, the complaints focused on the mandate by sponsors that programs adhere to a 'dead-centerism.' […] Sponsored shows were to avoid completely socially and politically controversial themes. Only those dramas that supported and reflected positive middle-class values […] were broadcast. Critics charged the networks with pandering to the expectations of southern viewers in order not to offend regional sensibilities. Scripts exploring problems at the societal level (e.g. racial discrimination, poverty and other social ills) were systematically ignored.[461]

The genre of the live-TV play dictated other rules as well, including a rigid class consciousness and adherence to a respective cultural taste. Everett sums this up in her foray into "The Golden Age of Live Television," as the era from 1949 to approximately 1960 was later dubbed. This era was typical for "anthology series" of plays written especially for television or works from the stage and broadcasted live. These series were usually sponsored by and named after a major company, for instance *Philco Television Playhouse*, *U. S. Steel Hour*, and *Kraft Television Theater*. Original and theater plays were complemented by adaptations of "high- and middlebrow literature."[462] What is interesting for my study of the first TV version of *The Member of the Wedding* is the class aspect of anthology series. As Everett puts it:

[460] John P. Shanley, "From Lean Years to Stardom" X9.
[461] Anna Everett, "'Golden Age' of Television Drama," *Encyclopedia of Television*, ed. Horace Newcomb (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004) 1003.
[462] Anna Everett, "'Golden Age' of Television Drama," *Encyclopedia of Television* 1002.

As the nation's economy grew and the population expanded, television and advertising executives turned to dramatic shows as a programming strategy to elevate the status of television and to attract the growing and increasingly important suburban family audience.[463]

The *DuPont Show of the Month* series focused exclusively on "classy" drama adaptations. James L. Baughman expresses the DuPont ideology succinctly:

The DuPont Show appeared to meet the theatrical expectations for television. But the offerings were plainly middlebrow. DuPont vetoed any productions of Tennessee Williams's work. Williams might be the nation's most impressive young playwright, but his plays' sexual tensions unnerved the sponsor.[464]

In this perspective it is no wonder that the 1958 version of *The Member of the Wedding* was focused exclusively upon a personal problem and gave "a delicate portrait of the hours of anguish that mark the passage from adolescence to womanhood," as the *New York Times* reviewer put it.[465]

Collin Wilcox looks distinctly younger than Julie Harris, although she is only three years younger than Harris was as Frankie, and her acting is very physical, which makes her grotesque and rather queer in comparison with other characters.

She is sweating profoundly, her feet are dirty, she tugs at her short-cropped hair all the time and at one point pulls her T-shirt over her head in an effort to hide herself. At the wedding, she wears the satin dress she bought and high-heel shoes in which she constantly stumbles. Later, she completes her costume with a sombrero, and runs away from home still wearing the dress. There is no soldier in this version, Frankie returns home voluntarily after she gets frightened by the dark empty streets and realizes her plans were childish. Her change in the coda of the story copies that of the 1952 version, including the final shot of Berenice, here with John Henry's doll on her lap.

[463] Anna Everett, "'Golden Age' of Television Drama," *Encyclopedia of Television* 1001.
[464] James L. Baughman, *Same Time, Same Station: Creating American Television, 1948–1961* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) 144.
[465] Jack Gould, "TV: McCullers Play" 47.

6.2.2. Growing Up in the Teenage-Suicide Epidemics

The second TV version of *The Member of the Wedding* was made by Delbert Mann in 1982 within the *Live Theater Series* at NBC. Although the format refers to the 1950s live TV productions, the style is different, because it is a hybrid between a filmed play and a theater performance recording. It is staged in the James K. Polk theater in the Tennessee Performing Arts Center in Nashville, transmitted live from here, and accentuates the theatrical element by showing the audience and their reactions.[466]

The most obvious, and major difference is that it is the first color version of *The Member of the Wedding.* This basic fact has an influence upon the way Frankie is perceived – while in both the 1952 and 1958 productions she had rather dark hair (the hair color of the actresses being darkened by the perpetual sweat and the black-and-white photography) and her surroundings, especially the kitchen was dark and oppressive, here Frankie is blonde, has blue eyes and the story is situated in pastel yellows and greens of the bright kitchen.

In contrast to her predecessors, who were rather lanky and athletic, Dana Hill, the actress playing Frankie, is short, has a round face, and a plump childlike figure; hence, she looks even too small for the part, not much older than John Henry (Benjamin Bernouy), although she was 18 at the time.

Frankie's major problem here is neither her aggressive tomboyism, nor gender nonconformity, as was the case in the two preceding versions, but self-consciousness and ambivalence about her oncoming puberty. She is neither angry nor volatile, her mood tends toward woeful pining and cries over her loneliness in the world. She wears the new dress to the wedding, but its effect is downplayed by John Henry wearing Frankie's costume – the two look like a carnival duo, and thus the potential of subverting femininity by exploding the symbolic role of the dress is turned into a mere disguise game.

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[466] Delbert Mann praises this choice of form: "'Television was the transmitter. The theatrical aspect intrigued me, for I began in theater and had wanted to return to it for some time.'" Susan Squire, "For Delbert Mann, All the Problems of Live-TV are Worth It," *New York Times*, 19 Dec. 1982: H33. Delbert Mann was one of the key directors of live television productions in the early 1950s, praised especially for his *Marty* (1953). See also Erik Barnouw, *The Image Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) 24–40.

Just as in the previous version, there is no soldier and sexual awakening here, still the final metamorphosis of Frankie into a woman is extremely problematic. While both Julie Harris and Collin Wilcox open the potential of viewing their final dress as a savvy form of masquerade, but both look feminized and changed by the dress, Dana Hill in a blue dress and a blue hat perched on her short hair looks distinctly parodic and profoundly queer. The parodic effect is, however, not due to any sophisticated masquerade, but merely by the youthful, even childlike appearance of Hill. The overall pathos of the final scene then stems from Frankie's obviously premature wish to grow up. At the same time, her ungrown-up appearance marks a clear rupture in the fluid course of the narrative, a rupture which cannot be sufficiently closed by the final shot on Berenice standing on the stage and humming a melancholy blues song.

The race issue is stressed profoundly in this version, but with no significant update in the racist bend – there is the scene from the original play in which Frankie's father utters a racist slur towards Honey, Honey also attacks John Henry for no reason and is scolded by Berenice for his impudence. Berenice underwent a queer change – while she is still the fat, sexless mammy-like character she was in the previous versions, she became much more mannish in appearance, and coarse and down-to-earth in speech and behavior. She wears a black patch over her eye most of the film which gives her a bizarre pirate look. The community formed by Berenice with a pirate patch, Frankie and her grown-up dress, and John Henry in a blue ballet dress, is distinctly performative and queer, but the play does not offer space for the development of their performance, on the contrary, the trio is oddly out of place and the cause and goal of their masquerades are unclear.

The bond between Frankie and Berenice is foregrounded. Frankie shares her troubles with Berenice, and the wedding is presented completely from the point of view of the cook, emphasizing the fact that Berenice is the only person who really cares about Frankie.

The publicity as well as reviews focus exclusively on the universal, gender-unspecified issue of growing up, relating it to current debates about childhood and adolescence psychology. The poster promotes the program with

the following slogan: "Growing Up Can Be the Hardest Think You Ever Do;" while the *Hollywood Reporter* reviewer defines "Frankie's growing pains" along with "the self-destructive growing pains of Berenice's fiercely proud brother" as the main themes of the program. He nevertheless prefers the theme of Frankie's growing up and delves no deeper into the race issue:

> Carson McCuller's [*sic*] award-winning 1950 play […] has just as much significance today as it did over 30 years ago. In fact, it could be argued that the play has renewed relevancy today in light of the current epidemic level of teenage suicide in this country.[467]

The caption under a photo from the play stresses the issue of adolescence and moves it right into psychiatric discourse: "Mr. Mann […] during rehearsals of the NBC production of […] *The Member of the Wedding*, […] with Pearl Bailey as the housekeeper who helps a 12-year-old Georgia girl (Dana Hill) through an emotional trauma."[468] The trauma is not explained, but is supposedly connected to Frankie's fear of growing up and her feeling of loneliness after she learns about her brother's wedding. Frankie's growing-up is meticulously devoid of any sexuality, probably for the fear of Dana Hill's too childish appearance, which might bring molestation to mind. This taboo is broken only in the last version which I will discuss now.

6.2.3. The Innocent Object of Desire and African American Masquerade – *The Member of the Wedding* without the Coda

Directed by the veteran of live-TV, Fielder Cook, the 1997 *The Member of the Wedding*, Cook's last production,[469] differs in many respects from the versions analyzed above. I will here point out only the issues that touch upon the themes of race, gender, and sexuality and their intersections.

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[467] Gail Williams, rev. Of The Member of the Wedding, dir. Delbert Mann, *Hollywood Reporter* 23 Dec. 1982: 21.
[468] Susan Squire, "For Delbert Mann, All the Problems of Live-TV are Worth It," *New York Times* 19 Dec. 1982: H33.
[469] See "Helmer Cook Crafted Fabled TV and Films," *Variety* 30 June 2003: 46.

The character of Frankie, played here by Anna Paquin, is probably best defined by the *New York Times* reviewer as "a bit of a tomboy"[470] – although she has her hair cut short and wears shorts, her haircut resembles more a girl's idea of a boyish cut than a boyish cut itself. The same goes for the shorts and sleeveless white blouse Frankie wears. On the other hand, this version is the only one that raises the issue of Frankie's fear of gender liminality, though it does so only at the very beginning and within the frame of the fair, where Berenice, Frankie and John Henry go to see the freaks and where Frankie encounters The Half Man/Half Woman. Through a dissolve, her face emerges from the fading face of the Half Man/Half Woman, transferring her fear to her daily life.

The *New York Times* reviewer notices the appearance of the fair, though he views it in terms of sexuality, not gender:

> The story, set in Georgia in 1944, has been […] opened up a bit (the first scene takes place at a carnival where the 'freak show' features a half-man, half-woman, signaling the persistent theme of sexual ambiguity).[471]

Frankie, I want to argue, is not sexually ambiguous, but wholeheartedly embraces the heterosexual ideal, embodied by her brother and his fiancée, whom she tries hard to emulate. Her buddying heterosexuality is shown even before the pair arrives – after their visit at the fair, John Henry stays at Frankie's to spend the night; after he falls asleep, Frankie licks his ear in a semi-playful, semi-sexual way.

Frankie's childlike masquerade does not upend femininity as a construction, but highlights the difference between the imitator and the posessor of true femininity, i.e. Janice, the fiancée of Frankie's brother. The latter is unquestioningly the (impossible) goal to achieve and Janice gets elevated into the position of an unattainable goddess which Frankie worships.

At the same time, Frankie's emulation of grown-up femininity is startingly precise and instantly remakes Frankie's innocent childlike body into

[470] John J. O'Connor, "Tough Georgia Summer For Adolescent Tomboy," *New York Times* 28 Jan. 1997: C14.
[471] John J. O'Connor, "Tough Georgia Summer For Adolescent Tomboy" C14.

an object of sexual desire. This uncanny metamorphosis is unravelled most distinctly when Frankie presents her new dress to Berenice, with one shoulder teasingly bared and a flirtatious expression – in this scene, the imitation melts with the original. While the sexual potential is downplayed by Berenice, its image reverberates later, when Frankie becomes a real sexual object for the drunken soldier. She meets him twice – for the first time in broad daylight in the Blue Moon Café where she drinks a beer with him and agrees with a date later that night; for the second time in the café again during the date, when the soldier invites her to his room and tries to have sex with her.

What is significant about both scenes with the soldier is how the form, i.e. the dress, gets totally dissociated from the body and carries its own, explicitly sexual signification. Frankie's dress, ironically not the "grown woman evening gown" that Berenice objected to so much, but her usual girly pink one, along with the setting of the café/bar, makes Frankie automatically a sexual object despite the fact that she looks very young and in no way responds to the soldier's advances.

Heteronormativity is Frankie's goal in the film, as she understands it as a way out of her feelings of freakishness and alienation. At the same time, it is inextricably bound to violence – when the soldier tries to rape Frankie, she hits him with a glass pitcher; when she tries to form a threesome with her brother and his bride, her father drags her screaming out of their car. This message is accentuated most strongly in this version, as the coda, in which previous events are closed in the past, Frankie is shown as beyond her anguish, and the weight of real solitude is passed on to Berenice, is missing here. The loneliness and feeling of defeat stays with Frankie, who is the center of the final shot, as her father escorts her home, accompanied by a bluesy tune "How Long Is Loneliness," composed especially for the film and performed (in contrast to the ubiquitous *Member of the Wedding* tune, used in the coda in all previous versions, "His Eye Is on the Sparrow") by a white performer, Willow Wray.

In removing the coda, Frankie's troubles which she voiced or implied, imaginary or real, petty or existential, maintain their significance, and the viewers are asked to untangle them by themselves. They are clearly shown as

pertaining to the white audience which is a major turning point in the approach to race. While in the previous versions, the theme of loneliness and a wish to belong which the authors introduced through Frankie, was deemed as universally human, only to be dropped onto Berenice in the end; here, Berenice's purpose is not to take the burden off of Frankie, but to help her deal with it. She is not the 50ish fat mammy figure, but a young-looking, slender, attractive and (relatively) independent person; the Addams family cherishes her for her cooking and treats her almost like a family member – she goes with them to the wedding, being the only African American in the house.

T.T. is an African American middle-class businessman who owns a restaurant in this version, Honey, the source of racial tensions in many of the previous versions, is left out. The only reminder of the Jim Crow era in which the film is set is the bus scene in which Berenice is shown sitting in the back in a section allocated for her race; the racial edge of the scene is, however, softened by Frankie's presence next to her. The absence of Honey, along with the absence of the coda, breaks the unchallenged bond between race and gender oppression – in this version, loneliness is not universal, it is gendered and racialized.

The gender and race configurations in the last version of *The Member of the Wedding* disclose yet another important aspect which I have only touched upon tangentially so far – the age of the actresses, whether they either look their age or not, and the way this influences the perception of the characters. In the critical discourse assessing the films and TV plays the biggest issue was the age and appearance of the actresses who played Frankie. In my opinion, though, the interaction between the actresses and the role of Berenice is of similar importance, as it discloses an interplay between the character itself, its stereotypical/prevalent reading, and the performance which binds both aspects.

As to the character of Frankie Addams, Julie Harris was 26 in the 1952 version, Collin Wilcox was 23 when she played Frankie in 1958, Dana Hill was 18 in 1982, and Anna Paquin was 14 in the last version in 1997. While Dana Hill probably looked the youngest in the role, due to her stunted growth caused by childhood diabetes, which limited her height to 5 feet 2 inches (approx. 157,5 cm) and her weight to 82 pounds (approx. 37 kilos), and made her look

distinctly "baby-faced,"[472] the growing effort to match the age of the character with that of the actress is evident from the sheer comparison of the numbers. This tendency is definitely part of a wider phenomenon and changes in casting policy and social expectations, in the case of *The Member of the Wedding* adaptations the effect is singular.[473]

I have already mentioned in my analysis of the last version the uncanny feeling resulting from the sexualization of childlike-looking Frankie, played by Anna Paquin; the lowering age of the actresses also influences the issue of masquerade and its power to deconstruct southern femininity.

In many of the reviews of the 1952 version, Julie Harris was marked as unconvincing in the part; "never a little girl in appearance,"[474] "betrayed by the propinquous camera into looking her own grown-up age rather than that of the youngster that she is supposed to be."[475] Frankie's sudden change into a young woman in the coda was nothing incongruous in this logic, resulting in Harris's looking more her age. Frankie's behavior nevertheless remained the same, which opened a space for theorizing masquerade, as masquerade operates just in this crack between the feminine look and unfeminine behavior.

In the following versions the issue of masquerade and the deconstruction of femininity as an essential, inborn feature is brought about by Frankie wearing her grown-up dress to the wedding and looking rather odd and clumsy, failing to match her dress with a fitting behavior; her appearance in the coda thus only echoes her wedding outfit and generates doubt rather than confidence in Frankie's newly acquired femininity.

The last version leaves the frame of masquerade in this respect, as Frankie neither wears the grown-up dress to the wedding, nor appears as grown-up and feminine in the coda; the issue of masquerade is therefore played out through her mimicking of the bride, which makes her confront the consequences

[472] Doris Klein Bacon, "Diabetes Has Slowed Her Growth, But Not Her Talent – Dana Hill Is Big Enough *To Shoot the Moon*," *People* 8 Mar. 1982: 135–37.
[473] For more on the matter of adult actors playing children, see Ian Wojcik–Andrews, *Children's Films: History, Ideology, Pedagogy, Theory* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000); for a provocative reading of this issue, see Kristen Lee Hatch, "Playing Innocent: Shirley Temple and the Performance of Girlhood, 1850–1939," Diss. University of California Los Angeles, 2006.
[474] Brog, rev. of *The Member of the Wedding* 3.
[475] Bosley Crowther, "The Screen in Review," *New York Times* 31 Dec. 1952:10.

of thus acquired femininity – her open display on the sexual market and the inherent violence. Masquerade here however does not invite any revision of femininity, as Frankie's problem stem from her desire to become a woman too early.

The absence of the coda in the final version is of crucial importance not only on the level of gender and the deconstruction of femininity through masquerade and potential deconstruction of heterosexuality through the emphasis upon threesomes, but on the level of race as well, as it profoundly changes the role of Berenice. The major reason for this shift was the casting of Alfre Woodard. While Ethel Waters was 56 when she played Berenice, Claudia McNeil was 41, and Pearl Bailey 62, Alfre Woodard was 45. The photos of the former actresses taken around the time respective films/TV plays were produced reveal the tendency to portray Berenice as an oldish, mammy figure.

This tendency lasted well into the 1980s and was broken only by the casting and performance of Alfre Woodard in the last version. All the three women preceding her in the role had been older than Berenice was said to be either in the play or the novel. The point, however, is not only the actual age of the actresses, but rather their appearance – all were overweight and rather asexual.

In this respect, the casting of Alfre Woodard in the role of Berenice is a radical step in the history of the representation of this character. She cancels the character's long-time bond with the mammy image and recreates Berenice as a complementary model of femininity for Frankie. While Janice is the model of the unattainable femininity for Frankie, Berenice presents the use and mastering of feminine tricks. Suggesting that instead of falling in love with the wedding, Frankie should start thinking about getting herself a "nice little white boy beau," Berenice provides her with both the reason and the means of becoming a woman.

When Frankie asks what she would do with a beau, Berenice answers pragmatically: "Do, foolish? Why, make him treat you to picture shows for one thing."[476] Berenice's advice links masquerade with African American

[476] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fielder Cook, Hallmark Home Entertainment, 1997, DVD.

womanhood. When she explains to Frankie that to catch a beau, she should "fix [herself] nice in [her] dresses, speak sweetly and act sly,"[477] she reminds the viewer of an earlier scene in which she did exactly that before her night out with T.T.

Femininity in the last version of *The Member of the Wedding* is shown not just as something gentle, good-looking and fragrant, but at the same time, as a convenient stratagem to navigate one's life, and reach one's goals. The presence of Berenice as a youthful woman allows for the first time in the history of the adaptations, to focus less on the racial plight of this character, and show more of her racialized and gendered jouissance.

Both models of femininity – Janice and Berenice – are nevertheless strikingly conservative in the way they support heterosexuality. Although each of them has a different class and race background, their versions of femininity share their male-centeredness. Frankie's aborted attempt at a heterosexual contact thus automatically excludes her from femininity and leaves her, despite her dresses, between genders, not masculine anymore, not feminine so far. Frankie's liminality, perpetuated in the previous versions by her masquerade and lesbian overtones in the coda, is here achieved simply through her failure at participating in the heterosexual race.

Tomboyism as the intersection of gender, race, class and sexuality, has undergone profound and dynamic transformations in the four films and TV plays I have discussed in this chapter and it was by no means a linear development. Whereas in the 1950s it was profoundly masculine, racialized and impossible to categorize socially, the tomboy being the ultimate other, in later versions it gradually came to represent universal human loneliness – starting with the 1958 Frankie who as an artist feels more acutely than others the threat of the oncoming nuclear war, over the 1978 Frankie, the symbol of the growing pains in insecure times, to Frankie in the 1997 version who is barred access into the world of heterosexual femininity and is left behind.

As the actresses who play Frankie got younger, the character lost much of its masculinity, racialization and aggressiveness. The 1997 Frankie returns to

[477] *The Member of the Wedding*, dir. Fielder Cook.

the darkness of tomboys with her hair and eye color, she is nevertheless profoundly feminine, even cute, in comparison with the previous Frankies. Compared to them, she is also very conformist, trying hard to become the member of the adult white feminine world that her brother's fiancée Janice represents. Her tragedy then is that the road to this kind of femininity is shown to lead through heterosexuality which is inextricably linked to violence.

7. THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER AS A FILM: TOMBOYISM IN THE MIDST OF THE RACE AND CLASS STRUGGLE

7.1. Not About Racial Problems – Shooting in Selma, Alabama, after the Bloody Sunday

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter (1940), Carson McCullers's second novel featuring a tomboyish character caught between childhood and adolescence (first in the chronological order), has been filmed only once, in 1967, on location in Selma, Alabama, a city which became nationally (in)famous two years earlier for the "Bloody Sunday" march for civil rights, which took place on March 7, 1965, was stopped by a brutal and televised police blockade, and left several people hospitalized.[478]

Reverberations of violent racial tensions were still in the air during the shooting and the local attitude toward the racially mixed film crew was aptly captured by the *Look* reporter: "The shooting took place in Selma, Ala. Quickly, townsfolk were rumoring that Sondra's film mother had been raped on location by Negro actor Percy Rodriguez ('One nice thing about working in Selma,' said a bitter Rodriguez, 'it's so close to the United States')."[479]

Because of the town's recent history, all parties involved tried hard not to make any connection between the novel's racial theme, the focus of the prepared film and the current racial turmoil. The reason for filming in Selma in the first place, as explained in the promotion leaflet, is nevertheless highly ironical in the light of contemporary events – the production claimed that Selma provided "the perfect background of a small contemporary southern city whose tree-lined streets and stately homes have changed little in over a century."[480]

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[478] For more on the role of Selma in the Civil Rights struggle, see for instance *The Race Beat*, which also covers the way these events were communicated nationwide. Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (2006; New York: Random House, 2007) 375–94.
[479] Daniel Chapman, "First Film for a Fresh Young Pro," *Look* 2 Apr. 1968: M14.
[480] Publicity leaflet, folder 34. *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – publicity, Joel Freeman Papers, Special Collections, AMPAS.

A similarly defensive position is adopted by the film's director Robert Ellis Miller, who in a *New York Times* report cleverly cuts the film's theme off from the present-day problems:

'Frankly, we were worried about coming to Selma,' says Miller […], 'after the unsavory reputation of the past few years. But once he learned that this was not a film about racial problems, the mayor said "It will give us an opportunity to show the rest of the world we're not a bad town."'[481]

The mayor's efforts at the whitewashing of Selma and diminishing its role in the race struggle went even further. After a decade of the Civil Rights movement which swept the South and recently overflew into other states of the country, the mayor of Selma depicted the place as almost heavenly:

People of all races are welcome here; they'll be treated fairly within the law… we're abiding by the law, which is a hell of a lot more than you're doing up there. Why you all are burning up the place up there; this is the safest place to be.[482]

Local inhabitants of Selma also defended their town, decrying the novel's themes as historic and local. A school newspaper informing about the shooting praised the novel's skillful portrait of "the reactions of different types of people to the emotion of loneliness," it was nevertheless strongly opposed to its portrayal of Southern racism and bigotry:

This same story, however, also contains the elements of social class struggle, racial injustice, and moral perversion […]. These conditions may well have existed in Columbus thirty years ago, but they do not exist in Selma today.[483]

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[481] Rex Reed, "The Stars Fall on Alabama – Again," *New York Times*, 10 Dec. 1967: 19.
[482] The mayor was hinting at race riots occuring during the preceding summer in northern cities like Newark and Detroit. Rev. of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *Jet* 14 Sept. 1967: 42. Box 41, folder 032209 (*The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – breaks and reviews), Warner Bros. Corporate Archive, Sun Valley, California.
[483] Earl Taylor, editorial, *Ram Pages* 16 Nov. 1967: 2. Box 2, folder 16 (*The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – clippings), Joel Freeman Papers, Special Collections, AMPAS. *Ram Pages* was the paper of the Albert G. Parrish High School in Selma, Alabama.

Moral perversion probably refers to homosexuality, while racial injustice obviously does not include segregation, in effect in Selma institutions at the time of the shooting, according to an internal memo:

> We understand that there are two kinds of ambulances, white and colored. […] The doctors of the clinic, incidentally, handle both white and colored people. The hospital handles both, with equal accomodation, though it is segregated.[484]

Racial issues, which according to the director were not the topic of the film, and according to the mayor were not a topic at all in Selma in 1968, were nonetheless a crucial topic for the film's scriptwriter Thomas C. Ryan, who was also, along with Marc Merson, the film's producer. As a deeper comparative look into the script versions reveals, situations involving African American characters and their contact with whites were the most often reworked ones. This naturally influenced the way tomboyism and its association with non-whiteness was presented.

Portia Copeland, the African American maid, for instance, occupies a role similar to that of Berenice Sadie Brown in *The Member of the Wedding* in an early script version from March 15, 1966. She oversees Mick's behavior and tries to make her embrace the ways of a proper lady: "Mick, I done told you afore. Nice young ladies does not come bustin' into rooms."[485] In the last version of the script, as well as the film itself, Portia does not even work in the Kelly household and the role of Mick's chaperon is taken by Mick's father, who is unable to act as any authority in the family, leaving all decision-making to Mick's mother. The instant connection between Singer, the deaf-mute, and Dr. Copeland, Portia's father, which Copeland attributes to Singer's Jewishness (i.e. his experience with otherness-based discrimination), as well as Copeland's exchange with Jake Blount on race and class oppression, is missing altogether in all versions of the script. Instead, Copeland is shown as an extremely proud man

[484] Memo to Larry Kostroff, Bob Anderson, Marty Hornstein and Maggie Smith, box 3, folder 32 (*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* – Production), Joel Freeman Papers, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[485] Thomas C. Ryan, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – script, 15 Mar, 1966, 14. MS. Folder 677, John Huston Papers, Special Collections, AMPAS.

who despises all whites; his abhorrence is manifested in a scene in which he tries to light his cigarette and Singer offers help only to get "an expression of contempt" from Copeland, who "removes the cigarette from between his lips, breaks it in two, lets the pieces drop to the gutter."[486]

The most problematic racially-imbued scene, which was commented on most frequently, is a scene featuring the clash of the races – the fight at the merry-go-round, which in the novel is decidedly racist and leads to the incarceration of Portia's husband and his loss of a leg due to gangrene. In one of the script versions, there is a note attached to the description of this scene, which is reminiscent of the efforts on the part of the producers of the 1952 version of *The Member of the Wedding* to restrain racial tensions in the scene where Honey is attacked by the police and T.T. explains that it could have happened to anyone:

> In the playing of the following scene, it is important that any implication of racism be avoided. What is about to happen is a human situation, and could just as easily have happened to two white couples, two Negro couples, or, as in this case, one white and one Negro.[487]

The source of the conflict was re-focused several times in the scriptwriting process – from having a white woman steal Portia's ticket to one of the attractions, and Portia defending herself; through a slightly drunk white woman falling over Portia's husband Willie, who helps her stand up, while the husband of the white woman jostles Portia, which leads to a fight; to the final combination of accident and individual prejudice portrayed in the film. In the finally approved scene, the white woman falls by accident on the merry-go-round and rips her blouse, Willie helps her stand up, and a few minutes later the woman's husband jostles Portia and tells his friends Willie grabbed and ripped his wife's blouse on purpose; Portia and Willie run away but the woman's husband and his friends follow them and start a fight in which one of the men pulls a knife which Willie seizes and stabs several times, leaving one of the men

[486] Thomas C. Ryan, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – final shooting script, 25. MS. Folder 72, James Wong Howe Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[487] Thomas C. Ryan, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – script, 70–71, MS. Box 2, folder 9, Joel Freeman Papers, Special Collections, AMPAS.

seriously injured. Thus, although the final version does feature obvious racial prejudice, it is in no way a systemic one, but purely an individual one. A white man, Jake Blount, who operates the merry-go-round, tries to stop the men from chasing Willie; no other white bystanders participate in the fight either, which prevents the fight from growing into a riot.

Such an extensive concern about the racial impact of one particular scene is difficult to understand, given that the outcome of the fight, about which the viewer learns from Blount, amounts to six months of hard labor for Willie and no punishment for the men who started the fight, which is an "implication of racism" par excellence.

7.2. Tomboyism Between Middle-Class Masculinity and Working-Class Femininity

In this frame, tomboyism gains considerably smaller attention as well as space in the film. *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is nevertheless a unique film regarding the representation of tomboyism, as it is defined not primarily through gender transgression, but as an amalgam of gender, sexuality, race and class.

In her outlook, as presented by the actress Sondra Locke, Mick is an epitome of healthy white girlhood – she is slender and delicate, with long blond hair and big green-grey eyes; she is a "cotton-haired, creamy-dreamy, moon-pie Southern teen-ager," as a reviewer put it.[488] Although her hair is pulled back in a braid and she is wearing shorts and a male shirt when we first see her, she has no problem changing her hair style and put on a skirt or a dress for school and at special occassions. And while her mother scolds her for stamping down the stairs like her junior brother, instead of walking them softly, and her father hits her for talking back, it is not her violations of codes of proper behavior that cast doubt upon her femininity, but her social status. Mick's tomboyism is thus allowed to flourish only at the time of the family's well-being; when they get poorer, it is simply put away.

[488] Rex Reed, "The Stars Fall on Alabama – Again" 19.

The family is supposed to go through a period of poverty, caused by the injury of Mick's father and his subsequent rehabilitation, which makes him unable to work and provide for them. Thus, they rent a room in their house, Mrs. Kelly repairs clothes and Mr. Kelly mends watches to make ends meet. As the situation is rather new, their social status is not fixed but on the move. They live in a spacious and well-kept house in a decent neighborhood which bespeaks middle-class background (although the script argues that it is "definitely not the home of wealthy people"[489]); and despite the hardships the family experiences, there is no discussion about leaving the house for something smaller and easier to manage.

The house definitely helps the family to keep up middle-class appearances. What complicates a clear definition of their social status further is Mick's mother, a rather plain and tactless creature ("common" as southern middle-class women would say) with "the pinched look of poverty and the disappointed look of one who asks little of life and gets it,"[490] who constantly reminds everyone of the family's dismal financial situation and lowers their class status more than necessary. This is illustrated best in the scene where Mick asks for the permission to give a party which is supposed to help her socialize more and mark her entrance into the adolescent phase. Although it costs near to nothing and Mick is able to pay for it with her own savings for her mother, it is only a matter of "throwing money away."[491]

Mick maneuvers her own position between her mother's bitter cynicism on one hand and her father's unrealistic promises, desperately trying to deny the family's economic decline, on the other one. She feels she has the power to break free from the burden of her social position, the only obstacle being her mother. Facing the necessity to quit school and get a job, Mick pleads with her mother to find a different solution:

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[489] Thomas C. Ryan, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – final shooting script, 15. MS. Folder 72, James Wong Howe Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[490] Thomas C. Ryan, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – final shooting script, 16. MS. Folder 72, James Wong Howe Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[491] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller, perf. Sondra Locke, Alan Arkin, Cicely Tyson, Warner Home Video, 2008, DVD.

Mick: ‘But Mama, I want to make something of myself, Mama. I got this feeling inside me that I was destined for something.’ Mrs. Kelly: ‘We all have that feeling when we are young. It will pass.’[492]

At the same time, Mick’s father, who always supported her, ceases to have any say in the family, which Mick notices with angry disappointment:

Mr. Kelly: ‘Don’t you worry baby. She’ll come round. You just leave it to me.’ Mick: ‘Oh, Papa, that’s what you always say. […] That’s what you said about my room, wasn’t it? You said you wouldn’t let her rent it. But she did.[493]

Moving between these two positions unsettles Mick’s social status and makes it difficult to pinpoint. Her class is thoroughly gendered – masculinity in the family is associated with middle-class status, while femininity is low-class. Once Mick’s father falls ill, loses authority in the family, and the mother takes over, the class decline follows inevitably. In this way, the film translates systemic problems into personal issues – the Kelly family becomes poor because of the mother’s commonplace attitudes.

In her efforts to raise herself in the social-class arena, Mick discovers the power of sexuality. She first tries to enhance her status by means of friendship with an upper-middle-class schoolmate Delores, but she looks down on Mick; then she starts to date Delores’ brother Harry. This move, though obviously based on mutual attraction, has distinctly social associations. At the party Mick gives, Harry compares her to her sister’s other friends: “You know, you’re not much like the other girls Delores knows. […] A guy can talk to you and you’ll give him a straight answer. And besides, you smell different than they do.”[494]

Harry’s remark about Mick’s perfume is very pertinent, as it encapsulates her class masquerade and connects social status with female sexuality even more firmly. Just a moment earlier in the film she explains the secret of her smell to Mr. Singer:

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[492] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.
[493] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.
[494] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.

Nice, isn't it? All the other girls wearing ten-cent store perfume. I think it smells cheap. Besides it costs too much. So I just swiped some vanilla extract from the kitchen. I figure if I don't smell sexy, at least I'll be appetizing.[495]

Making use of her sexuality to get a better social position is also what Mick's mother recommends to her. When Mick's summer job ceases to contribute to her dream of saving up for a piano, but becomes the vital income which keeps the family going, she has to quit school. Complaining that it will curtail her future chance at a social advancement – "without a high school diploma what chance have I got?" – Mick's mother lays out the future available to her: "You'll meet some fellow and get married. If you're lucky, you'll love him. You'll have kids. That's what life is, Mick. That's all it is."[496] In this exchange, class is unmistakably gendered and profoundly sexualized – the only way for Mick to change her social position is heterosexual marriage.

Poverty, or lower-class status in this case, ironically does not cancel the rigid gender hierarchy characteristic of the middle-class mindset. After Mr. Kelly's injury, which leaves him in a wheelchair, it is the women of the family who must take on the role of both breadwinners and homemakers; there is no way Mr. Kelly could look after the small kids, while Mick would continue going to school and Mrs. Kelly would find herself a job:

Mr. Kelly: 'Margaret, maybe there's some way… we haven't figured yet…' […] Mrs. Kelly: 'The only other way is for me to get a job. And Mick would still have to stay home to look after you and the boys.'[497]

Neither Mick, nor her father protest this conclusion.

Mick, who seems opposed to her mother's disillusioned pragmatism, slowly adopts her view of sexuality as commodity. She decides to have sex with Harry in order to have something which belongs to her, after she was robbed of her room, school, and the future she imagined to have. It is her who urges Harry:

[495] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.
[496] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.
[497] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.

Harry:'Do you think we should?' Mick: 'Please. Let me have just one thing the way I want it to be.'[498]

After the intercourse, Harry is devastated and Mick clearly voices her aversion to heterosexuality, which on the other hand seems inevitable to her:

Harry: 'It's all my fault. […] It's a terrible sin and you're two years younger than me.' Mick: 'No. I wanted it to happen. I wasn't any kid. Now I wish I was.' Harry: 'Do you think we ought to get married or something?' Mick: 'No, I don't think I'll ever get married.'[499]

Ironically, this experience makes her into a woman – she changes her name from Mick to Margaret and her behavior gets profoundly tamed. Her class, gender and heterosexuality interlock and shut her in a position of a disenchanted working-class girl.

In the final scene, she brings flowers to the grave of Mr. Singer, the deaf-mute who rented her room in their house and with whom she became friends, and tells him that she loved him. Her posthumous declaration of love sounds rather odd, as it sexualizes their relationship in retrospect, although it had rather been presented as a daughter-father alliance thoughout the film. Singer embodies Mick's classed ambitions – he buys himself a phonograph after he learns about Mick's passion for music, and it is to him that Mick comes to mourn the loss of the dreams about her future.

The possibility of a romantic involvement is played out as a pun, though possibly with a real core. Mick's brother Bubber teases her about her love for Mr. Singer, using the same phrase and sing-song style that Berenice did in *The Member of the Wedding* when she was teasing Frankie about her affection for her brother's wedding: "Mick's got a crush on Mr. Singer. Mick's got a crush on Mr. Singer." Mick gets upset and rejects all allusions so vehemently that her father joins the teasing: "Deny it too loud and we're liable to think it's true."[500]

The romantic involvement of Mick and Mr. Singer is further hinted at in the early version of the script. When Mick comes from the picnic with Harry

[498] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.
[499] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.
[500] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.

where they had sex, she goes to Mr. Singer and confides to him that she is in love. The script describes Mr. Singer's reaction as follows: "Slowly an expression of pain mingled with disappointment steals over Singer's face as he realizes that it is with Harry Mick thinks she is in love."[501] Although this scene was omitted in the final version, it might serve as the key to the film's final scene.

Robert Aldridge sees another reason for Mick's final revelation:

> [I]t is she now who articulates the central theme of both book and film when she says: 'I loved you Mr. Singer. I loved you.' The theme of love – individual love – is preserved, then, realized by Biff Brannon in the novel, Mick Kelly in the film.[502]

This reading of the film distinguishes Mick as the most important character and tries to argue with the tragic and despondent tone of the film's ending, at the same time, though, this is the first time Mick talks about her feelings for Singer, which makes their relationship very much unrealized. In my view, this scene is introduced solely to confirm Mick's development into a grown-up woman, fully entangled within the heteronormative matrix, accustomed to her gender and class position. At Singer's grave, Mick bids farewell not only to her friend, but to her tomboyish childhood as well.

7.3. Tomboyism, Sexuality and Playing Middle-Class in the 1960s

Mick's trajectory in the film forms an interesting counterpoint to the view of feminine class and sexuality, voiced in the 1960s by *Cosmopolitan*'s editor-in-chief Helen Gurley Brown. Although Cosmopolitan, as many women's magazines, was targeted primarily at middle-class readership, Gurley Brown's vision precludes such simple distinctions.

In her self-help bestseller *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) as well as in her Cosmopolitan articles, addressed to working and single girls and women, Brown

[501] Thomas C. Ryan, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – script, 15 Mar, 1966, 132. MS. Folder 677, John Huston Papers, Special Collections, AMPAS.
[502] Robert Aldridge, "Two Planetary Systems," *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers* 186.

presented sexuality as a route to upward class mobility, and, as Laurie Ouellette suggests, "articulated a girl-style American dream that promised transcencence from class roles as well as sexual ones."[503] According to Ouellette, Brown and the cultural discourse she helped to articulate, reshaped class from an economic and social category into a cultural construction, "a fragmented and sexualized identity," which could be transformed "through a combination of self-management strategies, performative tactics, sexuality and upwardly mobile romance."[504]

The general view of what it means to be a woman in a specific social position, presented by Mrs. Kelly and adopted by Mick, follows this advice step by step. In a quasi-comical scene of the preparation for the party, Mick is introduced by means of a fashion magazine into the art of fabricated femininity. Unhappy about her flat chest, she tries to boost it by means of a pair of socks; after a moment, however, she changes her mind and removes the padding. As the conversation with Singer about her vanilla perfume reveals a couple of hours later, the magazine advice did not fall on deaf ears.

Mick employs masquerade on many other occasions (limited to aspects of clothing and hairstyle) and tries to emulate upper-middle-class speech patterns and interests, believing, as *Cosmopolitan* was telling its readers, that class is malleable and that traditional femininity and heterosexuality lead to upward social mobility. Mick's sexual encounter with Harry, her ideal "upwardly mobile romance," nevertheless shatters her belief and sheds a new light upon Mick's endeavors at an identity make-over, and thus, on the path promoted by the Cosmo Girl image.

Although she is quite good at passing as middle-class, having internalized the necessary "cultural capital,"[505] Mick has not identified with what

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[503] Laurie Ouellette, "Inventing the Cosmo Girl: Class Identity and Girl-Style American Dreams," *Media Culture Society* 21.3 (1999): 360.
[504] Laurie Ouellette, "Inventing the Cosmo Girl" 360.
[505] Borrowing the concept of cultural capital from Pierre Bourdieu, Ouellette sums up Brown's advice and points out the conservative dark side of the masquerade Brown proposes: "Women were essentially advised to 'pass' as members of the bourgeoisie by studying and copying its presumably superior tastes, knowledges and cultural competencies. […] This advice often involved appropriating cultural signifiers of class, particularly European cuisine, art, foreign languages and good books. […] By extending the aura of cultural capital to the female masses, this discourse subverted

the Cosmo Girl takes for granted – adult femininity. "I guess I'm all grown up now," voices Mick her nightmare after the sexual intercourse. Though she does not mention what scares her about being grown up, it is evidently her entry into the classed, gendered and sexualized world. It is exactly this tentative relation towards femininity (and class) which makes Mick into a tomboyish character at last, despite her very un-tomboyish look.

So far, literary as well as filmic tomboys have displayed several characteristics which allowed them to be instantly identifiable once they appeared on the page or screen – dark and/or short-cropped hair, ostensibly boyish attire and rough manners. With Mick Kelly embodied by Sondra Locke, tomboyism enters a new territory and becomes a complicated cross-section of many physiological and psychological traits and social influences. At first glance, Sondra's Mick has nothing to do with the usual tomboy – definitely, no tomboyish character has ever been described as "creamy dreamy."[506]

Tomboyism, however, does not disappear from *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, despite Mick's feminization and whitewashing, but gets translated into energy, restlessness, and unfocused ambition. In the script, Mick is described as "crammed full with vitality, dreams, plans, and a restless longing for something which she has not yet found but of whose existence she is sure." [507]

Many critics of the film notice a keen vitality and animation of Sondra Locke's acting style, comparing her performance to that of Julie Harris in *The Member of the Wedding*. "Sondra Locke […] is like watching Julie Harris reincarnated," writes one of the film's reviewers.[508] Mick's liveliness is nevertheless quite cute in comparison with the aggressivity and anger of Julie Harris as Frankie.

Despite this softening, Mick is called a tomboy by most reviewers, and some praise Locke's flexibility in capturing a wide array of Mick's mental

myth that class is inevitable or natural. However, it also upheld the class pyramid and reproduced social and cultural hierarchies." Laurie Ouellette, "Inventing the Cosmo Girl 368–69.

[506] Rex Reed, "The Stars Fall on Alabama – Again" 19.

[507] Thomas C. Ryan, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – final shooting script, 15. MS. Folder 72, James Wong Howe Collection, Special Collections, AMPAS.

[508] William Wolf, "Two of the year's best," *Cue magazine*, n.d., 20. Box 3, folder 35 (*The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – reviews), Joel Freeman Papers, Special Collections, AMPAS.

states, “the changeling quality of Mick Kelly,” and her metamorphosis from “a scruffy, restless tomboy in jeans to a pretty but disillusioned young woman.”[509]

Mick’s tomboyism is perched exactly onto the masculine/feminine divide – she has big eyes and long blonde hair, and yet she wears shirts and shorts. Locke, or rather her husband Gordon Anderson, were wery much aware of the problems in remaking her glamorous and distinctly feminine beauty into tomboyism, but while trying to make Locke look younger, they surprisingly did not tried to made her look more masculine.

Before applying for the role, Locke underwent a profound makeover, and much of Gordon’s ideas about Mick’s look have been kept in the film. Gordon dyed Mick’s golden blonde hair ashen and thinned them, bleached her eyebrows, created her a peeling sunburned nose with freckles, and bound her breast with Ace bandages. Gordon also made Sondra lie about her age, telling the film company that she was 17 instead of 20, that she lived in Shelbyville, a small southern town, while she was living in Nashville at the time, and also made her pretend she had a thick southern accent. This trick gained much publicity later when it was revealed and occupied much of the space devoted to the film in popular magazines, along with the couple’s romance and marriage.[510] In many of the articles Locke is photographed in highly feminine outfits, with layers of make-up and the beauty of her hair highlighted. There is absolutely no trace of tomboyism in her off-screen persona and her relationship with Gordon (they were childhood sweethearts) stands in for the romance missing in the film’s story.

7.4. A Translucent Awkward Pullet on the Edge of Womanhood

Tomboyism in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is presented in an unprecedented way – while adulthood is seen as rigidly classed, gendered and sexualized,

[509] Louise Sweeney, “Film: Arkin’s Silent Eloquence,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 Aug. 1968: 6.
[510] See for instance Al Ellenberg, “The Many Faces of Sondra Locke,” *Eye* 1.9 (Nov. 1968): 39, 92; Daniel Chapman, “First Film for a Fresh Young Pro” M10–M15; and also Sondra Locke’s autobiography *The Good, the Bad and the Very Ugly: A Hollywood Journey* (New York: William Morrow, 1997) 64–90.

tomboyhood becomes its antipode and the archetype of carefree, class- and sexless childhood with boundless ambitions and possibilities. On one hand, this is a very utopian image, making this type of tomboyism bound to be defeated ultimately, as it does not equip its bearer either with resistance to outside pressure or with endurance; on the other hand, it releases tomboyism from its freakish form embodied by Julie Harris and makes it into a universal recipe for a happy childhood.

The degree of transgression in this type of tomboyism is debatable. Mick's story might be seen as exposing the classed, sexed, racialized and gendered nature of the American Dream and thus rather revolutionary, it nevertheless shows no way out but capitulation and acceptance of the imposed limitations. These changes have naturally been debated in the reviews. While many reviewers (mostly men) were touched by Mick's story, Ann Birstein, for instance, offered an opposite view:

> It's hard not to remember the ridiculous rawboned airs of Julie Harris in *The Member of the Wedding*. Miss Locke is an appealing girl, with […] an eager poignant smile. She's a nice child, the kind of child one sympathizes with. But that's all. There are none of those terrible rough edges to her that can make an adolescent so absurd and so heartbreaking at the same time.[511]

The feminization and whitening of the tomboy representation in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* may be seen as part of a general phenomenon taking place in mainstream media from the late 1950s into the 1960s. Michelle Ann Abate documents this move on the examples of the Nancy Drew series reissued in 1959 and onwards, and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, published in 1960. In both cases, the tomboyish characters are remade in quite a ladylike fashion.[512] I have traced this tendency in my analysis of the film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, in which I have also mentioned the connections of Scout Finch, the tomboyish character, with animal-like behavior.

In the reviews of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, this issue resurfaces – Sondra Locke is compared to a fawn, or a pullet, evoking her childlike

[511] Ann Birstein, rev. of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *Vogue* 1 Sept. 1968: 276.
[512] See Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 166–70.

appearance and need for protection, as well as otherizing her. *Playboy* presents Mick as "the scrawny teenaged pullet whose growing pains are eased by the discovery of music and sex;"[513] for Clifford A. Ridley of the *National Observer*, Locke is "a newcomer with a freckled face, the gait of a newborn fawn, and an irrepressible zest for life;"[514] Al Ellenberg describes her as a "filly;"[515] Eric Rhode calls her "elfish,"[516] while Daniel Chapman labels her as an "adolescent beanstalk."[517] Animal imagery, used predominantly by male critics, distances Mick/Sondra from conventional displays of gender and sexuality and moves her difference into focus without necessarily connecting her behavior to masculine codes of conduct. At the same time, all the fawns and pullets connect Mick's youth to pet-like cuteness, innocence and ignorance, which reframes her worries and struggles as part and parcel of an ordinary and necessary growing-up process.

The views of female critics and reviewers of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* were different in many respects – they saw Mick's childhood as full of unease and awkwardness, and her growing up as agonizing. Jody Jacobs from *Women's Wear Daily* describes Mick in the film as "a waifish tomboy," connecting her with images of frailty and animality on one hand, and vagrancy on the other.[518] For Cerrulia Kent Mick is "Carson McCullers's awkward child teetering on the edge of womanhood," a "girl with a tangle of confused adolescent feelings visible beneath her skin," who looks "vulnerable as the ugly duckling, paralyzed by shyness and ignorance of what grown-up life is all about.[519]

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[513] Rev. of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *Playboy* Oct. 1968: 45. Box 41, folder 032209 (*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* – breaks and reviews), Warner Bros. Corporate Archive, Sun Valley, California.
[514] Clifford A. Ridley, "There's a Warmth and Tenderness to *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*," *National Observer* 5 Aug.1968: n.pag. Box 41, folder 032209 (*The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – breaks and reviews), Warner Bros. Corporate Archive, Sun Valley, California.
[515] Al Ellenberg, "The Many Faces of Sondra Locke" 92.
[516] Eric Rhode, "Mute Singer," *Listener* 19 June 1969: 873.
[517] Daniel Chapman, "First Film for a Fresh Young Pro" M10.
[518] Jody Jacobs, "New Face… In the Movies," *Women's Wear Daily*, 22 July 1968: 8.
[519] Cerrulia Kent, "Good Guys and Bad Guys: *Eye* Reviews Movies," *Eye* 1.8 (Nov. 1968): 10. Box 41, folder 032209 (*The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* – breaks and reviews), Warner Bros. Corporate Archive, Sun Valley, California.

From this perspective, growing up into a woman is far from ordinary and gratifying and its outcome is far from evident. It is an arduous job which involves giving up one's visions of the future, becoming alone and totally selfless.

The comparison of Mick with Frankie from *The Member of the Wedding*, and Sondra's performance with that of Julie Harris is revealing in one more aspect beyond the passive vs. aggressive performance debate. While the ending of *The Member of the Wedding* has been interpreted as a happy ending for Frankie, and might be approached as ambiguous and open to queer rereadings, the ending of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* as a film (not a novel) is rather sealed up in this respect. Mick looks grown-up, is well dressed in a neat black coat with her hair tied in a braid and has an air of almost middle-class respectability. She is, however, devoid of all her energy, luster and restlessness, so dear to the reviewers of the film. Instead of masquerade which helps Frankie/ Julie keep the ending open, Sondra plays Mick/Margaret in the end as an embodiment of conformity and defeat, far from any masquerade. The feminist message carried by the tomboy of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is thus stronger than that in *The Member of the Wedding* – a dreaming, music-obsessed Mick has become a working-class dull Margaret.

The transgressive potential of tomboyism is subdued, as it is presented as a childhood identity that cannot be preserved, tomboyism itself epitomizes a strong counterpoint to the idea of a happy teenage femininity which all girls are supposed to embrace. Tomboyism in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is both an expression of utopia and uneasiness. It strives to imagine people as rid of social barriers of class, gender, race and sexuality, although it fails to overcome or integrate them. While tomboyism is not presented as a way out of these barriers, but gives in to outside pressures, it manages to expose the interlocking nature of race, class, and gender oppression in the forming of one's identity.

Mick's whiteness, along with her class status and her gender identity, occupy a precarious position in the film – not only is Mick's class status in motion, not only does her gender identity undergo profound metamorphoses, but her very skin color verges on the translucent. Cerrulia Kent calls Mick

"transparent" in her review,[520] while Ann Berstein notes that Mick/Sondra's skin and hair are "so pale as to be almost albino."[521]

Flaunting her whiteness might serve several purposes. It enhances Mick's ethereal and delicate nature and counteracts more progressive aspects of her gender transgressions, as all her shorts and shirts are light-colored to go well with her fair hair. Furthermore, Mick's "translucence" rectifies the impression of her purity and virginity, damaged by her sexual adventure. Last but not least, her flaunted whiteness counteracts her class decline and sets her off the issue of race which is strongly present in the film through other characters.

These two latter aspects are so crucial in my view that I would like to devote a few lines to them. Class and race (both whiteness and nonwhiteness) are firmly linked in the film and it is impossible to deal with them separately. In the white community, the degree of whiteness determines social position. In this respect, Mick's family is situated between two basic levels – the superior one is occupied by Mick's friend Dolores and her brother Harry as well as Mr. Singer, the inferior by the "white trash" Jake Blount. Blount appears in the film for two reasons – as a warning to the Kelly family, the image of the possible bottom of the social decline that they are experiencing; and, more importantly, to delineate their social position as not "white trash," and therefore unconditionally white.

As socially the lowest among the whites in the film, Blount is an embodiment of the interconnectedness of race and class and he loses his grip on whiteness quite often – he is allowed into the whites-only restaurant, but is soon kicked out; he witnesses the merry-go-round fight and wants to testify, but is not allowed to, being labelled as "irrelevant and immaterial."[522]

Although he dissapears from the film in the middle of it, his character is indispensable for my discussion of tomboyism in yet another aspect. Not only does he delineate Mick's fluctuating social position as lower- to middle-class and secures her whiteness, his overblown masculinity, presented as unattractive, low-class and animalistic, bespeaks a gender crisis at the heart of the film, which may explain Mick's shift toward more feminine appearance and her avoidance

[520] Cerrulia Kent, "Good Guys and Bad Guys: *Eye* Reviews Movies" 10.
[521] Ann Birstein, rev. of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 276.
[522] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.

of masculine features typical for tomboyism. Blount shares another important feature with Mick – the class decline of both is justified by personal flaws. In the case of Mick, it is the common nature of her mother which draws the family down the social ladder, with Blount it is simply his alcoholism and aggressive masculinity.

Just as whiteness in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is shown as malleable and dependent on one's social position, so is blackness. The film's central conflict is a generation clash between an overly ambitious father and an utterly ambitionless daughter – Dr. Copeland, a middle-class African American physician who introduces himself to Mr. Singer as "a man who has hated all whites for as long as I can remember,"[523] is accused of racial betrayal by his daughter Portia because he wanted her to become a doctor and rise socially within the community. In Portia's rhetoric, blackness equals low-class position, while middle-class status necessarily entails racial betrayal and leads to one's "whitening," as well as the loss of identity: "All those years after Mama died, all that time I was growing up... what was I? I don't know. I only know I wasn't white. And you wouldn't let me be black."[524] This perspective, preposterous as it needs to be said, as it denies the existence of social stratification within the African American community of the 1960s South and perpetuates the stereotype of a poor, uneducated-but-happy Negro as the only genuine form of African Americanness, legitimizes her father's absurd assertion that Portia "chose to become a maid."[525] This approach to blackness precludes any contact with whiteness and bans Mick from any association with African American characters. Her flaunted whiteness makes her distinct not only from her own community, but the African American one as well. Thus, her position in the end is rather tragic – while Dr. Copeland and his daughter make up, she sits alone at Mr. Singer's grave crying.

This deconstruction of Mick along aspects of class, sexuality, gender and race has served a simple purpose – to demonstrate the interconnected nature of these aspects in the formation of the tomboyish character, to prove tomboyism

[523] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.
[524] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.
[525] *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, dir. Robert Ellis Miller.

as a concept where all these aspects reverberate with varying intensity, yet a similar impact. While tomboyism might express itself dominantly via gender, adopting signs of masculinity in look and/or behavior, to challenge the natural display of proper femininity, it is similarly effective on the level of sexuality, race and class.

The foregrounding of one of these identity facets results in the questioning of all of them. Mick might look feminine enough, but her class decline, as well as her unpleasant foray into the heterosexual arena, complicate her gender identity in retrospect; her whiteness, on the other hand, counterbalances her fall and keeps the individual identity facets in mutual tension and dependence. The result is not a softened tomboy, as Abate would argue, but a tomboy in which more identity facets operate at the same time and challenge the image of white middle-class heterosexual femininity from multiple angles.

8. CONCLUSION – TOMBOYISM IN THE NEW MILLENIUM AND THE RETURN OF ANDROGYNY

In the last two decades, tomboyism went through an intriguing development, far from its announced death in the 1990s. For the first time in its history, it has become a subject of focused scholarly interest and its movement across the U.S. culture and society has been outlined. At the same time, its scope has gradually become restricted to lesbian identity. This shift has been noticed by Abate already, in connection with the 1990s New Queer Cinema and the following boom of lesbian-themed films, it has also been the outcome of many recent psychological studies.

In their 2010 work on tomboys and sissy girls, Kerry Robinson and Cristyn Davies confirm the transfer of interest in tomboyism and come with an compelling definition of this phenomenon, linking gender performance with queer sensibility. Tomboyism in their view presents

> a heterogeneous, unstable and complex phenomenon, where girls' desires and interests are located in performances of gender that incorporate more traditional masculine behaviours and a negotiation of femininity that challenges heteronormativity.[526]

Robinson and Davies link tomboyism firmly with childhood, but challenge its automatic link to heterosexuality and fixed gender identity. Childhood in their view can be approached as "a potentially queer time and space – a space in which children can subvert dominant discourses of childhood through taking up alternative ways of performing gender."[527]

Abate herself edited a special issue of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies* in 2011 devoted to tomboyism, underwriting further the phenomenon's contemporary link with same-sex desire and queer theory. Although Abate

[526] Kerry Robinson and Cristyn Davies, "Tomboys and Sissy Girls: Exploring Girls' Power, Agency and Female Relationships in Childhood Through the Memories of Women," *Australasian Journal of Early* Childhood 35.1 (Mar. 2010): 26. The term sissy is usually connected with feminine boys, but Robinson and Davies point out its use with girls who display similar characteristics, perceived by their surrounding as undesirable both in boys and girls – emotional fragility, weakness, crying and compliance. See Kerry Robinson and Cristyn Davies, "Tomboys and Sissy Girls" 27–28.
[527] Kerry Robinson and Cristyn Davies, "Tomboys and Sissy Girls" 24.

suggests a very broad definition of tomboyism in her introduction to the issue, embracing both heterosexual and homosexual identification, the very venue of her words clearly points the direction of what may be called tomboy studies.[528]

In 2003 a study appeared which linked typically masculine gender role behavior in girls with higher exposure to testosterone during the mother's pregnancy, moving tomboyism outside of the realm of social pressures into the sphere of inborn inclination.[529] Further studies dealt with the genetic predisposition toward masculine gender behavior in girls due to prenatal hormonal malfunction.[530] Such an approach pathologizes tomboyism it in the long run and is not limited to medicine and genetics, but appears in child psychology as well – the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders* presents a diagnosis of the Gender Identity Disorder, the symptoms of which are dressing like the opposite sex, wanting to be of the opposite sex, and uneasiness about one's own sex.[531]

In this light, McCullers's tomboys, in her books as well as the films and TV programs made of them, occupy a strangely liminal space – they both bring forth older and different views of tomboyism (especially touching on race and class), and anticipate the future development in the sphere. Both *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding* complied with the prevalent formula at the time of their publication of linking gender oppression with that based on race and made their tomboys associate with African Americans in the setting of the Jim Crow South. Despite the fact that tomboys are white and fair-haired, this link, along with their gender transgression into the male sphere of

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[528] See Michelle Ann Abate, Introduction, *Tomboys and Tomboyism*, special issue of *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, ed. Michelle Ann Abate, 15.4 (2011): 407.
[529] See Melissa Hines, et al., "Testosterone during Pregnancy and Gender Role Behavior of Preschool Children: A Longitudinal, Population Study," *Child Development* 73.6 (Nov.–Dec. 2002): 1678–87.
[530] For a more recent research see Hines, "Sex Hormones and Human Destiny," *Journal of Neuroendocrinology* 21.4 (Apr 2009): 437–38; and E. Dati, et al., "A Girl with Tomboy Behavior: Lesson from Misdiagnosis in a Baby with Ambiguous Genitalia," *Sexual Development* 4.3 (2010): 150–54.
[531] See "Gender Identity Disorder," *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV TR* (Arlington: American Psychiatric Association, 2000) 576–82. Although it states that tomboyism should not be incuded under the umbrella of Gender Identity Disorder, one of the criteria is the wish to be a boy, and behaving and presenting as one, making the diagnosis a matter of degree of and persistence in boyish behavior.

appearance and conduct, made them automatically racially ambiguous and difficult to position class-wise as well.

Along with gender rules, McCullers challenges the connection of femininity and heterosexuality in her tomboys. She also highlights social pressure at work during the onset of adolescence, which labels tomboyism as a childhood game needed to be given up when time comes. Both Mick and Frankie feel the constrains of their impending adolescence and adulthood, both of them experiment with heterosexuality, but the result in both cases, as the endings of the novels reveal, is a radical disjunction of heterosexuality, femininity and the female body. Although the tomboys don feminine outfits in the end, they either remain alone, as is the case with Mick, or form a non-normative bond, as is the case of Frankie and her friendship with Mary Littlejohn.

Masquerade and performance play a crucial role in both books and operate on more levels. One is simply the fact of the tomboys' cross-dressing which de-automatizes the link betweeen one's sex and gender expression and reveals gender as performable. The second level involves the sudden final metamorphoses of the tomboys into grown-up women – while Mick feels cheated and her inner monologue is a bizarre combination of child's and adult's thinking, just as is her outfit (women's dress and stockings patched with a piece of chewing gum) and her order in the café (root beer and chocolate sundae); Frankie's female outfit is undermined by her eccentric and theatrical behavior.

The films and TV programs follow an intriguing trajectory in regard to their representation of gender, sexuality, race and class. In the first film, the 1952 *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie is profoundly masculinized through Julie Harris's aggression-prone acting style, racialized by means of dirt and sweat and de-classed in her dark and claustrophobic environment. The promotion campaign for this film was most articulate in the tomboy's transformation into a woman via heterosexuality, and went so far as to reformulate near-rape into a moment of bliss.

The first version of *The Member of the Wedding* is also the one converting the inter-racial connection into racist alienation. In dealing with the

African American characters, specifically Berenice, the cook and caretaker, it introduces (with considerable help of both McCullers and Ethel Waters, the actress playing Berenice) blatant stereotypes and makes Berenice first into the voice of a white middle-class common sense, only to dump all the pain and suffering onto her in the end – in the final scene of the film we see her desperate and abandoned, humming a blues tune with tears in her eyes, while Frankie is crammed with energy and new plans.

This scheme proved unshakeable in the following versions. Although the actresses playing Frankie became younger and their tomboyism less aggressive and angst-ridden and more theatrical and playful, Berenice remained locked in the mammy stereotype and bound to take on the pain and suffering. Only in the final version from 1997 does misery become reversely racialized, focused on Frankie, and Berenice gets released from the mammy trap. In the same version, Frankie becomes dark in her hair and eye color and exotic in her look – she is played by Anna Paquin, a Canadian actress with Irish and New Zealand roots. This move is at odds with a tendency in the representation of tomboyism in the 1990s observed by Abate and described as "the return of whiteness to white tomboyism"[532] which started to highlight the whiteness of tomboys's via blonde, almost whittish hair and fair features, and removed non-white characters from their surroundings. In the 1997 version of *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie is dark and spends most of her time with Berenice.

Paquin's cuteness makes her tomboy very un-masculine, but this feminization is not connected with heterosexuality. It makes Paquin's Frankie into a sexualized object, but her behavior again precludes such an easy link and reveals heterosexual femininity as a masquerade, a performance so powerful that it can overwhelm its performer along with the audience. Along with performance, *The Member of the Wedding* made in 1997 re-opens the issue of the tomboy's androgyny. This choice corresponds with a shift in McCullers's criticism. After more than a decade of disdain and oblivion, the feminist scholars of the 1990s, informed by queer theory, rediscovered androgyny as a viable

[532] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys* 232.

approach towards McCullers's tomboys. As Judith Giblin James writes in her overview of McCullers's criticism:

> The revival of androgyny as a model […] may be impelled by the discovery of bi-, ambi-, uni- and non-sexual freedoms among postmodern youth and the cultural avatars that cater to them. The blurring of gender boundaries, the deconstruction of sex roles in contemporary high style may revive this dimension of McCullers's portraits, as a positive force.[533]

Frankie's androgyny in the last version of *The Member of the Wedding* bypasses the issue of tomboy taming, as I have shown on the example of Scout from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and introduces the option of lifelong tomboyism. This interpretation challenges the impression of a closed and tragically-ending story, as it leaves Frankie as an "unregenerate tomboy," as Patricia White called her.[534]

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter as a film is similar to the last version of *The Member of the Wedding* in its treatment of the tomboy. Although the reviewers compared Mick and Sondra Locke's performance with Frankie and Julie Harris, Locke's Mick is in many ways the opposite of Harris's Frankie. There is no trace of aggressivity or masculinity and the version of tomboyism presented in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* touches on androgyny. Just as Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Mick is shown dressed in both shorts and dresses with no significant change in her behavior.

The tomboy from the film version of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is a perfect example of the way individual identity facets intersect and reshape one another. In comparison with *The Member of the Wedding*, class is is more prominent here and imbues both Mick's race, heterosexuality and gender expression. Thus, her dresses and long blonde hair do not have primarily a feminizing function, but they help raise Mick's social position and bestow her with an air of respectability, unavailable to her otherwise. A similar function is performed by her enhanced whiteness – it sets her apart from African American otherness as well as dirt associated with lower class. Mick's whiteness also uplifts her morally, as it manages to alleviate her unhappy sexual experience and

[533] Judith Giblin James, *Wunderkind* 189.
[534] See Patricia White, Introduction, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) xi.

activate the discourse of purity and youthful innocence. Last but not least, Mick's dresses and long hair uphold her heterosexuality following her negative stance on marriage voiced after her first intercourse.

The dealing with filmic rendition of tomboyism opened a new set of questions, as there is no tradition in the representation of this character on the screen. In my selection of examples, I have outlined a set of possible modes of approaching filmic tomboyism, the elements of which are embedded in the film and TV versions of both *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding.* These modes do not exist separately, but interweave with one another – the 1952 version of *The Member of the Wedding* uses female masculinity to the largest degree of all the films, but links it with masquerade; in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* tomboyism is less about transgression into the male domain and more a feminist plea for a broader set of life options for ambitious young girls, and it combines a feminist viewpoint with the idea of androgyny.

In her memoir, Marianne Dresser, an "unrepentant tomboy," as she calls herself, voices what may be a very fitting motto of my work: "Having been a tomboy had taught me that the other side of 'not fitting in' is a subtle subversive energy – the power of difference."[535] Although the publicity campaigns for the films and TV programs I focused on worked hard at convincing the audience that the story they watch is a regular growing-into-a-woman narrative, their incredibility and ultimate failure bespeaks the power of the seemingly powerless character who nevertheless has the gift of making everything seem perfectly queer.

[535] Marianne Dresser, "Confessions of an Unrepentant Tomboy," *Tomboys! Tales of Dyke Derring-Do* 182.

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10. APPENDIX

Figures 1+2: Katherine Hepburn (above) and Winona Ryder (below) as Jo March in *Little Women* in 1933 and 1994. © Columbia Pictures Industries.

The difference between the two Jos is fuelled by the appearance and off-screen personas of the two actresses who play them. Hepburn was twenty six at the time, Winona Ryder, though twenty two in 1994, looked much younger and her looks in no way "redefine the beautiful" as was the case with Hepburn, her darkness was always redeemed by her "doe-eyed […] pretty fragility" off-screen and her "acceptable unthreatening-ness" on-screen.

Figures 3+4: Julie Harris as Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding* (1952). © Columbia Pictures Industries.

Frankie's metamorphosis is not that sudden and profound as it might seem. Her new persona in the coda (below) has lost none of the former's theatricality and excess. Her feminization has stopped at her dress, a beret and a touch of make-up.The only thing that vanished is Frankie's aggressivity.

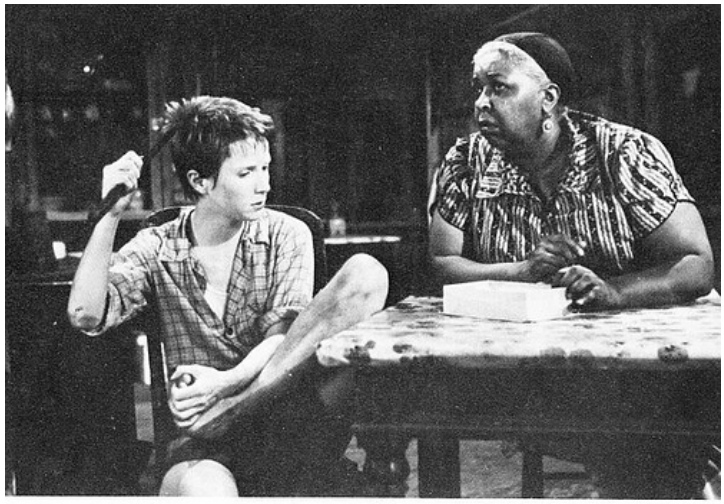

Figure 5: The poster of *The Member of the Wedding* (1952). © Columbia Pictures Industries.

"A girl turns woman in the middle of a kiss in Columbia's *The Member of the Wedding*, at the ..... theater. She's star Julie Harris; he's Dick Moore."
The woman's reserve towards the kiss imbues the would-be-romantic scene with a distinctly queer potential. First of all, there is no kiss in the film.

Figure 6: The poster of *The Member of the Wedding* (1952). © Columbia Pictures Industries.

Most posters combine both the kiss theme and the threesome embrace and add further images from the film – Honey Brown playing the horn; guests gathered at the wedding; and Frankie being drawn crying from the wedding car – creating a collage background. The image of the unfulfilled kiss evokes aggressivity and rejection, and its link to the embrace image, on which both Frankie and John Henry look sad and hopeless and Berenice is smiling in the middle of them, sends mixed emotions to the viewer.

Figure 7: Collin Wilcox as Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding* (1958). © Public domain.

Wilcox in publicity materials looks similar to Harris and is captured in the same feminized way – with slightly longer hair, neatly combed close to the skull, delicate, but distinct layer of make-up, looking away from the picture with a tense and imploring expression.

Figure 8: Dana Hill (left) as Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding* (1982). © Public domain.

In contrast to her predecessors, who were rather lanky and athletic, Dana Hill, the actress playing Frankie, is short, has a round face, and a plump childlike figure; hence, she looks even too small for the part, although she was 18 at the time.

Figure 9: Ethel Waters as Berenice Sadie Brown in *The Member of the Wedding* (1952). © Public domain.

Waters was 56 when she played Berenice and introduced, along with McCullers and the directors the tendency to portray this character as an oldish mammy figure.

Figure 10: Claudia McNeil as Berenice in *The Member of the Wedding* (1958). © Public domain.

McNeil was 41 and her performance offered a "de-mammified" Berenice with a blonde/ whittish hair-wave on her forehead and a perpetual cigarette in the corner of her mouth.

Figure 11: Pearl Bailey (middle) as Berenice in *The Member of the Wedding* (1982). © Public domain.

Berenice in this version of *The Member of the Wedding* underwent a queer change – while she is still the fat, sexless mammy-like character she was in the previous versions, she became much more mannish in appearance, and coarse and down-to-earth in speech and behavior. She wears a black patch over her eye most of the film which gives her a bizarre pirate look.

Figure 12: Alfre Woodard as Berenice in *The Member of the Wedding* (1997). © USA Network.

Woodard was 45 when she played Berenice. It is only in this version that this character leaves the mammy stereotype and is presented as a young independent woman.

Figure 13: Frankie Addams (Anna Paquin) in the 1997 version of *The Member of the Wedding* © USA Network.

Anna Paquin was 14 at the time and looked very childlike and fragile in the part. Her performance abandons masculinity inherent in tomboyism and brings darkness back into the concept.

Figure 14: Sondra Locke (right) as Mick Kelly in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter (1968) © Warner Bros–Seven Arts.

With Mick Kelly embodied by Sondra Locke, tomboyism enters a new territory and becomes a complicated cross-section of many physiological and psychological traits and social influences. In this case, Mick's overblown whiteness and her low social position counteract her feminine look.