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The Perception of Women as Objects in *The Crimson Petal and the White*

Vnímání žen jako objektů v románu *Kvítek karmínový a bílý*

Bakalářská práce

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Abstrakt:

Cílem této práce je představit román *The Crimson Petal and the White* současného nizozemského anglicky píšícího autora Michela Fabera a prozkoumat vztahy mezi sexuálními třídami mužů a žen optikou feministických teorií přivlastňování a objektivizace, které budou aplikovány na hlavní ženské postavy. Tyto teorie vycházejí z prací feministických filozofek Collette Guillaumin a Sandry Bartky. Aplikací těchto teorií bude analyzováno vnímání žen jako objektů pro uspokojení mužských potřeb a jejich vlastní účast na své objektivizaci. Dále budou rozebrány pojmy deviace a správného chování charakteristické pro viktoriánskou éru jako součást prostředků nadvlády jedné třídy nad druhou.

Klíčová slova

Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White,* literatura 21. století, neoviktoriánská literatura, feminismus, Colette Guillaumin, sexage, přivlastnění, Sandra Bartky, objektivizace, sebeobjektivizace, šílenství, viktoriánská doba

Annotation

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to introduce the novel *The Crimson Petal and the White* by the contemporary Dutch-born author Michel Faber, and to examine the relationships between the sex classes of men and women through the lens of the feminist theories of appropriation and objectification, which will be applied on the novel's main female characters. The theories are based on the work of the feminist scholars Collette Guillaumin and Sandra Bartky. By applying these theories, the perception of women as objects for the satisfaction of male needs and their own complicity in their objectification will be analyzed. Moreover, the notions of deviance and proper behavior characteristic to the Victorian era will be shown as a part of the means of domination of one class over another.

Key words

Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White*, 21st century literature, Neo-Victorian literature, feminism, Colette Guillaumin, sexage, appropriation, Sandra Bartky, objectification, self-objectification, madness, Victorian era

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucí práce a uvedla úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne 10.5.2023 Podpis: 

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Introduction

The year 2022 marked the twenty-year anniversary of Michel Faber's second novel *The Crimson Petal and the White.* A literary sensation upon its publication, the novel does not cease to attract new audiences. Stretching over more than 800 pages, the novel manages to pull the reader into the labyrinth of nineteen-century London and keep them intrigued thanks to its alluring combination of typical elements of Victorian fiction and modern understanding of the world. A madwoman, a prostitute with the heart of gold, child labor, a rags-to-riches story, it is full of literary clichés, which are, to a great extent, subverted. It is a story as much for the connoisseur of the nineteenth century literature, as for a reader of the fast-paced and sexualized world that we live in nowadays. The novel is a rewarding subject for the academics for the depiction of female madness, gender roles, family relationship or social critique.

The objective of this thesis is to examine the social relationship between the classes of men and women, in which the women are perceived as objects, rather than full-fledged human beings. The theoretical basis that the thesis is built on are interconnected theories of appropriation and objectification by French feminist philosopher Colette Guillaumin and American professor of philosophy and gender studies Sandra Bartky, respectively. Guillaumin's theory introduces the term *sexage* as "the class relationship whereby the bodies, work and time of women as a whole, are appropriated for the personal and social benefit of men as a whole."[1] There are two forms of this relationship. The first one is the collective appropriation of all women in society, which is revealed through its private form, marriage.[2] The link between Guillaumin's and Bartky's theories lies in the fact that both authors perceive the unequal position of women in society as the result of the objectification of women by men. According to Bartky, women undergo sexual objectification in society by being too closely identified with their bodies. Sexual objectification occurs "when a woman's sexual parts or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they

[1] Nicole-Claude Mathieu, "Sexual, Sexed and Sex-Class Identities: Three Ways of Conceptualising the Relationship Between Sex and Gender, "in *Sex in Question French Materialist Feminism,* edited by Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 61

[2] Colette Guillaumin, "The Practice of Power and Belief in Nature," in *Sex in Question French Materialist Feminism*, edited by Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 89.

were capable of representing her."[3] This perception of women bears consequences for the way they see themselves and leads to their self-objectification, which, in turn, causes a duality in feminine consciousness. As a result of that, a woman regards herself as both, the "appraiser and the thing appraised."[4]

It will be argued that the women are thought of as objects, programmed for their subordinate role and unable to transcend it. Moreover, they are treated as such, due to *sexage*, in the form of the aforementioned general relationship between the sex classes, as well as a private contract by means of which their "use" is assigned to a single man. Even though the contracts present in the novel are of a different nature, one legally acknowledged as marriage, the other a clandestine purchase of a prostitute, the object-like nature of women will be visible in both cases. Moreover, with regard to the mental effects of appropriation on the appropriated women, it is only through madness and deviancy that they are able to escape these social relationships. When female protagonists do not behave according to the established conventions or transgress their "designated form of use," they are labeled deviant and need to be removed or replaced with a faultlessly functioning substitute. Both women escape their material existence by the means of writing. The prostitute conceives an autobiographical revenge novel, in which she avenges herself and other women on male customers. The respectable Victorian wife formulates her own religious vision of the world. When their appropriator acquires their respective pieces of writing, they are evaluated by him as products of madwomen.

The thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 is devoted to the introduction of the author of *The Crimson Petal and the White*, Michel Faber, and the plot overview of the novel with focus on the key moments concerning the characters chosen for analysis in this thesis. Moreover, the genre and narration are discussed to introduce the ingenious intertextual references or modes of narration that constitute an important aspect of the gradual metamorphosis of the characters. Chapter 2 presents the overview of the key concepts of the theories, such as *sexage* and self-objectification, and the explication of the worldview in the nineteenth century according to these concepts. Chapter 3 analyzes the similarities between acquiring a wife and a prostitute, as portrayed in the novel, and the ways these appropriations differ. In chapter 4 the examination of the internal processes of

[3] Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in Phenomenology of Oppression* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990), 35.
[4] Bartky, *Femininity*, 38.

the appropriated women and their role in self-positioning as an object is elucidated. Lastly, madness will be shown as the only way out from the object-like existence of the women.

1 Introduction of the Author and the Novel

1.1 Michel Faber

Michel Faber was born in 1960 in the Netherlands. At the age of seven, he and his parents moved to Australia.[5] His siblings were left behind and he was unable to speak English at that point. This contributed to a lifelong sense of dislocation and alienation, the latter of which is an ever-present theme in his writing,[6] as he himself acknowledged in an interview for *The Irish Times:* "In much of my work I'm tackling alienation and the various gulfs – cultural, sexual, political, generational, linguistic, historical, etc. – that make it difficult for one human being to understand another."[7] In 1993 he and his wife moved to a remote farm in the Scottish Highlands. This location would become the setting of his debut novel *Under the Skin*.[8] He now resides in Kent.[9]

In 1998, Faber's first published work, a collection of short stories *Some Rain Must Fall* won the Saltire Book of the Year Award. It was followed by a novella *The Hundred and Ninety-Nine Steps* in 1999.[10] His first novel, *Under the Skin*, came out in 2000. In an interview for *The Guardian*, he described the process of the conception of the book and its core message as "[a] journey from alienness to humanity."[11] The novel was shortlisted for the *Whitbread Award*.[12] It portrays the life along a remote Scottish motorway from the point of view of a dog-like alien who has undergone extensive reconstructive surgery to resemble a human being.[13]

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[5] Michel Faber, interview by Justine Jordan, *The Guardian*, July 8, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jul/08/books-interview-michel-faber-undying-a-love-story-under-the-skin.

[6] Michel Faber, interview by Julie Hale, *BookPage*, September 23, 2022, https://www.bookpage.com/interviews/8160-michel-faber-fiction/.

[7] Michel Faber, interview by Ian Maleney, *The Irish Times*, July 10, 2015, https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/michel-faber-for-a-long-time-now-i-ve-despised-literature-for-its-impotence-to-change-the-world-for-the-better-1.2280371.

[8] Faber, interview by Jordan.

[9] Michel Faber, interview by Anthony Cummins, *The Guardian*, September 5, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/sep/05/michel-faber-i-dont-read-fiction-any-more.

[10] "Michel Faber," MIT Press, accessed April 29, 2023. https://mitpress.mit.edu/author/michel-faber-33104/.

[11] Faber, interview by Jordan.

[12] MIT Press, "Michel Faber."

[13] Faber, interview by Maleney.

In 2002 the novella *The Courage Consort* (2002)[14] and Faber's second novel, the subject matter of this thesis, *The Crimson Petal and the White*, were published. Even though it seemed like a "commercial suicide"[15] at the time, the 800-page-long novel became a bestseller.[16] No extra-terrestrials make an appearance in Faber's historical fiction, although the narrator greets the twenty-first century reader as "an alien from another time and place altogether"[17] in the opening paragraph and never ceases to remind them of their position outside the narrative. A collection of short stories *The Fahrenheit Twins* followed in 2005.[18] In 2008 he contributed to the Canongate's myth series, in which classic stories are retold by today's writers, with the novel *The Fire Gospel*, his own take on the myth of Prometheus.[19]

The 2014 novel *The Book of Strange New Things* marked Faber's return to the science fiction genre and aliens. The frustrations with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq made him create a story on an entirely different planet. The novel, however, became more autobiographical after his wife was diagnosed with an incurable form of cancer. It tells the story of Peter, a missionary who travels to Planet Oasis to bring religion to the aliens, while his wife stays on Earth as it is falling apart.[20] In 2015 *The Book of Strange New Things* won the Saltire Book of the Year Award. Commenting on the win, Faber said: "I'm so moved and grateful that this honour has been bestowed on my work. You've made an alien feel very welcome."[21]

A collection of poems called *Undying* followed in 2016. In the same year, he was approached with the offer to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens. This was the motivation behind his first young adult novel, *D (a Tale of Two Worlds).* The heroine of his book, a thirteen-year-old girl Dhikilo is, in the author's own words, "the ultimate stranger in a strange land, the ultimate uprootee." On her journey**,**

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[14] MIT Press, "Michel Faber."
[15] Faber, interview by Jordan.
[16] Faber, interview by Jordan.
[17] Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White* (Canongate: Edinburgh, 2008), from now on cited in text as CP, 8.
[18] Michel Faber, interview by Anna Aslanyan, *The White Review*, October 11, 2017, https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/interview-with-michel-faber-3/.
[19] Geraldine Bedell, "A new book of revelation," review of *The Fire Gospel* by Michel Faber, *The Guardian*, November 30, 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/nov/30/fire-gospel-michel-faber.
[20] Faber, interview by Jordan.
[21] "Michel Faber Wins Saltire Book of the Year Award," BBC News, BBC, last modified November 27, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-34941450.

she encounters the Magwitches, the Quilps, and the Spottletoes, and the Gamp. An experienced reader of Dickens might discover even more links that tie Faber's fantastic story to the famous Victorian writer and his works.[22] Apart from writing fiction and poetry, Faber reviewed books for Guardian. Currently, he is working on a non-fiction book about music.[23]

Three of his works have been adapted for the screen so far. In 2011 *The Crimson Petal and the White* was turned into a four-episode BBC drama.[24] When he himself reviewed it for *The Guardian*, he "got tears in [his] eyes" and was "hugely impressed."[25] *Under the Skin* became an award-winning movie in 2013 under the direction of Jonathan Glazer with Scarlet Johansson in the lead role of the alien. *The Book of Strange New Things* was adapted for Amazon by the Oscar-winning Scottish director Kevin Macdonald as *Oasis* in 2017. Unfortunately, only an hour-long pilot episode of the intended series exists.[26]

1.2 The Crimson Petal and the White

Faber started working on the novel 22 years before its release.[27] When it was published in 2002, it was called "[e]xtremely sophisticated" by *Daily Telegraph*, "this year's [2002] most entertaining novel" by *The Boston Globe*, "[a] hugely original take on the historical novel" by Maggie Pringle from *Sunday Express* or "[u]tterly absorbing" by Cathy Kelly from *Irish Independent* (CP 843–846). Many critics noted the similarities to Charles Dickens and dubbed Faber's novel as "a Dickensian novel for our times," or a "novel that Dickens might have written had he been allowed to speak freely."[28]

Maria Teresa Chialant notes the similarities between Faber's novel and Dickens's works in her article for *Dickens Quarterly*. According to her, *The Crimson Petal and the*

[22] Michel Faber, interview by Barry Didcock, *Herald Scotland*, September 19, 2020, https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18725594.skin-author-michel-faber-grief-politics-d-tale-two-worlds/.

[23] Faber, interview by Cummins.

[24] Faber, interview by Didcock.

[25] Michel Faber, "The Crimson Petal and the White: Watching My Novel Reborn on TV, *The Guardian*, April 6, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/apr/06/crimson-petal-white-my-novel-faber.

[26] Faber, interview by Didcock.

[27] Faber, interview by Hale.

[28] Kathryn Hughes, "Whores, porn and lunatics," review of *The Crimson Petal and the White* by Michel Faber," *The Guardian*, September 27, 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/sep/28/fiction.

White calls forth *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House* or *Our Mutual Friend* in its depiction of London "by providing extensive physical space in which events can take place. Slum streets and alleys…provide a context and social texture for the stories as well as room in which to develop the lights and shadows of a multitude of characters."[29] With regard to sexuality, "*The Crimson Petal and the White* expose[s] details that Dickens and his fellow authors knew but couldn't or wouldn't write about."[30] Another point of resemblance between Dickens's works and Faber's novel lies in the narrative structure, which is characterized by "the complexity of the plot, or, rather, the coexistence of multiple plots that intermingle through links and connections made of recurrent figures, images and metaphors."[31] A further link to the Victorian times is the title of Faber's novel, which is a line taken from the poem *The Princess* by Lord Alfred Tennyson. Explaining this choice, Faber stated that he "liked the symbolism of crimson and white petals – blood, sexual immorality, purity, snow, the perfume business."[32]

The more than 800-page-long book boasts "a narrative of exquisite historical accuracy."[33] The first step in Faber's creative process entailed "cherry-[picking] the Victorian era for the bits that [he] found inspirational."[34] Then the characters were created and subsequently, Faber set out to discover as much about the Victorian times as possible. As he recalls in an interview for his publishing house Canongate, "I … did several years of really intensive research consulting of a lot of experts, professors, academics on all sorts of issues and there was a wonderful internet community called *The Victorialist*, where you had access to people who know everything about everything."[35] In addition to this, he decorated the walls of his study with original maps from the Victorian times. His painstaking research included topics, such as the treatment of female hysteria, weather reports from the nineteenth century, and the process of lavender harvesting.[36] The stories

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[29] Maria Teresa Chialant, "Dickensian Resonances in the Contemporary English Novel," *Dickens Quarterly* 28, no. 1. (March 2011): 45. https://www.jstor.org/stable/45292302.

[30] Chialant, "Dickensian Resonances," 48.

[31] Chialant, "Dickensian Resonances," 44.

[32] Faber, interview by Peter Wild, *3:AM Magazine*, 2002, https://www.3ammagazine.com/litarchives/2002_sep/interview_michel_faber.html.

[33] Hughes, "Whores, porn and lunatics."

[34] Michel Faber, "The Crimson Petal and the White," March 1, 2011, video, 2:18, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89JDfKhUm9o&t=2s.

[35] Faber, "Crimson Petal," video, 2:56.

[36] Michel Faber, interview by Claire Sawers, *The List*, 2011, https://list.co.uk/news/23901/michel-faber-interview-the-crimson-petal-and-the-white.

of some of the characters from *The Crimson Petal and the White* continue in the 2006 collection of short stories called *The Apple*.[37]

1.3 Plot

The novel is set in London and covers a period from November 1874 until the first quarter of the year 1876. The main characters are William Rackham, his wife Agnes, and a prostitute called Sugar. A secondary storyline follows William's older brother Henry, who forsook the family business in order to become a clergyman, and Mrs. Emmeline Fox, a pious widow with progressive views.

William is a reluctant heir to a perfume business who fancies himself a writer despite never having published anything. To prompt his transition from an idler into a businessman, his father reduces his allowance. William, who is used to a certain quality of life, is distressed by this change. Another source of frustration is his seemingly perfect wife, Agnes. On the one hand, she is "a high-Victorian ideal" (CP 134). On the other hand, she is seen by everyone in the household as mad because of her unpredictable changes in behavior, seizures and fainting spells. To make the lives of the Rackham household easier, she is routinely kept drugged in her room. In accordance with the Victorian mores, she is prohibited from doing anything that might excite her too much and aggravate her state any further. And so, Agnes's typical day consists of "sewing and staring out the window at what the gardener is up to, of making up her mind whether she'll comb her hair or have [her servant] Clara comb it for her" (CP 222).

She documents her daily struggles in her diary. She suffers from loneliness, but religion is a source of solace for her. Agnes immerses herself in it to such an extent, that she starts to experience religious ecstasies and even develops her own religious theory, on which she begins to write a book. As the story unfolds, Agnes is shown to be completely unaware of her bodily functions and the fact that the traumatic event of her wedding night was sexual intercourse, which resulted in a pregnancy and the birth of her daughter Sophie. She views her menstruation as a punishment from God, her pregnancy as a demonic possession. She describes the delivery of her daughter similarly to an exorcism that causes "the demon to spring out" of her body (CP 623). Not one member of the

[37] Martyn Bedford, "Beyond The Brothel The Apple: New Crimson Petal Stories," review of *The Apple* by Michel Faber, *Literary Review*, September 1, 2006, https://literaryreview.co.uk/beyond-the-brothel.

household knows about Agnes's point of view and they all take her for a lunatic. Since childbirth proved to be exceptionally traumatic for her, Agnes's daughter's existence is kept secret from her and the child lives in the "Rooms Into Which She [Agnes] Must Never Go" (CP 291). Moreover, as the story progresses, Agnes is revealed to have a brain tumor, which is the source of frequent headaches and possibly the cause of her religious ecstasies.

To forget his financial and marital troubles, William frequents London's brothels, where he encounters a prostitute who calls herself Sugar. He is told that there "[a]in't nuffink Sugar won't do… It's common knowledge… that special tastes as can't be satisfied by the ordinary girl, Sugar will satisfy" (CP 79). This proves to be a case in point and William is infatuated with the combination of her virginal looks, her professional skills, as well as by the intelligence, thought so unnatural in a woman of her class. Unusual in more than one respect, Sugar sets herself apart from other prostitutes, in order to climb the social ladder and escape the life of prostitution. The only outlet for her frustrations from her profession is her secret revenge novel, in which she fantasizes about killing the customers. Sugar's charms work on William so well that he decides to purchase her from the madame exclusively for himself. At first, he keeps visiting her in the brothel. When Sugar finds out how well William lives, she prophesies: "My God. You'll keep me better than you do now, my dear Willy" (CP 243). And indeed, he does. He moves her out of the squalid neighborhood into a spacious apartment. During their meetings, Sugar stuns William with her excellent business advice, and thanks to her input, his takeover of the perfume business becomes an unexpected success. When he shares with her that a governess is needed in his household, Sugar proposes that she will take the position to be near him, which he accepts. And so Sugar becomes his daughter Sophie's governess.

William's successes in business result in a flood of invitations to various social events. The social season proves to be a welcome escape from the confines of her room for Agnes and her health improves for a while. However, she is soon overwhelmed and causes scandals, which William, now a man of some stature, cannot afford. For example, after an opera performance ends, a dizzy Agnes rushes out of the theater to get some fresh air. However, on her way out, an acquaintance insists on hearing her opinion on what they have just seen. Unable to get away, Agnes breaks her decorum and retorts: "You are fat, and ugly, and I've never liked you." She continues voicing all her up-to-then hidden antipathy towards the woman and her husband: "Your husband disgusts me… with his

slobbering red lips and his old man's teeth. Your concern for me is false and poisonous. Your chin has hairs on it. Fat people shouldn't ever wear satin" (CP 396). To prevent any further embarrassment, Agnes is kept under the influence of medicine alone in her dark room. When awake, she indulges in her religious visions and claims she has a guardian angel, which infuriates William. Little does he know that Sugar is the embodiment of his wife's fantasies. His mistress followed the married couple during the social season and helped Agnes a few times without revealing her identity or ties to William. The last straw for William are Agnes's renewed visits to a Catholic church, from which she had to convert after the marriage, and he decides to commit her to an asylum to prevent any further embarrassment.

Meanwhile, Sugar, the governess, and the Rackham's daughter, Sophie, form a strong bond. In contrast, little attention is paid to Sugar by William, so she turns to reading Agnes's diaries, which the lady of the house disposed of during one of her manias. By reading them, Sugar understands Agnes's struggle. When Sugar finds out that Agnes is to be admitted to an asylum, she helps her run away from home in search of the Convent of Health, an imaginary religious place that Agnes travels to during her emotional distress. A couple of days later, a body is found in the Thames. William identifies the body as his wife's. After these events, he becomes cold and irritable towards Sugar and he begins to court a more respectable lady. When he discovers that Sugar is pregnant with his child, he cold-heartedly releases her from his services. Both Sugar and Sophie are devastated. "How dare he do this… to my child," Sugar asks (CP 804). She decides to take Sophie with her as she leaves the Rackham household. William is left entirely alone. The only things in his hands are Agnes's diaries and Sugar's novel, of which he thinks he is the protagonist. He laments his fate and asks "[h]ow is it possible… that God saw fit to install two madwomen in the bosom of his household, when other men are altogether spared?" (CP 822).

1.4 Genre

The Crimson Petal and the White belongs to the Neo-Victorian genre, which can be defined broadly "as contemporary fiction that engages with the Victorian era, at either the

level of plot, structure, or both."[38] Neo-Victorian scholar Dana Shiller, distinguishes two main strategies used in Neo-Victorian narratives, which are based either on "creating altogether new stories or [on] reimagining specific Victorian novels from a new angle."[39] *The Crimson Petal and the White* is an original story and therefore belongs to the former category. The second approach is represented by the plentiful Neo-Victorian appropriations of *Jane Eyre*, most famously by Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, or more recently, by Margot Livesey's *The Flight of Gemma Hardy*, April Lindner's *Jane* and Nessa Aref and Alysson Hall's web series *The Autobiography of Jane Eyre*.[40]

The genre has also been dubbed as "a postmodern project of 'writing history of those without one.'"[41] Faber's novel provides a fresh look on favorite Victorian tropes, such as the madwoman, the prostitute, the unattractive spinster and child labor. Agnes Rackham evokes Coventry Patmore's "Angel in the House" at the same time as the "Madwoman in the Attic." Both of her incarnations are the results of the stultifying set of rules that the respectable women had to conform to at the time. Her character, however, is not only limited to these types. Throughout the novel, she becomes a rounded character on her way to freedom through madness. Sugar, the prostitute, the maneater, the *femme fatale*, who is supposed to be filthy, simple and morally depraved proves to be purer than many members of the higher social strata, smart and capable of providing maternal love. Driven by hatred for men, to whom she has to submit sexually, she uses them to ultimately escape from them.

The engagement with Victorian and Neo-Victorian literature enables us an improved understanding of modern-world problems, such as "depression, addictions, insecurities, anxieties, neuroses, psychoses and other troubling behavior and torment."[42]

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[38] Louisa Hadley. *Neo-Victorian Fiction and Historical Narrative: The Victorians and Us* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 4.

[39] Hadley, *Neo-Victorian Fiction*, 5.

[40] Kate Faber Oestreich, "'I Am Not an Angel': Madness and Addiction in Neo-Victorian Appropriations of *Jane Eyre*," in *Neo-Victorian Madness Rediagnosing Nineteenth-Century Mental Illness in Literature and Other Media*, ed. Sarah E. Maier and Brenda Ayres (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 28-29.

[41] Barbara Braid. "Queering the Madwoman: A Mad/Queer Narrative in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* and Its Adaptation. "in *Neo-Victorian Madness Rediagnosing Nineteenth-Century Mental Illness in Literature and Other Media*, ed. Sarah E. Maier and Brenda Ayres. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2020). 204.

[42] Sarah E. Maier and Brenda Ayres, "Introduction: Neo-Victorian Maladies of the Mind," in *Neo-Victorian Madness Rediagnosing Nineteenth-Century Mental Illness in Literature and Other Media* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 9.

Michel Faber described his novel as "utterly modern in its social, political and psychological perspective. The story maintains the seductive illusion that it's unfolding in 1875, but a lot of its insights are based on what we've learned since then, about feminism, child abuse and so on. Obviously the book is also much more sexually explicit than any Victorian novel was free to be."[43] The Victorians are often regarded as excessively modest in the sexual domain. Faber challenges this point of view and portrays them as sexual and sex-crazed. The pious characters engage in sexual fantasies about each other. William Rackham and his friends frequently leaf through the handbook called *More Sprees in London – Hints for Men About Town, with advice for greenhorns* in search of a suitable prostitute. This guide might have been inspired by real-life publications, such as nineteenth-century *The New Swell's Night Guide* or possibly the eighteenth-century publications *The Secret History of London Clubs* and *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies*.[44]

Another way Neo-Victorian fiction engages the modern reader is by the means of the inclusion of twentieth-[or twenty-first] century perspectives.[45] A case in point is the mention of roentgen, which had not been invented at the time when the novel is set. The narrator explicitly turns towards the twenty-first century reader and informs them about Agnes's indetectable tumor: "No one will ever find it. Roentgen photography is twenty years in the future" (CP 222). Simultaneously, Neo-Victorian literature employs intertextual references to Victorian literature or even medical opinions of the period and encourages the readers to detect them. In a fitting juxtaposition, when Agnes reads *Jane Eyre*, she gets shivers down her spine while pondering "this horrid tale of a wife driven mad by illness and shut up in a tower by her husband while he attempts to marry another woman" (CP 444). Her loneliness is likened to the famous Tennyson's famous heroine when she finds herself lying in a big bed "like the Lady of Shalott launched upon a dark lake in a vessel twice the size it need be" (CP 223). Sugar wants to avoid writing a novel like "one of those 'Reader, I married him' romances she so detests" (CP 233). Beth Palmer points out that *The Crimson Petal and the White* and *Lady Audley's Secret* share a

[43] Faber, interview by Hale.

[44] "The New Swell's Night Guide," *British Library*, accessed April 29, 2023, https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-new-swells-night-guide.

[45] Hadley, *Neo-Victorian Fiction*, 156.

fabricated obituary of the missing wife.[46] A medical tract on Sugar's table warns the readers about the consequences of female education, which come "at the price of a puny, enfeebled and sickly race" (CP 175). This is a very explicit allusion to the opinion of an eminent Victorian psychiatrist Henry Maudsley.[47] The more knowledgeable the reader, the more pleasure one finds in decoding these more or less explicit literary references.

1.5 Narration

The narrator of *The Crimson Petal and the White* is intrusive and often interrupts the flow of the narrative to address the reader directly. In fact, the novel opens with a direct warning to the reader: "Watch your step. Keep your wits about you; you will need them" (CP 8). Chialant compares the narrative mode in *The Crimson Petal and the White* to Dickens's in *Master Humphrey's Clock* or *The Uncommercial Traveler*. She also notes the "occasional resort [of the narrator of *The Crimson Petal and the White*] to the indignant and accusatory tone present in the third-person narrator of *Bleak House*.[48]

Faber's narrator presents his attitude towards the characters. For example, the reproduction of William Rackham's rumination over his unfortunate financial situation is cut short by the narrator, who gets to the gist of the seemingly endless inner monologue. "Let me rescue you from drowning in William Rackham's stream of consciousness, that stagnant pond feebly agitated by self-pity. Money is what it boils down to: how much of it, not enough of it, when will it come next, where does it go, how can it be conserved" (CP 62). William is presented as an ineffectual man, whose grand meditations never convert to actions. Another time, the narrator withholds information from the characters but discloses it to the reader. In case of Agnes's brain tumor, he makes a pact with the reader: "only you and I know of this tumour's existence. It is our little secret" (CP 222). Beth Palmer likens Faber's intrusive narrator to Fowler's in *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*[49]

Some of the most crucial moments for the plot of the novel are presented in the novel in the form of Agnes's diary entries. Kym Brindle, the author of *Epistolary*

[46] Beth Palmer, "Are the Victorians Still with Us?: Victorian Sensation Fiction and Its Legacies in the Twenty-First Century," *Victorian Studies* 52, no. 1 (Autumn 2009): 91. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/vic.2009.52.1.86.

[47] Henry Maudsley, "Mind and Sex in Education." *Fortnightly Review*, 1874. 472.

[48] Chialant, "Dickensian Resonances," 45.

[49] Palmer, "Are Victorians Still with Us," 91.

Encounters in Neo-Victorian Fiction, points out the role of Agnes Rackham's diary as "accessory to the novel's overt omniscient control."[50] Numerous diary volumes get into Sugar's hands, who amuses herself with them between William's visits and Sophie's classes, when she serves in the Rackham's household as the governess. Hoping to obtain information about the peculiar lady of the house, Sugar is let down by Agnes's inconsequential diary entries. Its topics consist of trifles, such as hairstyles, dresses or slander about her classmates at the school for young ladies. Sugar struggles to believe that this could be all that lurks behind the surface. The more she reads, however, the clearer it becomes that "this muddle-headed, minuetting adolescent is a lady, as fully adult as she'll ever be" (CP 557). It occurs to her that all of the ladies she has ever encountered, are basically children who are oblivious to real life and live in their fairy-tale world.

Sugar, as well as the modern reader, however, become increasingly interested in Agnes's diaries, as "a growing strangeness and duality begin to manifest in the writer's record" and "[h]umdrum daily entries periodically give way to a melodramatic Gothic narrative style beginning in the wake of [Agnes's] mother's death."[51] One day she writes of dresses, garden parties, balls, shoes or hats. Another day, she battles demons hungry for her blood (CP 568). It is through Sugar's eyes that the reader become sympathetic to Agnes's struggle and her grotesque form of purity (in a less extreme way, a Victorian virtue, to which all respectable women should aspire). As Brindle notes, "Faber's character rewrites her cultural representation in a diary record of an experience that demonstrates the constraints and demands of Victorian model femininity as patently ludicrous."[52]

The continuation of Agnes's diaries is a book of religious visions, *The Illuminated Thoughts & Preturnatural [sic] Reflections of Agnes Pigott.* In this volume, she abandons her married name, the physical world and her adult body. Instead, she floats around in the light, naked, free from any signs of maturing. Without the knowledge that Sugar and the reader possess, this book convinces William that his wife is a madwoman and has to be admitted to an asylum (CP 651). Sugar's revenge novel can, perhaps unexpectedly, be seen as analogous to Agnes's writings in multiple ways. Both texts serve as an escape

[50] Kym Michelle Brindle, *Epistolary Encounters: Diaries and Letters* (Great Britain: Lancaster University, 2010). 159.
[51] Brindle, *Epistolary Encounters,* 166.
[52] Brindle, *Epistolary Encounters,* 164.

from the harsh reality, a place to act out the desires that needed to lay dormant in the real world and a potential proof of a woman's lunacy, The diaries and the books provided the reader with a deeper understanding of the internal worlds of the characters and, in Neo-Victorian fashion, subverted the expectations about the roles that women were supposed to perform.

2 Theories of Appropriation and Objectification

This chapter provides an overview of the most significant concepts of Colette Guillaumin's and Sandra Bartky's theories. The introduction of the theories is followed by elaboration on specific aspects of the general perception of prostitutes and middle-class women as objects. The section on prostitution is divided into two parts. The first one provides an analysis of the sexual objectification of prostitutes, a class of which Sugar is a prime example. It is followed by the examination of women's and Sugar's female forms of intelligence. Since in Agnes's case the notions of sexuality and knowledge, or lack thereof, are intricately intertwined, section 2.5 presents the analysis of both concepts. Finally, influential scientific views that served as tools for keeping women in their subordinate positions, will be analyzed and illustrated with examples from the novel.

2.1 Key Concepts of the Theories

The theoretical backbone of this thesis is the theory of appropriation by French feminist Colette Guillaumin, one of the founding members of the influential feminist journal *Questions féministes*.[53] Guillaumin's theory consists of an ideological and a material part. The ideological part is devoted to the examination of the development of a naturalistic discourse that is employed to validate the existing gender relations.[54] She maintains that women are seen as "living things" because they live in a determined social relationship – *sexage*.[55] Women then undergo the "reduction to the state of a tool whose instrumentality is applied in addition and fundamentally to other human beings."[56] This is also the leitmotif of the latter part of her account, in which she asserts that the whole class of women is physically appropriated by the class of men. The private and institutionalized expression of this general relationship between sex classes is visible in the form of the marriage contract.[57] Guillaumin defines five means of appropriation: the labor market,

[53] Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins, "Reconstructing French Feminism: Commodification, Materialism and Sex," in *Sex in Question: French Materialist Feminism*, ed. Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 19.
[54] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 90.
[55] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 103.
[56] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 78.
[57] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 82.

spatial confinement, show of force, sexual constraint, and the arsenal of the law and customary rights.[58] Moreover, she explores the four concrete forms of appropriation of women: the appropriation of time; products of the body, the sexual obligation, and the physical charge of disabled members of the group, as well as of healthy members of the male sex group.[59] These concepts will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Many of Guillaumin's ideas are related to the objectification theories of the 1990s, since for her, physical appropriation "is a relationship between owner and an object."[60] Sandra Bartky built her theory of objectification on Catherine MacKinnon's contribution to sexual objectification. Bartky notes that the "objectifier and objectified can be one and the same person." A woman can become a sex object for herself, taking toward her own person the attitude of the man."[61] Such a woman will then get sensual pleasure in her corporeality, perceiving her body as an object to be admired and decorated.[62] Bartky identifies two core features of alienation: fragmentation of the human person and a prohibition of typically human functions constitutive of selfhood.[63] This fragmentation results from a social arrangement that has given certain individuals the authority to restrict others from the exercise of capacities that are considered necessary to lead a wholly human existence,[64] which is analogous to Guillaumin's *sexage*.

2.2 The Object-like nature of Women

The patriarchy thinks of women as things. According to Guillaumin, there are respects in which this line of thinking is most salient, such as sexuality and intelligence, and a discourse that justifies this point of view.[65] An addition to this list, presented in the following section, is the decorative purpose of the middle-class wife. It is their corporeality that defines women, even though a lot of attention is paid to the moral aspect of their existence. Their thinking faculties and consciousness are suppressed or thought to be on a much lower level, since they are taken to be thing-like beings. In order to grant validity to these arguments, a scientific discourse was developed by the dominant group,

[58] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 84.
[59] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 76.
[60] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 89.
[61] Bartky, *Femininity*, 36.
[62] Bartky, *Femininity*, 37.
[63] Bartky, *Femininity*, 34.
[64] Bartky, *Femininity* 34.
[65] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 90.

so that the social nature of the relationship is overshadowed by the immutability of natural laws.

2.3 The Objectification of Prostitutes

According to Guillaumin, the dominant group of men selects a subset of the class of women to sexual use to personify sexuality. In urban civilizations, this is the situation with prostitutes, who are "objectified as sex."[66] This is exemplified in the novel when William reminisces about his sexual desire for Agnes during their courtship seven years ago. However, he felt no urgency to act on it, since "there was, after all, a whole class of women provided especially for that purpose" (CP 731). Sandra Bartky defines sexual objectification as "when a woman's sexual parts or sexual functions are separated from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her."[67] The class of men, represented by William and his friends Philip Bodley and Edward Ashwell demonstrate this attitude with proclamations about prostitutes, such as: "Three men; three holes – the arithmetic of it is perfect" (CP 228). The men view themselves in their totality, while the women are reduced to a specific body part.

Similarly to a catalogue of the products of the Rackham perfumeries, one can leaf though the guide *More Sprees in London – Hints for Men About Town, with advice for greenhorns* to pick one (or more) women on offer. In the handbook, the women and the establishments are categorized by the price, in the ascending order from the street prostitutes, referred to in the handbook as "Trotters," the cheapest houses – "Hocks," followed by houses for reasonable spenders –"Mid Loin," and the most expensive houses nicknamed "Prime Rump" (CP 88). The particular kind of girls, that William and his friends are after, are young, without visible signs of previous usage because "[t]ime catches up with them. They don't stay ripe for ever" (CP 65). The men lament that despite "[a]ll those thousands of bodies on offer… still it's a hellish job to find a truly succulent young one" (CP 74). Women are perceived as mere physical objects that are worn out with time, as holes or pieces of fruit that does might get damaged if treated too harshly. William's friends like to pursue "slumming," not because they're short of money, but

[66] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 90.
[67] Bartky, *Femininity*, 35.

because “it amuses them to pass from the cheapest to the most expensive whores in quick succession” (CP 73). The women are treated as interchangeable objects designed for male pleasure.

Before meeting Sugar, William visits an establishment where he pays for a pair of twins, whose parameters are unsatisfactory to him. He deems the girls “no good: they don’t move as he wishes, they are the wrong shape, the wrong size, the wrong consistency” (CP 76). Moreover, it is clear to him that they have been used many times before. He gives up his search for a previously untouched part of their bodies and while thinking about the money he spent on this disappointing experience, he asks himself “[i]s there never such a thing as exceptional value for money?” (CP 76). When he requests a service that the girls are not willing to perform, he gets directed to Sugar. This nineteen-year-old girl has built a name for herself in her profession as “*an eager Devotee of every known Pleasure, [whose] sole purpose is to put the demanding Connoisseur at his ease and far Exceed his expectations*” (CP 89, italics in original). Apart from this, her description in *More Sprees* contains her physical attributes as well as the place where she can be found. After delivering the services of promised quality, William thinks “she might almost be a thing designed for no purpose but to bring him to orgasm” (CP 177).

2.4 Sugar’s Special Kind of Intelligence

It is not just Sugar’s absolute sexual submission that makes William decide to purchase her into his exclusive ownership – it is also Sugar’s “unnatural” intellect, which intrigues him. When they meet for the first time, William is taken aback by her conversation skills and the “amazing knowledge of literature, lacking only Latin, Greek and the male’s instinctive grasp of what is major and minor (CP 107),” which is not only an exceptional feat for a woman, but an incredible one for a prostitute, a person on the lowest rank of the social ladder. This is the second aspect of the assumed thing-like status of women, their intelligence, or lack thereof. It is presumed that women are naturally alien to intellectual speculation. What they use is intuition. This enigmatic form of intellect is inherent in the material from which they were created, it is a characteristic of a thing, such as the hardness of wood. Guillaumin argues that the objectified situation of oppressed people is symbolized by intuition.[68] Another point in the debate on intelligence of women is their

[68] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 91.

consciousness. “The dominators generally deny the consciousness of those they appropriate, and they deny a consciousness to them precisely because they take them to be things.”[69]

Sugar, however, is very conscious of her role as a sexual object. She plays along with the stereotypes and defies them at the same time, both to her advantage. Her compliance with her role is her complete sexual submission and it “makes Sugar a rarity…that she’ll do anything the most desperate alley-slut will do, but do it with a smile of child-like innocence” (CP 40). Even her name, or namelessness, is indicative of the lengths that she will go to, in order to please a male customer. Another means of satisfaction of the male desires, uniquely hers, is a stimulating conversation on typically male topics, such as trade unions or business competition (CP 40). She strives to remember as many details about whose lives as possible in order to create a sense of importance and connection in the man. In her free time, she visits public libraries, where she peruses journals and books for the male audience. The narrator laments the unfortunate placement of such a capacity for learning in a woman: “A pity, really, that Sugar’s brain was not born into a man’s head, and instead squirms, constricted and crammed, in the dainty skull of a girl. What a contribution she might have made to the British Empire!” (CP 40). This way, she transcends being merely “a hole” for the men that she depends on upon her survival.

Once she is acquired by William, she sets her mind on becoming indispensable for him in more domains than just the sexual. She knows that “his interest in her is a valuable commodity, and she ought to keep it alive for as long as she can” (CP 339). Skilled in selling herself, she helps him improve the catalogue of the products of the Rackham perfumeries. Her connections from the days before her private appropriation serve to weaken William’s competition. She learnt “the male way of thinking” and when needed, she disguises her cunning as intuition. After she is already in William’s possession, Sugar sets out to find out as much about him as possible, in order to make him feel as though she could read his mind and make any wish come true instinctively. She visits his neighborhood and later follows him and Agnes during the social season. The results of her investigations are then presented as her, so specifically, female instinct. When William wonders how it is possible for her to guess everything about his life so

[69] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 92.

accurately, she replies "'Feminine intuition.…I feel it, somehow.…Deep inside me'" (CP 253).

2.5 The Objectification of the Middle-Class Women

Guillaumin argues that female sexuality can also be treated as non-existent. The virtuous middle-class lady is seen as passionless, without any desires or carnal impulses.[70] At the same time, however, a certain, although very restrained form of sexuality needs to be present, for the most elevated role of a woman in society, motherhood. An authority on the subject of female health, Dr. William Acton, stated in 1857 that "most women are not 'troubled' by sexual feelings: The best mothers, wives, and managers of households, know little or nothing of sexual indulgences . . . a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him; and, but for the desire for matrimony would far rather be relieved from his attentions."[71] This presupposes that a woman possesses knowledge about her marital and maternal functions intuitively.

In Agnes's case, the utter unconsciousness of her role was the result of the education women received at the time, the impropriety of such discussions as well as the death of her mother, who could have informed her on it. Therefore, when William and Agnes consummate their marriage without her knowledge of what is happening, it traumatizes her so much, that she begins to evade any physical attention from him. Recalling their wedding night, the night when they conceived their daughter, William retrospectively admits that Agnes was "a flower not designed to open" (CP 140). Her distress can be explained by her lack of knowledge. "Doctor Curlew, the only person who might have enlightened her, never has, because he assumes his patient can't possibly have married, borne a child and lived to the age of twenty-three without becoming aware of certain basic facts" (CP 241).

The knowledge that was provided to her in the school for young ladies was the importance of her social role and her appearance in order to secure marriage. The fact that a man chooses from an array of available women is analogous to prostitution. In order be an interesting prospect, Agnes gained skills, such as German and French, calligraphy,

[70] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 90.

[71] Jeanette King, *The Victorian Woman Question in Contemporary Feminist Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 16.

music and dancing. The understanding of the ten-year-old Agnes of her education was that "no girl is permited [*sic*] to leave here until 'finished'", which means "Clever & Beautiful. I have been thinking deeply on this and have decided that it would be a good thing if I was Clever & Beautiful because then I should marry well" (CP 541). Her ideal Victorian beauty as well as her education succeeded and she married William at seventeen. Even though she was not an ideal wife or a mother, she was an ideal decoration. "It's true that from birth she has been groomed to do nothing especially well except appear in public looking beautiful" (CP 161). The Rackhams' domestic life might be a disappointment, however, when the social season commences on the Fools' Day, Agnes regains lust for life. The household speaks of her miraculous change: "Such a short while ago she lay like a corpse in her darkened, airless room: now, dressed gaily, she's brightening the house with her angelic singing voice as she prepares to meet the Season" (CP 332). There are essential skills that she needs to regain for the season, such as "standing erect, turning demurely, smiling fetchingly, walking without the footsteps showing. There's an art to moving as if on castors, and only an elite few can master it" (CP 332).

Accessories to her husband during the social season or a prize to be paraded, the women were appreciated for their looks, not their opinions. This is what caused most of Agnes's scandals. When a visit comes to the Rackham household, to prevent further embarrassment, Agnes is instructed to say as little as possible. She confirms her understanding of this assignment, when she tells William "'I'll pretend the Season's still in full swing, dear,…and say absolutely nothing about *anything*'" (CP 463, emphasis in original). The corporeality and presence of the middle-class wife were important for the Victorian home. As Lynda Nead writes, "[t]he comfortable suburban home with dependent women was an index of material success and social position."[72] This means that a wife was also a class symbol. Until it was time to parade her, she was deposited at the Victorian home. This restrictive form of existence with respect to female education and sphere of activity was, according to Guillaumin, the result of the social relationship of *sexage* and the advancement of modern science that gave rise to the notion that appropriation is genetically determined and the conviction that it is "programmed."[73]

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[72] Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: B. Blackwell: 1988), 32.

[73] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 94.

2.6 The Role of Modern Science in *Sexage*

The influence on the perception of female sexuality, intelligence and their purpose in life in the nineteenth century was heavily influenced by the sciences, such as biology, anthropology, psychology or gynecology. Darwin's evolution theory shaped the thinking of the period to a great extent. *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex,* published in 1871, introduced the principle of sexual selection. It presented the view that since women do not partake in the competitive process of sexual selection, they cannot achieve the same stage of evolution as the man. The areas, in which a woman excels over a man in, are inevitably, a proof of her lower position on the evolutionary ladder. Darwin acknowledges the belief of the dominant class that "with women, the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation, are more strongly marked than in man," only to add that some of these abilities are "characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization."[74] Anthropologist J. McGrigor Allan, maintained that "[t]housands of years have amply demonstrated the mental supremacy of man, and any attempt to revolutionise the education and status of women on the assumption of imaginary sexual equality, would be at variance with the normal order of things."[75] An excerpt from a medical journal, that Sugar is reading, seems to represent this line of thinking: "*No woman can be a serious thinker, without injury to her function as the conceiver and mother of children. Too often, the female 'intellectual' is a youthful invalid or virtual hermaphrodite, who might otherwise have been a healthy wife* (CP 175, italics in original).

The norm of passionlessness was introduced as a scientific notion. King describes the scientific explanation behind enforced inaction of women: "An argument from physics was used to explain the nature of female physiological economy since the laws of conservation of energy meant that too much energy was expended by the reproductive organs to be available for any other interests a woman might have."[76] It seems that Agnes's physician, Doctor Curlew, shares this point of view. During a pelvic examination

[74] King, *The Victorian Woman,* 24-25.

[75] Brenda Ayres and Sarah E. Maier, "The Unmentionable Madness of Being a Woman and *Ripper Street*," in *Neo-Victorian Madness Rediagnosing Nineteenth-Century Mental Illness in Literature and Other Media*, ed. Sarah E. Maier and Brenda Ayres (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 171.

[76] King, *The Victorian Woman*, 18.

he discovers that Agnes's uterus has moved higher, which is, at first, a surprise to him. However, the mystery seems to be resolved after a journal, that he has not allowed Agnes to read, is found under her bed. A list of items that may cause "womb distress" is then presented: "[e]xcessively thrilling reading, excessively taxing reading, excessively pathetic reading, too much washing, too much sun, tight corsets, ice-cream, asparagus, foot-warmers (CP 173–176). It seems that any intellectual stimulation has an adverse effect on the physical health of the women. The control of their existence was employed to constrict faculties, such as reading, that would help with the development the faculties which have propelled men to their superordinate position, and to ensure their subordinate and dependent position.

3 The Appropriations

This chapter aims to zoom in on how William's appropriation of Agnes and Sugar took place and the similarities between the contracts. Firstly, the transition from general appropriation to its private form is described through the application of specific forms and means of appropriation according to Guillaumin's theory. In the subsequent two sub-chapters, the evidence is provided for the claim that the contracts are contingent on the same mechanisms, whether a woman was bought or legally passed to William's possession by marriage. It is shown that Sugar, in her special form of private appropriation, even manages to fulfill some conjugal roles better than Agnes. However, when she exceeds the designated scope of her "use" she becomes faulty, just as Agnes is.

3.1 The Nature of Appropriation

Guillaumin maintains that "[t]o acquire a woman in a society where there is an existing class of women, it is enough to 'ask for' her or to buy her."[77] William Rackham is able to privately acquire two women for an unlimited amount of time by the means of signing a contract. The first, legalized, ownership transfer is carried out between him and Lord Unwin, whom William asks for the hand of his stepdaughter, Agnes. The ownership of Sugar passes into William's possession from her mother, Mrs. Castaway. There is a direct monetary exchange of ten guineas between the buyer and the seller in the second transaction, since William deprives Mrs. Castaway's establishment of its most profitable item. Moreover, the contract contains a clause on renumeration for Sugar's services directly to her, which is not specified. Until the contracts came into force, the women could have been appropriated by any member of the class of men, which in Sugar's case was done repeatedly by her customers. This shows that the women are at the disposal of men, the relationship of *sexage*.

In Agnes's case, the potential appropriators were suitors from the upper class, who could have married her. Now the women are taken off the market and in an exclusive possession of a single individual. From the general appropriation of the whole class, they became private appropriations of William Rackham. When pondering the contracts he

[77] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 93.

made, he himself admits the similarity between these two processes when he recalls that Agnes's was "extraordinarily laissez-faire – much less demanding of him than [Sugar's]" (CP 172). Sugar, in contrast to Agnes, is aware that she is being sold and thinks to herself, "[h]armless as any man can be, and with plenty of ready money. If he wants her name on a contract, well, why not?" (CP 174).

3.2 Concrete Forms of Appropriation

According to Guillaumin, there are four concrete forms of appropriation, four areas a life of a woman, where this process is most visible. One of these forms is sexual obligation. Guillaumin points out the difference between prostitution and marriage that rests in the monetary exchange for the services. In the classic model of prostitution, a specific amount of money compensates for sex and this compensation relates to a fixed period of time and to regulated activities. This was the way that Sugar operated before her private appropriation. The primary distinguishing feature of prostitution is that the acquired physical services are exclusively sexual in nature. Contrarily, physical usage in marriage includes all conceivable forms, putting sexual encounters in the forefront while also embracing other kinds,[78] such as bearing children, taking care of other members of the classes or providing the household with her presence. Sugar, who is set on escaping her existence as a pure sexual object and becoming an indispensable component of William's life, extends her usefulness into other areas of William's life. The sexual side of William's relationships with Agnes and Sugar will be elaborated on in the next section.

The second form of appropriation is that of the products of the body, most importantly, children. The number of children is not fixed by the marriage contract, therefore the woman is obliged to bear all the children the husband wishes to father. After exceeding what is convenient for him, he puts all the responsibility on the wife.[79] This is the case with William's and Agnes's daughter Sophie, who was conceived without Agnes's conscious consent during their wedding night. William rapes the unconscious Agnes at least once throughout the course of the story. His sexual use of Agnes during her unconsciousness could have resulted in another pregnancy. However, because of her frequent fasting, "her monthly issue has dried up" and it seems that in her present state

[78] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 78.
[79] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 77.

she is unable to bear another child (CP 422). Since Agnes does not acknowledge the existence of the child, the care of Sophie was conferred to the nurse. The daughter is taught that "well-behaved children are neither seen nor heard" (CP 152). And so his child essentially does not exist. William's behavior concurs with Guillaumin's statement that "men demand ownership of them, but not the material burden."[80]

Another facet of the same form of appropriation is unwanted pregnancy. Abortion seemed the only alternative for women, whose sexual partners did not sanction children from them. Sugar, as well as the other prostitutes perform primitive forms of contraceptive rituals after each visit from their customers with home remedies consisting of mixtures of sulphate of zinc and borax, with which they "clean themselves." When Sugar discovers that she is pregnant with William's child, she is aware of the gravity of the situation. She thinks: "This baby – this creature – this tenacious clump of flesh – cannot be permitted to live. Her own life is at stake; if William finds out she's in the family way it will be the end, the end of everything" (CP 743). She pours the mixture inside her vagina, which only causes her immense pain, but proves to be ineffectual. Desperate, Sugar throws herself down the stairs in hope that this would induce an abortion. Agnes's physician Doctor Curlew is called to examine Sugar and discovers her pregnancy, and reveals it to William. As she feared, it leads to her dismissal from his services, William cuts all ties with her and ignores all her pleas. What she feared became reality. Her use was overextended and she became redundant, since bearing a child was not William's intended use of her.

The third form of appropriation is the physical charge of the members of the group, such as children, old, sick or disabled people and of healthy members of the dominant group. Agnes's condition disqualifies her from taking care of herself and of her daughter. Sugar, however, looks after all members of the Rackham household. William is provided sexual services, emotional support and business consultation. Sugar becomes the embodiment of Agnes's guardian angel after she tends to her during one of her collapses during the social season and when she saves her from freezing to death in winter after Agnes ran out of the house. Ultimately, Sugar saves her from admittance to an asylum, when she provides Agnes with clothes and instructions on how to reach a real convent. Agnes's fate after her departure is, however, uncertain. Finally, Sugar provides Sophie

[80] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 77.

with attention, education, maternal affection and a chance for a different life than the one Agnes was forced to lead.

All of the forms of appropriation that were mentioned up to now are feasible due to the appropriation of time, since "there is no measurement of it and no limit placed on its use."[81] The distinction between a standard contract and a marriage contract consists in the fact that in the latter "all of the time of the women is absorbed once they are acquired."[82] Therefore, their constant presence is demanded. This is perceived as natural when it comes to middle-class wives' position at home. The constriction on the freedoms of a woman is more noticeable the case of Sugar who, to a certain extent was able to dispose of her time. Before William acquired her, she would spend her time with activities, such as writing her novel or visiting the public library. However, after her appropriation, William disposes of all her time and decides when she will be used and for how long.

3.3 The Means of Appropriation

Guillaumin then elaborates on the means of appropriation that enable *sexage*. One them is labor market or, more accurately, the prohibition to take part in it. As already mentioned, it was unfit for a woman of a certain rank to work. Since she could not herself actively earn money, a woman was dependent on her inheritance. In contrast to boys who would come into active capital, girls would be left money in the form of a marriage settlement or in the form of a trust, which would be managed by a male member of the family.[83] As Guillaumin argues, "women are forced to find employment as a wife, that is, to sell THEMSELVES [*sic*]."[84] William remembers that when he married Agnes, "[h]er dowry was no great fortune – nothing a young woman couldn't spend within a year or two" (CP 172).

Before William purchased her, Sugar was able to sell her labor power. Lynda Nead writes about the specific position of the prostitute within the economic system. A prostitute "is able to represent all the terms within capitalist production; she is the human labour, the object of exchange and the seller at once. She stands as worker, commodity

[81] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 76.
[82] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 79.
[83] Nead, *Myths*, 29.
[84] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 84.

and capitalist and blurs the categories of bourgeois economics in the same way that she tests the boundaries of bourgeois morality."[85] She is an artificial addition to bourgeois femininity and doesn't even follow the rules of the market. She offers a product for sale that the customer can never truly possess. This is what makes her a potentially powerful figure.[86] Since Sugar has built a name for herself, she, to an extent could have set limits on the duration of the services and the subsequent remuneration. After the appropriation by a contract, however, her working instrument is possessed by a single individual and she is wholly dependent on him on her survival. Despite the update of her status, and the fact that "the allowance she gets from Rackham is more than she ever earned at Mrs. Castaway's" (CP 368), she finds herself asking whether this is "the life of luxury to which she thought she was graduating when she left Mrs. Castaway's?" (CP 379).

This point is related to spatial constraint, the second means of appropriation. In case of marriage, the domicile for a married couple is determined by the husband. The wife is usually only allowed to be in her husband's home. Guillaumin likens the enclosures for movable animal property which cannot speak, such as cages consisting of posts, metal, rope, or electric fencing to female property confined to the house.[87] Agnes is at home all the time. When the social season is not happening, she has nowhere else to be. This state of her is reminiscent of the proverbial "Madwoman in the Attic" or "Lady of Shalott" who watches people outside of her room living their lives. Sugar becomes aware of her own confinement in her new home that is presented to her as "a jewel box to house the treasure she is" (CP 265). The initial happiness fades away when William becomes a busy businessman and his visits are scarcer due to the amount of work. She wonders whether he is "fed up with his prize already" (CP 379). If that is the case, she asks herself: "how long can she cling to this little nest? The rooms are paid for and her allowance is set to come directly from the bank, so there's nothing to fear except William himself" (CP 288). When she cannot contain the boredom and leaves her rooms, she risks not being available when her time is required.

Another means of appropriation is sexual constraint. All women, whether speaking about potential wives or prostitutes, are in Guillaumin's words "common property."[88] All

[85] Nead, *Myths*, 99.
[86] Nead, *Myths*, 99.
[87] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 85.
[88] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 83.

other men were disqualified of the sexual use of these women. The fact that women can move between constituting a private and common property is exemplified when William's friends, Bodley and Ashwell, who are unaware that it is William, who took Sugar off the market tell him: "if you should hear a whisper…About where this girl is to be found…If not now, then when her master has tired of her…We're still dying to have a bash'" (CP 353). If William chose to let Sugar go or to make her submit to his friends, she would not have any other choice because she is contractually obliged to him.

Guillaumin states in her chapter, that it is not simple to distinguish sexual constraint from the use of physical force, the fourth means of appropriation. However, rape can be perceived as both. It occurred during the wedding night of the Rackhams and resulted in the birth of their daughter. William rapes Agnes at least one more time, when she is under the influence of narcotics. Before that happens, he apologizes to her for what happened during their wedding night: "'I never meant to hurt you, on that first night…I was … made hasty by urgency. The urgency of love.'" He explains that he thought that "once we … once we were underway, you'd begin to like it'" (CP 619). Since she did not know what sex was, she could not consent to it. From what William told her, it seems that Agnes displayed signs of displeasure, which he chose to ignore. He continued the one-sided conversation with his unconscious wife, who would be moved to an asylum soon on his orders. "You like it now, though, don't you?" (CP 620). He interprets the sounds she makes in her sleep as noises of pleasure and thinks to himself that "[s]urely what a woman says in her sleep is closer to the truth than what she says in wakeful anger!" (CP 610) After some affectionate words, he sets his mind on the next rape. "It won't hurt. You'll let me know if I'm hurting you, won't you? I wouldn't hurt you for all the world," to which she, naturally, is not able to voice her opposition (CP 620). After he performed the act, he is riddled with the immorality of his actions, so he covers his tracks and leaves the room in shame. A similar, although maybe less disturbingly portrayed situation happened with Sugar during their first intercourse. Even though her bodily signals are to be interpreted as not ready to be penetrated, "he pushes through the discomfort, wincing once or twice, persisting until his organ and hers are accommodating each other perfectly" (CP 123).

The last of the means of appropriation is the law and customary rights. This point applies to the process marriage, since Sugar's appropriation is not recognized as lawful. Another example of this point is the formality of conferring the name of the husband on the wife and the children. This might be interpreted as a way of marking one's

possessions, which in William’s case are a wife, Agnes Rackham, and a daughter, Sophie Rackham. One more addition to this point could be the already mentioned place of permanent residence designated by the husband. In Sugar’s case, only the last point applies.

4 The Internal Objectification and Madness

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on Sandra Bartky's theory of objectification which is concerned with the inner world of the objectified woman. The inner fragmentation, repressive satisfaction, or infantilization of heroines are discussed in the first half of the chapter. The second part is devoted to the male definition of madness and the volatility of this category, which is based on how it is perceived by the owner of the women. It will be shown how women have no autonomy over their bodies or their destiny and it will be reaffirmed that they are taken as objects. In expressing their individuality and self-determination they free themselves from this limiting existence at the cost of madness.

4.1 The Consequences of Self-objectification

The social relationship of *sexage* has consequences for the internal world of women. The supremacy of their corporeality in society results in self-objectification. Simone de Beauvoir states that the female situation disposes a woman to perceive her body as "an object destined for another."[89] Bartky adds that when a woman knows that her chances in life depend on the way a male "connoisseur" assesses her, she learns to assess herself first.[90] When Agnes analyzes her appearance in the mirror during her preparations for the social season, she "beholds what God or the folk in the Royal Albert Hall's balconies might look upon: a most fetching specimen, a credit to her sex" (CP 364). Her thin frame, which was the beauty standard at the time, is a source of pleasure for her and apart from keeping her demons away, is making her an ideal product of her time. "While other ladies are torturing themselves with starvation diets, she has inherited *la ligne* effortlessly. Is it any wonder, then, that she still doesn't eat much, even now that she's well enough? Gorging herself when she has the thinnest waist she's ever had would be criminal" (CP 363, italics in original). She enjoys her delicacy and "takes especial pleasure in counting her ribs" (CP 363).

[89] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), 300.
[90] Bartky, *Femininity*, 38.

Bartky terms this kind of pleasure "repressive satisfaction."[91] Since the system that generates false demands also determines the conditions under which they can be satisfied, it binds the women to the dominant order that exists at the time. The existence and gratification of "false needs" serve a social order whose interest is in domination rather than the individual who possesses them. They are needs that are manufactured through indoctrination, psychological manipulation, and the denial of autonomy.[92] One more aspect of this order is aging. As Bartky writes, "in the feminine ideal of stasis, we find once more a source of women's physical passivity."[93] Agnes is perpetually worried about signs of aging. She peruses ladies' journals, the only sort of literature sanctioned by her physician. These magazines contain articles, such as "Defending yourself against the enemy," that is the old age and she performs facial exercises to smooth out wrinkles without having any (CP 160). In Sugar's case, as a prostitute, as already mentioned, she needs to keep herself from looking used. She is known for her cleanliness, perfect composure and ladylike appearance. Very little is indicative of her status at a glance. When William sees her for the first time, "she appears so much the lady that it's difficult to imagine how he could possibly soil that status" (CP 105). After she is purchased by William and installed in her apartment, with no other occupation, but waiting for his visit, she spends significant amounts of time bathing in order to always be ready for him.

Since the activities that constitute selfhood, such as consciousness, education, unrestricted socialization, movement or development of other than typically and suitably female faculties, are prohibited to women, and the external circumstances deny them the transcendence of their corporeality, women undergo internal alienation and fragmentation. Both, Sugar and Agnes, routinely undergo out-of-body experiences during or after distressing situations. Since they are unable to physically escape from the distressing circumstances, they undergo a split between their corporeality and their minds. Their physical bodies stay in the real life, while their thoughts move in a more pleasurable fantasy. This has already been introduced as the duality in feminine consciousness.[94] In Agnes's case it is often during pelvic exams undertaken by Doctor Curlew. While he is examining the state of her reproductive organs, in her mind, she takes a train ride to the

[91] Bartky, *Femininity,* 42.
[92] Bartky, *Femininity,* 42.
[93] Bartky, *Femininity,* 40.
[94] Bartky, *Femininity,* 38.

imaginary Convent of Health, where a congregation of nuns "welcome her and care for her, without any reward but to see her smile" (CP 223). After William used Sugar sexually for the first time, she slumps on her bed, relieved to be alone. She closes her eyes and "her spirit flies out of her body," leaving behind the decaying building that she lives in and the tub with the contraceptive mixture she uses after every intercourse. She abandons the real world for "the reality of dreams. And, in those dreams of flying, Sugar's old life has already ended, like a chapter in a book" (CP 129).

Another point in Bartky's self-objectification theory is the infantilization of the objectified woman. She uses Freud's notion of narcissism as an "infantile libido-position," from which women have to mature. She proposes that the ever-present infantilization in the larger society makes a woman retain her narcissistic state. Such a woman is subject to forced dependence, manufactured ineptitude, weakness, and helplessness, prohibition from many fields of adult life as well as the demand not only act but also to have the appearance of children.[95] By reading Agnes's diaries Sugar discovers that that is the situation of the middle-class women like Agnes. She realizes that "all the ladies [she] has ever seen… they are children. Essentially unchanged from when they played with dolls and coloured pencils, they grow taller and gain a few 'accomplishments'" (CP 557). The child-like nature of his wife is remarked upon William too when he tells Sugar that Agnes is "still growing up, I think; she'll come good with a bit of maturing. She was awfully young when I married her – too young, perhaps. Playing with dolls still … and that's what her outbursts tend to be: childish" (CP 421).

The longer Sugar is removed from the harsh life of prostitution, the more similar she becomes to Agnes in this respect. Sugar was introduced into the adult world of sex and work at thirteen, which was, disturbingly, the age of consent in England until 1885 when it was changed to sixteen.[96] A precocious and perceptive child, she learnt that while her youthful looks were an asset, child-like behavior was not. In order to set herself apart from the other prostitutes and to be able to amuse her male customers in other ways than just sexually, she pursued intellectual development. She hoped to one day transcend her position as an object for the male desire. When her status improves to a private mistress and subsequently a governess, she experiences a kind of infantilization. With no

[95] Bartky, *Femininity*, 38.

[96] Anna Krugovoy Silver, *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press), 67.

opportunity now for library visits, she, at one point pronounces her novel, that was supposed to illuminate the public on the terrors of prostitution, dead. She is unable to read the kind of "heavy books," such as Shakespeare, Collins, or Trollope, that she used to. After a fight with William, already as a governess, she is "[s]ent up to her room in disgrace" like a child "indulges, at long last, in a tantrum. A solitary, silent tantrum, in the privacy of her drab little bed-chamber" (769). Similarly to Agnes, she experiences the powerlessness when she asks William about his whereabouts at night and is told off. In her room "she rips and rends, her body convulses with infantile sobs, an incessant rapid spasming, and the tears run down her cheeks" (CP 769). It is a change for her as someone who has not cried since her childhood. She feels the change that came with her status improvement as a loss of authenticity: "I'm so full of schemes and plots, nothing interests me if it doesn't concern the Rackhams. Every word I speak I look up and down twice before it leaves my mouth. Nothing I say comes from my heart …" (CP 488). She realizes that her whole existence depends on the favor of William Rackham, who can at any moment decide to get rid of her and replace her with a newer, shinier object.

4.2 Escape through Madness

With respect to inequality between classes, madness can be seen as "culturally constructed, a discursive formation, in which a group, usually a dominant group, designates deviations from its supposed norms as 'mad.'"[97] In the world of *The Crimson Petal and the White*, the dominant group are men. It is William, who designates both of his possessions, Agnes and Sugar, mad. From his mouth, however, it carries much more influence on the life of the women than the other way round, since he is a subject who can decide what will be done with the purchased objects. Interestingly, what intrigues him in the women he appropriates in the beginning, will be his reason for getting rid of them and pronouncing them mad in the end. This shows how much power men holds over women and that their individualities are his to decide what to do with them.

During their courtship William noticed that Agnes "was ignorant about the usual topics girls are ignorant about (broadly, anything of consequence)," but he "could tell she had an unusual and original mind. Most strikingly, she had an instinct for metaphysics

[97] John Thieme, "Becoming a Madman, Becoming a Madwoman: Ex-Centricity in Caribbean Writing," in *Ex-Centric Writing: Essays on Madness in Postcolonial Fiction*, ed. Susanna Zinato and Annalisa Pes, 95. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

that her flimsy education had left entirely uncultivated" (CP 731). Her "flimsy education" and an understanding of the world basically unchallenged since childhood contribute to the development of her phantasmagorical outlook. Guillaumin describes the situation of the objectified people as "reduced to making very close analyses (contrary to what is claimed), using the tiniest and most tenuous elements of the data that can reach them from the outside world, for *access* to this world, as well as action in it, is *prohibited* to them."[98] When she prays to the Saint Teresa of Avila to send her a guardian angel and subsequently glances at Sugar dressed in white looking at the Rackham house during her investigation of William's private life, Agnes interprets this sighting as the answer to her prayer. To a certain extent, she is aware of the things happening to her, she just does not possess the means, to make sense of the events in the same way a less sheltered person would. Her fantasies are further fueled by her loneliness. The narrator asks whether "[w]ith so little hope of friendship in her waking life, is it any wonder that Agnes prefers the company of the nuns at the Convent of Health?" (CP 223).

William permits Agnes's visits to the Catholic church, even though they are Anglicans, to make her feel better while the season goes on. However, after some public embarrassment during social occasions, the visits become a source of gossip and William, with Doctor Curlew's blessing, prohibits further attendance. He explains to her that he wants to protect her from becoming laughing stock to other people. Banned from the only source of internal nourishment, Agnes breaks the mask of her perfect female passivity and addresses William's two-facedness with a perfect recollection of the exact words that he wooed her with. She reminds him that he proclaimed that he did not care about what the whole world thought and that he used to call her "my odd little sprite," while "[t]hose other girls [were] dull to the bone" (CP 600). When he seizes her in his arms to calm her, she utters a hysterical, bestial laugh (CP 600), which frightens him. Every time that Agnes loosens her internal control, William recoils at it and sees it as a sign of her madness.

Whenever she voices her opposition against a male authority, it is interpreted as a further indication of insanity. She is aware that it is futile to protest against Doctor Curlew's visits. If she informs him that she is too tired to be examined, he views it as a sign of illness. If she declares, she feels too ill to be examined, he responds that his intervention will serve to improve her state. If she ventures to voice her reluctance to the

[98] Guillaumin, *The Practice*, 91. (italics in original)

weekly checkups and asks “what harm can it do to leave it undone just once,” the doctor counters: “You can’t mean that; only a madwoman would willingly let her health decline.” When she insists on her sanity, he replies: “That’s why I’m asking your permission, rather than ignoring your wishes as I would ignore those of an asylum inmate” (CP 164). This demonstrates the lack of autonomy that she has over her own body. When her clandestine protest against the vacuousness of her object-like existence is discovered by the outer world in the form of her book of religious visions *The Illuminated Thoughts & Preturnatural Reflections of Agnes Pigott*, it is seen by William a testament of her faulty mind. William and Doctor Curlew see Agnes fit to be admitted to an asylum. “Agnes is mad, she’s been mad for years, and the situation is unmanageable, and the long and short of it is … well, I believe she ought to be put away” (656). One such declaration has a grave effect on her existence. Her object-like nature is displayed in the lack of autonomy that she possesses over her fate. Before she can be admitted to the asylum, Sugar helps her run away. A partially disfigured body is found in the Thames a couple days later. William identifies it as Agnes by her pubic hair, a part of the body known to him from his repeated raping of her.

When Sugar becomes a burden instead of a useful asset, she is dismissed and all the seemingly personal interest of William vanishes in a second. Unable to fathom the bond between Sugar and Sophie, William thinks that Sugar has taken his child away from him out of spite and because of her moral depravity. Sugar’s manuscript falls out of her hands on the run and is scattered on the street. When William reads it, he believes that the autobiographical story is about him. Analogously to Agnes’s case, it was Sugar’s unusual mind that interested him so. On the night that they met, he thought that “she is a woman with a brain in her head! He has never met anyone remotely like her, except himself” (CP 112). He marveled at her extensive knowledge of literature. He referred to her skin ailment as to tiger stripes and a “fitting mark of her animal nature” (CP 177). However, from the very same attributes, it becomes “so terrifyingly self-evident, that Sugar was a madwoman: her unnatural intellect, her sexual depravity, her masculine appetite for business, her reptilian skin …” (CP 821). Sugar’s favorite play by Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus,* should have been, in hindsight, a warning sign of her craving for bloodshed.

The precarious situation of women at the mercy of men is shown in William’s attitude towards them at the beginning and at the end of the story. As shown, the women already exhibited all the “deviations” that he condemned them for at the very beginning. What is more, these very characteristics made the women stand out from the rest of their

subclasses. Both, Sugar and Agnes were perfect representatives of their class, while deviating just slightly in a way that William found attractive. As long as men find these expressions of non-standard attributes permissible, the women are safe. However, what the dominant class finds tolerable seems to be rather mercurial. If one views William's situation through the eyes of the dominant group, one might agree with William's assessment of it. The objects he purchased for clear functions started malfunctioning and exhibiting properties that were not supposed to be a part of the package (in such an extent). The appropriated women took control of themselves in a world dominated by men, where their role was to be of use. Agnes and Sugar both leave William, they do not passively wait for him to decide their fate. Their capacity to transcend their roles, and use of the faculties that the male group does not acknowledge in women, lead William to attribute these events to a fault in their broken minds. William sees himself as a victim of a cruel and unexpected twist of fate – as a man, who was tormented by not one, but two madwomen.

Conclusion

It has been argued throughout this thesis that the class of women is the possession of the class of men and that the former class perceives the latter as objects rather than people. Firstly, it is easily detectable in the case of the prostitutes, who are assigned the role of sex objects and are stripped of all other signs of their humanity. They become mere body parts that lose their appeal with repeated use. Their systematic objectification in the world of the novel is evident in the underground, but highly popular handbook *More Sprees in London – Hints for Men About Town, with advice for greenhorns*. Then there is the ornamental function of the middle-class lady with her nearly non-existent sexuality. Due to education which aimed solely at cultivating Agnes's social skills, while neglecting other areas of potential development and real-life knowledge, she becomes a perfect decorative object that is empty inside. Once again, the assertion that "from birth she has been groomed to do nothing especially well except appear in public looking beautiful" (CP 161) is a very fitting juxtaposition of her mental and corporal state. Her lack of knowledge of the required form of sexuality results in a skewed understanding of the world and pervasive isolation of her person because of her unconventional behavior.

The similarity between the acquisition of a prostitute and marriage is shown in the way William purchases both women. The possession of their physicality passes from their earlier possessors, coincidentally, their parents, to William on the basis of a contract between these parties (excluding the purchased women). Agnes and Sugar become objects stored at a designated place and the extent of their use is decided by William. Moreover, he now owns the totality of their time. Sexual obligation is another point in case. Since the contract assigns him the right to the totality of the women, he uses them sexually when he sees fit. The products of the female bodies, such as children are William's possession too, unless he decides that he does wish to father the children. Since the women have no other means of supporting themselves, they are both wholly at his mercy.

The comparison of the two kinds of contracts side by side unearthed the nature of marriage as the socially acceptable and accepted form of appropriation. William legally acquires a wife, clandestinely a prostitute. Both Sugar and Agnes undergo similar processes in their internal worlds, such as fragmentation of the self and infantilization because it was still their corporeality, rather than their mental faculties that kept them in

William's favor. Individuality or inconsistency of the objectified women with the dominant point of view is viewed as madness and was liable to sanctions. The dominant group decided on what is a permissible curiosity and what constitutes an irreparable fault in the appropriated product. And so, what attracted William to these women at the beginning was interpreted by him as madness when the women finally transcended their designated use and broke free from the limited existences. For example, a part of a flirtatious dialogue between William and Agnes during their courtship already revealed her belief in demons. William, however, found it amusing and it interpreted as Agnes's peculiar sense of humor. He thought: "damn it, this girl was funny! It only required a special sort of man to perceive her gently mischievous brand of wit," which was, obviously, him (CP 731). Sugar's brain was once referred to as "a superb little machine," (CP 419) before turning into a sign of her monstrous femininity.

When over the years Agnes's quirks (scandals during the social season, fainting spells, visits to the Catholic church, talking about angels) accumulate and culminate in the discovery of her religious vision of the world, he decides that her deviations exceeds her usefulness and she is to be removed. When Sugar exceeds her scope of use by falling pregnant with William's child, it is perceived an irreparable fault in her. She is to be disposed of as well. At the end, both women leave the flabbergasted William on their own terms. Agnes disappears from home in search of a real-life convent to join, Sugar and Sophie flee the Rackham's household to an undisclosed location. In the 2006 collection of short stories *The Apple* about chosen characters from *The Crimson Petal and the White*, Sophie's fate is revealed. The fact that Agnes's and Sugar's stories are not resolved, as there were doubts about the identity of the body found in the Thames, finally enables the women to take their narratives into their own hands, since the stories that they wrote before, ended up in William's. It might be interpreted as the opportunity for Agnes and Sugar to finally construct their own narratives according to their own terms.

Resumé

V roce 2022 uplynulo dvacet let od vydání románu *Kvítek karmínový a bílý* nizozemského, anglicky píšícího, spisovatele Michela Fabera. Jedná se o jeho nejúspěšnější román. Za svůj úspěch pravděpodobně vděčí velmi detailnímu a věrohodnému vylíčení viktoriánského života a využití prvků typických pro toto období. Na druhé straně je na tento svět nahlíženo očima člověka žijícího v 21. století a zavedené koleje viktoriánského života jsou zpochybněny a známé archetypy viktoriánské literatury představeny ve zcela novém světle. Jedná se o postmoderní román, kde do děje zasahuje vševědoucí vypravěč, kde jsou nám přístupné myšlenkové pochody postav, kde se střídá satira, historická fikce či gotický horor. Objevují se zde témata dvojí morálky, prostituce, dětské práce či zanedbávání dětí nebo vliv současných názorů na vhodné chování. Díky četným odkazům na klasická díla světové literatury či soudobé názory je román vhodným subjektem pro akademiky, kteří se na něj dívali například očima genderové teorie, ale také pro čtenáře viktoriánské literatury.

Úvodní kapitola této práce představuje autora, jeho život a dosavadní dílo. Následuje stručné shrnutí děje, zařazení do žánru a také oddíl o zajímavých vypravěčských prostředcích důležitých pro děj. Druhá kapitola je věnována představení aplikovaných teorií. Román je natolik rozmanitý, že jej lze zkoumat z nesčetných hledisek. V této práci byly vybrány teorie přivlastňování francouzské filozofky Colette Guillaumin a objektivizace americké profesorky filozofie a gender studies Sandry Bartky. Obě teorie spolu souvisejí, neboť je v nich vyjádřen názor, že ženy jsou vnímány jako objekty pro uspokojení tužeb a využití muži. Colette Guillaumin zavádí pojem *sexage* jako sociální vztah mezi muži a ženami, v němž si muži ženy fyzicky přivlastňují a berou je jako objekty k uspokojování svých potřeb, nikoli jako lidské bytosti. Tento vztah existuje na úrovni společnosti, ale existuje i soukromé přivlastnění v podobě manželství.

To, že jsou v něm ženy vnímány jako objekty, je patrné z pěti specifických forem přivlastňování, o nichž se podrobně hovoří v kapitole 3, a to přivlastňování času, produktů ženského těla, sexuální submisivity a fyzické odpovědnosti za postižené členy skupiny i za zdravé členy mužské pohlavní skupiny. Tento vztah je dále udržován pěti způsoby, a to trhem práce, omezováním svobody pohybu, demonstrací moci, sexuálním nátlakem a zákony a zvykovými právy.

Kapitola 4 se zabývá vnitřním světem žen, s nimiž muži zacházejí jako s objekty podle teorie Sandry Bartky. U objektifikovaných žen existuje vnitřní rozdělení mezi jejich tělesností a myslí a ženy se tak samy pokládají za objekty, protože tak funguje svět kolem nich. Protože jejich duševní schopnosti nejsou rozvinuté a je kladen přílišný důraz na funkce jejich těla, jsou infantilizovány. Pro hrdinky románu je tento způsob života již neudržitelný, a tak se vymykají z kolejí a stávají se vadnými produkty, protože vykazují aktivity v oblastech, pro které nebyly koupeny. Jejich únikovou cestou se stává šílenství - tedy podle pohledu dominantní skupiny, která ženám nepřisuzovala schopnost překročit své vynucené a vymezené postavení.

Záměrem této práce bylo popsat, jak si lze ženy přivlastnit a jak se legální forma velmi podobá té skryté, a odhalit základ, kterým je nerovný společenský vztah. Manželství je ještě represivnější než čistě sexuální vztah s prostitutkou, za který se platí. To, že ženy neměly na výběr a musely se buď vdát, byt odsuzovány za svou práci, ukazuje jejich malý prostor pro orientaci v životě bez společenských sankcí. Prostřednictvím analýzy vztahů mezi muži a ženami jsou nastoleny otázky o skutečné povaze manželství a postavení žen ve společnosti, stejně jako o postoji společnosti k ženám, které se bouří proti předepsaným společenským rolím.

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