



التواصل الأدبي

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مجلة نصف سنوية محكمة

تعنى بقضايا الأدب العام والمقارن والنقد والترجمة

تصدر عن مخبر الأدب العام و المقارن
كلية الآداب و العلوم الإنسانية و الاجتماعية
جامعة باجي مختار / عنابة (الجزائر)

ديسمبر 2016

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جامعة باجي مختار - عنابة-
كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية



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رئيسة التحرير: د. سامية عليوي

أمانة التحرير:

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- أ.د. عمار رجال
- أ. سليم لسود

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البريد الإلكتروني: ettawassol.eladabi@gmail.com

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« *Shéhérazade* »: A Transcultural Character

الكلمة الافتتاحية

سنبلةٌ سابعة تُضاف إلى السُّنبلات الخُضر التي ادّخرنا لقراءنا خيرها لأَيَّام القحط، علَّها تشبع فضولهم، وتروي تعطُّشهم للقراءة والمعرفة؛ هكذا، تُطلّ مجلّة "التّواصل الأدبي" على قرائها في عددها السَّابع، بثروة من المقالات تنوّعت بين مجالاتٍ عدّة وبلغات ثلاث.

وتطلّ مجلّة "التّواصل الأدبي" متعطّشة إلى مقالات وبحوث تثري أعدادها، متلمّسة حاجة القراء إلى ما يُنشر على صفحاتها، سعيدة بهذه الكوكبة من الباحثين الذي أثروا العدد بدراسات تحسب أسرة التحرير أنّها تضيف شيئاً جديداً.

ويطلّ المتلقّي دوماً محطّ اهتمام "التّواصل الأدبي"، إذ بمستوى رضاه ترقى "التّواصل الأدبي" وتزداد تألّقاً، وبملحوظاته تزداد إصراراً على التّطوّر، وتسعى إلى مواكبة ركب المجالات العالمية، محاولة ألاّ يتأخّر عدد عن الأعداد السَّابقة في ثرائه وتنوّع موضوعاته.

نقرأ في هذا العدد ثماني مقالات، توزّعت على لغات ثلاث: العربية والإنجليزية والفرنسية، وتنوّعت موضوعاتها بين أجناس أدبية ثلاث: الشّعر والرّواية، والمسرح.

أمّا الجزء الأول من المجلّة، فقد ضمّ ستّ مقالات باللّغة العربية، ثلاث منها في جنس الشّعر، نقرأ فيها: مقالاً يندرج في مجال الأدب المقارن بعنوان «التّيناص القرآني في شعر أبي العتاهية وناصر خسرو قبادياني»، يستعرض فيه صاحبه

أشكال الحضور القرآني -أصداء وأنماط- لدى الشّباعين، معتمدا في ذلك دراسة تناصيّة؛ أمّا المقال الثّاني فقد جاء بعنوان «الأدب النّسوي الكُوري: قراءة في ديوان "الحياة داخل بيضة للشّباعرة كيم سنغ هي"»، تتبّع فيه صاحبه الحركة النّسوية في كوريا من خلال ديوان واحدة من رائدات الحركة النّسوية في كوريا، عبّرت فيه عن الأزمات السّياسية والاجتماعية والمعاناة النّفسية لإنسان هذا الزّمن عموما، وعن معاناة المرأة خصوصا؛ أمّا المقال الثّالث فقد جاء بعنوان «الفرديّ والجماعيّ في نماذج من شعر الفلسطينيين واليهوديات الشّرقيّات داخل حدود 1948»، استعرضت فيه صاحبه الموضوعات الشّعرية التي تفرّدت بها كوكبة من الشّاعرات داخل حدود 1948، الفلسطينيين منهنّ واليهوديات، عارضة المشترك كالموضوعات السّياسية، والممنوعة، متتبّعة مراحل تطوّر الشّعريّ العربي الفلسطيني والعبري المعاصر.

أمّا المجموعة الثّانية، فقد اهتمّت بجنس الرّواية بدءا بالبحث الذي حمل عنوان «المعنى الجمالي للسّيرة في السّرد الرّوائي دراسة في رواية "حارة الهلالية لمحمّد جلال"»، اجتهد فيه صاحبه في عرض السّيرة والسّيرة الدّاتية من منظور جديد بعيد عن الرّؤية التّقليدية، وذلك من خلال دراسة رواية "حارة الهلالية لمحمّد جلال"؛ أمّا البحث الثّاني فقد اهتم بروايات إبراهيم الكوني، وركّزت فيه صاحبه على رمزية الماء لكشف أبعاده الفلسفية في واحدة من روايات الكوني، فجاء البحث بعنوان: «شعرية الماء في رواية "واو الصّغرى" لإبراهيم الكوني»؛ أمّا البحث الثّالث، فقد تتبّعت فيه صاحبه تجلّيات الصّراعات الاجتماعية والرّوى المتناقضة، فتغلّقت -في

سبيل كشف تعدّد الأصوات وتباينها - بين روايات ياسمينه خضرا المشكّلة لثلاثيته الروائية، فجاء عنوان البحث «تعدّد الأصوات وصراع القيم في ثلاثية ياسمينه خضرا الروائية: سنونات كابل، الاعتداء، صقّارات بغداد».

وقد ضمّ الجزء الثاني من المجلة الذي نقرأ أبحاثه من اليسار إلى اليمين، بحثين أحدهما بالّغة الإنجليزية وحمل عنوان: «صور المقاومة وتشكيل الهوية النسائية في مسرحية "بام جيمز" ومسرحية "جاكي كاي"»، وهو عبارة عن دراسة مقارنة، تناولت فيه صاحبه صور الهوية النسائية من خلال المسرحيتين؛ أمّا آخر مقال، فجاء بالّغة الفرنسية، وحمل عنوان «شهرزاد شخصية عابرة للثقافات»، تتبّع فيه صاحبه تجلّيات شخصية "شهرزاد" في مختلف الآداب العالمية، والصّور والدلالات التي اتخذتها في مختلف الثقافات.

خضع ترتيب المقالات في العدد لاعتبارات تقنية لا غير، وتنوّعت موضوعاته بتنوّع ما وصلنا من أبحاث، جاءت في مجملها بين جنسيّ الشّعْر والرواية، وسبحت جميعها في فلك الأدب المقارن والنّقد.

كما أنّ المقالات المنشورة في المجلة لا تعبّر إلّا عن آراء أصحابها، ولا تعبّر بالضرورة عن رأي المجلة التي لا تتحمّل مسؤولية ما قد يرد في بعض الأبحاث من أخطاء.

□ الافتتاحية

نتمنى أن يجد قراءونا في سابع سنا بلنا غذاء فكريا وثقافيا يشبع شغفهم للقراءة والاطّلاع، ويثري معارفهم بكلّ جديد نافع، ونهيب بهم ألاّ يخلوا علينا بانتقاداتهم، فبهم وبآرائهم تمضي المجلّة قدّما وتسعى إلى المزيد من الرّقي.

وختاماً تتقدّم رئيسة التحرير بالشّكر الجزيل إلى الأساتذة الأفاضل الذين أثروا هذا العدد بكتاباتهم، وإلى جنود الخفاء الذين تتمّ غربة ما يصل المجلّة على أيديهم، فيختارون لقراءنا من الجيّد أجوده، فشكرا لقراء المجلّة الأوائل؛ والشّكر موصول إلى عضو التحرير السيّد "سليم لسود" على سهره الدائم على أن تصدر المجلّة في أبهى حلّة، فله الشّكر الجزيل، وجزاه الله خيرا على ما أنفق من وقت في تزيين وجه المجلّة، وتقويم ما اعوجّ من نظامها.

رئيسة هيئة التحرير:

د. سامية عليوي



Ettawassol El Adabi

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Faculté des lettres, sciences humaines et sociales

B.P: 12 - Annaba (23000)/ Algérie

Site Web : <http://www.llgc.univ-annaba.dz>

E-mail: ettawassol.eladabi@gmail.com

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1. Dr. Naglaa Abou-Agag 04

Forms of Resistance and Shaping Female Identity in Pam Gems's Dusa, Fish, Stas, and Vi and Jackie Kay's Chiaroscuro.

2. Dr. Samia Alloui 39

«Shéhérazade»: A Transcultural Character

Forms of Resistance and Shaping Female Identity

in Pam Gems's Dusa, Fish, Stas, and Vi and Jackie Kay's Chiaroscuro¹

Naglaa Abou-Agag

Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Arts, University of Alexandria, Egypt

Abstract:

The paper proposes to investigate the concept of resistance and its relation to shaping female identity in Pam Gems's Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi (1976) and Jackie Kay's Chiaroscuro (1986) within the framework of Judith Butler's Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. Both plays, though set in different historical conditions, are concerned with the same gender issues; each presenting a set of four characters struggling with questions of female identity. Gems belongs to the feminist climate of the 1970s that witnessed the introduction of women's dramatic texts into mainstream canonical theater works, while Kay comes from the late eighties charged with racial concerns. The paper provides an analysis of the stories of the eight women with the aim of showing the patterns of resistance adopted by these women within a complex matrix of racial as well as gender issues.

Keywords:

Resistance- Female Identity- Canonical Theater Works- Racial Issues- Gender Issues.

¹) A presentation on the topic was given at the Twelfth International Symposium on Comparative Literature at the English Department- Faculty of Arts- Cairo University 11-13 November 2014.

صور المقاومة وتشكيل الهوية النسائية في مسرحية بام جيمز *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*

ومسرحية جاكاي كاي *Chiaroscuro*

يطمح البحث إلى دراسة مفهوم المقاومة وعلاقته بتشكيل الهوية النسائية في مسرحية بام جيمز *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* (1976) ومسرحية جاكاي كاي *Chiaroscuro* (1986) في إطار كتاب جوديث بتلر *Gender Trouble: feminism and the Subversion of Identity*، فالمسرحيتان، بالرغم من أنهما تنتميان لظروف تاريخية مختلفة، تعينان بالموضوعات النسوية ذاتها، فتقدم كل منهما مجموعة من الشخصيات النسائية تتكون من 4 شخصيات. وتنتمي مسرحية بام جيمز لجيل السبعينات الذي شهد دخول النصوص المسرحية التي كتبتها كاتبات مسرحيات لإطار الأعمال المسرحية الكلاسيكية، بينما تأتي مسرحية جاكاي كاي لتحمل اهتمامات عرقية. وهكذا تثير مسرحية جيمز موضوعات تنتمي للحركة النسوية فقط، في حين تنشغل مسرحية كاي بإشكاليات عرقية وثقافية في قصص شخصياتها النسائية. ويهدف البحث إلى توضيح أنماط المقاومة التي تنتهجها هؤلاء النسوة في المسرحيتين إلى جانب عرض إخفاقاتهن ونجاحاتهن في إطار منظومة من الأطروحات النسوية والعرقية.

الكلمات المفتاح:

المقاومة- الهوية النسائية- الأعمال المسرحية الكلاسيكية- إشكاليات عرقية- إشكاليات نسوية.

The paper investigates the concept of resistance and its relation to shaping female identity in Pam Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* (1976, reprinted 2013) and Jackie Kay's *Chiaroscuro* (1986, reprinted 2011) within the framework of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999). Both plays, though set in different historical conditions, are concerned with the same gender issues; each presenting a set of four characters struggling with questions of female identity. Gems belongs to the feminist climate of the 1970s which witnessed the introduction of women's dramatic texts into mainstream canonical theater works, while Kay comes from the late eighties and is charged with racial concerns. Thus, Gems's

play raises issues of gender only, whereas Kay's introduces problematics of race and culture into her women's accounts.

In her investigation of gender and female identity, Butler posits the contentions that the field of possibilities for gender should be open "without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized" (Butler 1999, viii), that heterosexual normativity ought not to order gender, and that ordering gender ought to be opposed" (Butler 1999, xiv). Since gender and identity are constructs and if they should not be rigid and exclusionary, then "no single account of construction" (Butler 1999, xvi) would encompass all the "cultural possibilities that feminism is supposed to open up" (Butler 1999, 187). The eight women characters in Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and Kay's *Chiaroscuro* present eight different variations on women identity through the stories of their personal struggles and the description in dramatic form of the resistance strategies they adopt to cope with the challenges they face and to shape their own individual identities.

Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* is set in a London flat owned by Fish, a socialist activist given the flat as a gift from her father. She allows three women friends to stay with her: Dusa, Stas, and Vi. Dusa is a regular middle-class wife separated from her husband and fighting to get back her children whom her husband has taken to Argentina and she is reunited with them at the end of the play. Stas is a physiotherapist who does prostitution on the

side, described in the play as “escort” business (Gems 2013, 38), to save money to study marine biology and is seen towards the end of the play with a stack of air tickets to Hawaii where she is planning to go to university. Vi is an unemployed anorexic who moves from illness to good health during the action of the play and finally takes up a job as a traffic warden. Fish is torn between her career commitments forged within the framework of her feminist ideology, and the disappointments of a relationship that makes her miserable. Her lover abandons her for another woman and she commits suicide towards the end of the play. Only the four women appear on stage and reference only is made to the male characters involved in the stories narrated by the women. The finality of death at the end seems to undermine the achievements of the other characters. However, the solidarity among the four women, their resilience, and their openness about their problems and struggles secure the play a solid place in feminist theater.

Along the same lines, Kay’s *Chiaroscuro* is only populated by women characters and action takes place in one setting. The play presents four black / mixed-race women; two are openly lesbian while the other two are flabbergasted at the openness of the lesbian couple. The racial issues color all the life stories of the four women: Aisha, Beth, Yomi, and Opal and add an important dimension to the resistance strategies they adopt being doubly marginalized, first as women and second as

belonging to non-white ethnic groups. The play ends on a note of reconciliation and continuity, emphasizing the contention that the fight is not over and that there are still more achievements to work for ahead. The struggle may not be as fierce as it was for the earlier generation of women activists and playwrights but preparation for it is a must. The end of the play with the “doll, the album, the cushion and the mirror in the same position as they were in the beginning” seems to suggest that this is only a break before the fight is resumed (Kay 2011, 117).

Gems’s *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas* and *Viand* Kay’s *Chiaroscuro* have a long history of women playwrighting behind them. Ever since the beginning of the twentieth century women struggled to achieve their political and social rights through dramatic and artistic means as is seen in the creation of the AFL (Actresses’ Franchise League) in 1908 in support of the suffrage organization “Women’s Social and Political Union” formed in 1903. The AFL staged a number of suffrage pieces by women playwrights such as Cicely Hamilton’s *Diana Dobson* and Elizabeth Robins’s *Votes for Women* during the 1913 Women’s Theatre season (Aston & Reinelt 2000, 3-4). Along the road there are dates of significance marking major achievements for women activism and women playwrighting. These include 1928, the year of gaining the vote for all adult women, 1956, the year of a major political, social, and artistic upheaval, and 1968, the year that witnessed the abolition of

theatre censorship, marked the fiftieth anniversary of being given the vote, and characterized by the youth rebellion.

After gaining the vote, the “militancy of the struggle for enfranchisement and equality... gave way to a post-war caution and concern with ‘feminine matters’” (Aston & Reinelt 2000, 9). The 1920s and 1930s saw an increase in the numbers of plays written by women which showed a considerable variation (Gale 2000, 25). Maggie B. Gale mentions names of prominent women playwrights at the time such as G. B. Stern in her hit plays *The Matriarch* (1929) and *The Man Who pays The Piper* (1931), Gertrude Jennings in *The Young Person in Pink* (1920), *Family Affairs* (1934), and *Our Own Lives* (1935), and Clemence Dane’s *Bill of Divorcement* (1921). These plays, among others, responded to “the enormous social and cultural shift” at the time caused by the death toll of the First World War and the deconstruction of “traditional sexual division of labour”, which allowed women to join the labor force (Gale 2000, 29).

A more drastic shift is seen after the Second World War in the production in 1956 of *Look Back in Anger*, marking the rise of the Angry Theater and giving voice to the young generation. Women dramatists were incorporated into the dramatic liberating movement at the time and plays by Ann Jellicoe, Shelagh Delaney, and Lesley Storm made their way into the drama of the decade. However, although plays by women dramatists of the 1950s pushed “the boundaries of social-realism far further

than Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*..., as far as the (theatre) histories go, [they] stand in the shadow of Jimmy Porter's legendary presence" (Bennett 2000, 41). However, 1956 was also "a critical moment for the emergence of a distinct black British theatre" with regard to cultural and racial perspectives (Ponnuswami 2000, 217). It witnessed the production of John Elliot's television play about Caribbean immigrants *A Man from the Sun* and Errol John's *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*. The 1950s and 1960s, therefore, paved the way for non-white non-male theatre but did not provide much support for women's cause and consequently for their involvement in drama (Peacock 1991, 155).

The 1970s, however, witnessed "[w]ithin the socialist theatre movement itself [...] serious attempts to incorporate the critique of feminism" (Wandor 2000, 61), and the rise of a number of theater groups focusing on the work of women dramatists such as the Feminist Theatre Study Group which began their meetings in 1976, and The Women's Theatre Group with which Pam Gems was associated (Wandor 1986, 61). Gems is known for her "fierce" femaleness reflected in the titles of her plays which are mainly populated by female characters who "are powerfully and confidently sexually self-determining", with men either coming on stage very briefly or enjoying some off-stage presence through relations with the women involved in the action (Wandor, 1986, 165-6). Her plays *Guinevere*, *Pasionaria*, *Camille*, and *Queen Christina*

belong to the category of “subversive female biography” (Sakellaridou 1993. 311). In general, Gems’s dramatic world is informed by the events of 1968 that further consolidated the feminist movement and encouraged new dramatic modes and traditions such as the alternative theater (Janik 2002, 129).

Within the same context, young black women playwrights were politicized by “the grass-root activism and the political as well as community work of the 1970s/80s” (Cersovsky 2013). The Theatre of Black Women was founded in 1982; disbanded in 1988 for lack of financial support. Black women’s plays of this period dealt with diverse topics including issues of beauty, cultural assimilation, the effects of migration and history on women’s lives, and archetypical images of black womanhood. Prominent names associated with Black theater in general in England are Roy Williams, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Tanika Gupta, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, Ayub Khan-Din, Alia Bano, Bola Agbaje, and Jackie Kay. Plays by Black British women were specifically encouraged after 1986 when the Second Wave Young Women’s Project organized “a National Young Women Playwrights’ Festival in South London and Winsome Pinnock’s *A Hero’s Welcome* was staged for the first time” (Cersovsky 2013). In the same year Jackie Kay’s *Chiaroscuro* was first presented at the Soho Poly, London.

Both Gems’s *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* and Kay’s *Chiaroscuro* are mainly concerned, then, with female

identity and each presents a set of variations on what may be seen collectively as the “female” character, which sustains the doubt Butler throws in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) on the definitions of “female identity”, “gender”, “sex”, and indeed of “woman” as one umbrella term in feminist theory (ies). Butler (1999) presents a thorough analysis of French feminist and poststructuralist theory and the power structures it propagates, highlighting the divergence between the positions of main figures associated with it. For example, she states that while Luce Irigaray claims that there is only one sex, the masculine, Michel Foucault believes that the category of sex is created within a system of economy governing sexuality, and Monique Wittig argues that the category of sex, within the framework of compulsory heterosexuality, is feminine (Butler 1999, 24). Butler (1999) comes to the conclusion that there is “no ontology of gender on which we might construct a politics [...] This kind of critique brings into question the foundationalist frame in which feminism as an identity politics has been articulated” (189).

The eight women in Gems’s *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and Kay’s *Chiaroscuro* function within the structure they find themselves in, which is, according to Butler (1999), complex and subtly governed by the paternal law and if:

subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns

against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself. The culturally constructed body will then be liberated, neither to its “natural” past, nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities. (119)

The two plays present such possibilities through the eight different stories, each of which touches upon an encounter with the paternal law or investigates an aspect of female identity. Action takes place in the two plays on an almost empty isolated stage space and involves a number of resistance strategies that includes challenging heterosexual gender roles, propagating the figure of the woman activist, employing story-telling as therapeutic activity, and using art, dance, and music as liberating and identity-asserting practices.

Action in Gems’s *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and Kay’s *Chiaroscuro* takes place in one closed setting; Fish’s flat in *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and an unidentified place where minimum stage props are used to create imaginary settings within the same space in *Chiaroscuro*. The setting in both plays, thus, may be seen in two different ways: the closed space in which action happens in the two plays may be considered a prison from which the eight women cannot break free or a niche where they may feel liberated, safe, and at liberty to contemplate their identity issues. The prison metaphor is sustained through the use of the four walls which are always there, containing the action and

symbolically preventing the women from direct contact with the outside world. In contrast, the view of the setting as a liberating space, where women are protected from the invasion of direct influences from the outside world so that they would enjoy the freedom and safety necessary for creativity, makes of the two plays a process of experimenting with identity and gender roles. Whether a prison or a liberating space, the place where action happens in the two plays has very limited connections with the outside world and is furnished with few stage props.

The setting, whether the plays are considered a prison or a liberating space, is economical. In Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, the setting is "[a] space...not naturalistic...neutral in atmosphere. One or two pieces of 'good' furniture. There is a divan...and a large, very fine, double-doored French armoire. A small black and white television is switched on, but without sound" (Gems 2013, 27). The rebellion against the traditional view of theater space as reflecting and reinforcing "the pleasure of perspectival space, in which each object has a measured and appropriate position within the whole" matches the revolutionary spirit of the play (Diamond 1997, 5). The flat in the play does not function only as the residence of its owner or as the place where she may receive guests. It is also a headquarter for the operation of finding Dusa's children, a shelter for Vi, and a temporary lodging for Stas. The practicality of stage design responds to the various functions of the flat.

Similarly, the setting in *Chiaroscuro* is made up of a grey cloth as the floor, two high-backed chairs, an old wooden chest, and a montage of landscapes and odd photographs as the backdrop. “*The stage should be as free from clutter as possible. It should have the appearance of an almost empty yard*” (Kay 2011, 63). The stage props which appear throughout the action are: a cushion, a doll, a mirror, a quilt, and a photo album. Aisha was given the cushion by her grandmother, Yomi had the darky doll as a child, Opal broke a mirror when she was little and has been ever since psychologically attached to the mirror (Kay 2011,66-7), and Beth’s photo album is where stories of the old boyfriends she pretends to have had and the photos of her white childhood friends reside (Kay 2011, 68). Later in the play, Aisha appears with a quilt. This was made by her mother, a factory machinist who came to England with her husband looking for a better work opportunity as England at the time welcomed foreign labor force, only to find out that they were “treated like gatecrashers” (Kay 2011, 71). Sometimes Aisha’s mother would stop sewing and make quilts “beautiful, angry quilts glorious with colour and pattern” (Kay 2011, 71).

Therefore, the minimalist theater in which actors, along the lines of Grotowski’s notions, “do not use furniture and props naturalistically but with the imaginative spontaneity of a child” (Roose-Evans1970, 103), heightens the intensity of the human experience presented in the two plays. The atmosphere in Gems’s *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*

and Kay's *Chiaroscuro* is charged with either hostility coming from the outside world or pains and fears inherited from the past. In *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, Fish's apartment where action takes place is seen as a shelter for women who have problems as revealed in conversation between Dusa and Vi:

Dusa: Are you living here now?

Vi: Yaah, why...you coming back?

Dusa: With two children?

Vi (Alarmed): Where are they? (Gems 2013, 28)

Vi lives at Fish's apartment for a reason that is not explained. However, she is always sick and she refers to her "last abortion" (Gems 2013, 29), which indicates that she has been leading a troubled life and that she has come to the flat just as women who need help would go to shelters. Dusa is another example that sustains the view of the flat as a center for women feminist activities. In this happy haven for unhappy women, communication with the outside world takes place through the telephone. In *Chiaroscuro*, the stories of the four women bring the outside world into the domain the four women have created for themselves. In both plays, the women set themselves apart from the social structures of the outside world; which is an act of resistance in its own right, showing dissatisfaction with the place, duties, and gender roles devised for women by society.

Resistance is, then, seen as in the straightforward rebellion against the social structure consolidating gender roles and therefore sexual orientation, which is led in Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* by Fish and represented in Kay's *Chiaroscuro* in the character of Beth. Fish is a lawyer whose efforts to stand up for women's rights are presented in the play as far as her career and her personal life are concerned. She stands in direct contrast to Dusa, Stas, and Vi in the sense that they are all preoccupied with their immediate personal concerns, whereas she ventures into public life as a lawyer and as a feminist activist in an attempt to give voice to women's pains and dreams. She appears "*in wig and gown. She addresses the JURY in her summing up speech*" in an important case in relation to the investigation of women's place in society (Gems 2013, 39-40). Fish defends a woman who murders her husband after spending many years married to him and supporting all his dreams and career plans in spite of the sacrifice she makes when she obeys him and terminates her pregnancy more than once. He succeeds on the business level and she becomes barren due to the many abortions she has had. She kills him when he leaves her for another woman; a divorced woman with two children, who in his words "needed a father" (Gems 2013, 40). The story is a variation on Dusa's problems with her husband and Fish's story with Alan. In addition to her legal profession, Fish is a feminist activist who has become a public figure following up on women's achievements with regard to their rights as part of the labor force:

Fish: Listen to this. ‘Council conceded that the female labour force had been evicted illegally, and that there had been faults in communication with management.’”(Gems 2013, 45).

She also addresses the public through the media:

Vi: Are you going to be on telly?

Fish: Possibly. I’m amazed. They conceded shift systems to fit school hours, and an on-site crèche. (Gems 2013,45)

However, the deterioration seen in Fish’s character after she receives the news of Alan’s marriage reveals her uncertainty with regard to her feminist ideas of success and career building:

Fish: To the bitch goddess, success! I really think I’m ready to have a child, I’ve got it together in my head...by this time, next year, I intend to be a mother! (Gems 2013,47)

The voice of the activist in *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* contemplates resorting to the traditional path devised by society for women, the path represented in the play by Dusa:

[...] (Quietly) You don’t understand.

You love them too much. It’s unbearable. From the moment they’re born [...] I mean. they can let go when they’re ready. You can’t.

You're just an old balloon after the party. Of course, nowadays...big deal... you can retain...become a computer data programmer. See life. No it's a tough act to follow. (Gems 2013,60)

The above-mentioned quotation tells the story of one of the ordinary women dealing with oppression in their everyday lives to which women activists usually give voice. In *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and *Chiaroscuro*, the ordinary women are also given a voice. The personal narratives of the eight women reveal aspect of female identity that are worthy of investigation and consideration.

In *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, the two pivotal stories involve relationships with men, who never appear on stage, within the traditional heterosexual framework. Dusa has a rift with her husband and seeks refuge at Fish's flat. Fish, too has problems with Alan who has been her boyfriend for many years. He takes up another woman and she marries someone else in retaliation, only to discover that she cannot go on and she abandons him. Alan gets married to his woman and this drives Fish crazy and she follows him around and spends a whole night in front of his house watching him and his wife making love and giggling (Gems 2013, 57-8). Later, the discussion of whether or not Alan's wife might get pregnant reveals Fish's denial tactics and her gradual loss of grip on reality, which culminates in her decisions to commit suicide. In contrast, Dusa is reunited with her children and is according to Fish firmly

anchored and has always had her “feet on the ground” (Gems 2013,70). Dusa and Fish stand in direct contrast to each other. Dusa expresses acceptance of her role as wife and mother in spite of all the burdens, challenges, and disappointments that come with it:

Fish: Oh I don’t know. Last time we met he looked quite cool, didn’t he Vi? Touch of Armani.

Dusa: I made him that jacket. I even limed the floor, laid the tiles, stripped the walls and built the Victorian mahogany bog so’s he could sit in their reading his GQ. It’s so unfair, Nobody could have worshipped his cock more than I did. (Gems 2013,31)

Dusa’s docile attitude contests the discourse of Fish, the feminist socialist activist in the play who responds to Dusa’s contention that “marriage is for grown-ups” and that she was ready for it with: “Ok. Great. So long as you know you can end up skint, abandoned, out of job experience and on Prozac” (Gems 2013,32). Dusa celebrates her reunion with her children at the end of the play after thinking that they were dead when news came to her that her husband took them to Argentina. In contrast, Fish is shocked to learn that Alan is married:

All of a sudden he wants a house and garden.
We should have had a child! (*Walks, restless*) I
should have done it last autumn, we both

wanted it then. (*Turns to Dusa*) It's funny...the idea of birth is suddenly very exciting. What's it like? (Gems 2013,34)

Fish and Alan are both lawyers who work closely together and therefore he is aware of Fish's abilities and intellectual orientations. According to Fish, Alan has always been supportive of her dreams and in response to Alan's expression of his wish to start a family with her, she states that she "should have done it. The only reason [she] didn't is because he wanted it to shut [her] up" (Gems 2013, 19). Now she is willing to change herself to win him back and to do "[a]nything he wants! [...] [to] swing from the chandeliers" (Gems 2013, 50). Her awareness that she has been afraid to give up her career and to jeopardize her individuality, however, does not help her overcome her shock at the news of his marriage:

Fish: Alan? (*She picks up the phone eagerly.*)

Alan ...Alan? Hullo ...(turns to Dusa)...he must have been cut off...was he ringing from a phone box? What's the matter?

Dusa: They've just got married. I asked him to hang on but he said he was in a hurry.

Fish stands still for a long time. Then, slowly she wipes her hand into her crotch and holds it out to Dusa as if to indicate that she is still wet from him. She turns abruptly and goes out. (Gems 2013,49)

While Fish and Dusa stand in direct contrast to each other, Stas combines the two facets represented by Fish and Dusa respectively. She has a career as a physiotherapist in the morning and does escorting and prostitution in the afternoon to make the necessary money she needs to pursue a degree in biology. She is clear about her view of the universe:

Stas: I'll tell you what's changing things...the last fifty years of physics and the next fifty years of biology. What you're talking about is fashion. (Gems 2013, 52)

She ends up with the necessary money and a stack of air tickets. She has created for herself the opportunity to study science, which she believes has solutions to all man's problems. The feminist discourse upheld by Fish, in contrast, has taken her to her suicide. Indeed, the suicide note she leaves throws doubt upon what she stands for in the play and may suggest the defeat of the voice of the activist in the play. This is further emphasized when the note is read by Stas who has expressed doubt about the validity of the Fish's feminist discourse:

Stas:

(*Reads*) 'Oh my loves, I'm sorry. I seem to have lost the knack of it. How could I have got it so wrong. I thought there was understanding...I thought we were getting somewhere. There's no love, and I can't face

the thought of fighting...forgive me. It's hard. I wanted so much to sit under a tree with my children and there doesn't seem to be a place for that any more, and I feel cheated. I've been seething with it for more than two years, but now I'm tired and it's not important any more. I don't feel fertile any more. (Gems 2013,72)

Although the death note creates a sense of finality in the play in spite of the achievements of the other characters, the success of the three other women in the play in forming their lives in the fashion they like is a the culmination of the women's effort to develop resistance strategies in the face of difficulties and disappointments.

While *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* dramatizes the negotiations, victories, and defeats of the four women who exist within the framework of a heterosexual patriarchal structure, *Chiaroscuro* explores "coming out in the face of prejudices within the community" (Godiwala 2003, 17) maybe with the aim of devising a more inclusive societal perspective that would encompass all possible variations of women identity. In *Chiaroscuro*, Beth, in revolt against the gender role devised for women by Patriarchal ideology, is open about her sexual orientations and her lesbian relationship with Opal. One of the major aspects discussed with reference to female identity is the issue of homosexuality. While *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* does not touch upon homosexuality and focuses on investigating resistance strategies adopted by the four women to

negotiate with the patriarchal society where they are expected to function, homosexuality is fully discussed in *Chiaroscuro* and may be seen as a form of resistance. The canon of feminist theory enforces, “the binary, heterosexist framework that carves up genders into masculine and feminine and forecloses an adequate description of the kinds of subversive and parodic convergences that characterize gay and lesbian culture” (Butler 1999, 84-5). In defiance against traditional feminist theory, *Chiaroscuro* brings the issue of homosexuality to the forefront.

This preoccupation with the issue of homosexuality is seen when Yomi and Aisha go to “the social”, a woman-only club where they describe silk-screening and actually take part in it (Kay 2011, 74-5). Yomi is surprised that there are many lesbians at the club and that there are black lesbian women (Kay 2011, 76). In contrast to Beth and Opal who are clear about their homosexuality, Yomi and Aisha have reservations:

Yomi: Wanted for murder! For killing off the race. God says it isn't natural. God says it isn't natural. AIDS is God vengeance on the men. On the men. Punishment for their sins. Their sins. Man and woman. Adam and Eve. That's the way it was meant to be. Meant to be.

Aisha: It is sick. But it can be treated. There is hope for them yet. Psychiatrists are God's disciples. Aversion therapy. Social diets. Electric shocks. A screw. A screw.

Yomi: What do they do what do they do these les-bi-ans? It is easy to imagine what men do-but women, women. The thought turns the national stomach, stomach. (Kay 2011, 83)

In the scene taking place at Aisha's imaginary apartment, the news of Beth and Opal's relationship is discussed and Aisha asks Beth to tone it down on "the lesbian bit" because Yomi does not know yet and Beth inquires why Aisha has not told Yomi (Kay 2001, 87). However, towards the end of the play Yomi sings a song she has heard from her mother about women in Nigeria "who lived with their husbands/ but loved each other./ She said, God it/ surprised me so much, that it was a/ pity they had to hide, a pity/ they couldn't just live together out in the/ open, if that's what they wanted" (Kay 2011, 112).

In addition to the sexual issues raised in *Chiaroscuro*, the play introduces a cultural dimension that adds more depth to the narratives of the four women. The title of the play, *Chiaroscuro*, means the arrangement of light and dark parts in a picture. This may mean light as happy and dark as sad but light may also indicate white and dark may indicate black. Both interpretations of the title enhance the racial and cultural theme in the stories of the four women in the play. Although set in the eighties in a supposedly multi-cultural Britain, stage space in *Chiaroscuro* only hosts black characters and describes inter-racial relations as they are perceived in their heads. All the stories of interaction between the black women of

the play and the members of the white-dominated society take place outside stage space. What remains of these stories is the effect they have on the imagination of the women of the play. Opal expresses her confusion with regard to the color of her skin. The brain in her head thought her skin was white, whereas her eyes tell her when she looks into the mirror that she is black (Kay 2011, 78). Color is also important when the issue of Beth's half-white mother is raised in a heated conversation between the four women, in which Beth is on the defensive expressing her anger with people's insistence on calling her "half and half" (Kay 2011, 89). These stories from the women's lives help them locate themselves within the cultural matrix where they function and understand their psyche. Therefore, the stories in *Chiaroscuro* which may be seen as "acts of retrieval" (Ponnuswami 2000, 225) building up the "diasporic and historicized" context in which the four women live (Ponnuswami 2000, 224).

The four black women in *Chiaroscuro*, Beth, Opal, Yomi, and Aisha start action in the play by explaining how they have acquired their names. Aisha was called after her grandmother on her mother's side who "was born in the Himilayas at dawn. Her mother shrieked as she pushed her out of herself" (Kay 2011, 64). Beth was called after her "great-great-great-great grandmother on [her] father's side who was taken from Africa to slavery in America and was raped often; who had children that were often taken from her" (Kay 2011, 64). Opal was named after a stone. "A

gemstone, at least they thought [her] special” (Kay 2011, 65). Yomi’s name came as a reflection of the story of her birth. She would not come out and they had to cut her mother open and Yomi came out at midnight, a baby who would not cry and whom they thought would never arrive but she “surprised the lot of them” (Kay 2011, 66). Later in the play, Yomi gives more information about old Yomi, information she was told about by her mother whose grandmother told her the story of old Yomi. Old Yomi was born “with her tongue missing” and as a child, she “started to draw and paint” (Kay 2011, 85). These stories from the past, which the women every now and then tell, help the women ground themselves firmly in their cultural origins, asserting their racial and cultural identity.

The four women revisit their past, not only to look for origins of their names and to attach these to their view of their identity or to show “how [they] got to where [they] were” (Kay 2011, 63), but also to sustain the themes of survival and continuity in the play as they are revealed in the conversation at the beginning of the play:

Aisha: All this has happened before.

Beth: How often have you heard it told though?

Aisha: Last night and the night before that.

Opal: Let’s get it on with. (Kay 2011, 64)

This repetitiveness is highlighted in the stage directions: “*The four women listen to each other as if they*

have heard it all before.” (Kay 2011, 63) and later towards the end of the play:

Lights down. They exit, leaving the doll, the album, the cushion and the mirror in the same position as they were in the beginning. They re-enter. Beth watches the audience. Aisha opens the chest. Opal and Yomi stand and chat to each other about the performance.

Lights out. (Kay 2011, 117)

The four women are conscious of the relation between stability seen in the objects on the stage being in the same position as they were in the beginning and the repetition of the narrative on the one hand, and the dynamic nature of dramatic action on the other. Therefore, the four women fill in each other's narratives, suggesting that they know all the stories and emphasizing that they have done this several times. The scene of the coffee shop is a case in point (Kay 2011, 68-70). This scene may be flashback describing the beginning of the relationship between Beth and Opal and may also be viewed as being imaginary presenting variations on the relationship to give scope to their homosexual feelings. Another example is the scene at Aisha's place (Kay 2011, 86-95). This scene is created out of the stage props which have been available since the beginning of the play:

Opal and Yomi open the chest. Yomi gives Aisha a loose black shirt. Opal gives Beth

some colourful wraps. Opal takes out a red belt and ties it round herself. Yomi takes out a yellow skirt and puts it on. Aisha and Beth dress opposite each other to music in a stylized fashion; they are laughing nervously. Yomi and Opal put some lipstick on each other. They separate. Aisha starts to move the chairs to the middle of the stage. Yomi and Opal sit down on the chest, watching her. Beth walks round the stage, carrying an imaginary bottle of wine. She stops and presses an imaginary bell. (The MUSICIANS do the ding dong!) Aisha opens the door. (Kay 2011, 86)

During this gathering for dinner the four women raise a number of issues including homosexuality and their place in the racial fabric of society, and almost fight with each other. The third example of an imaginary scene is the scene at the hospital where Beth and Opal perform the role of patient and nurse respectively (Kay 2011, 98-9). This scene turns into a kind of interrogation where Opal is being forced verbally by Beth and Yomi to face her past, her view of herself, and what they call her fear (Kay 2011, 100-1).

In general, the memories, the present experiences, and the worries about the future create the stories of the four women in *Chiaroscuro* in the same way they do in *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, although in the latter investigation of the origin does not figure at all as one of the themes.

Dialogue in both plays is rich with complex, bitter, and optimistic stories all at once. The power of words is seen in Fish's defense in court, in Dusa's description of her feelings towards her husband and children and her view of her role as wife and mother, in Stas' theories on science and her future plans, and in the overlapping narratives of Beth, Opal, Yomi, and Aisha.

However, the stories in Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Viand Kay's Chiaroscuro* are not only narrated in words. Movement, singing, and dancing; elements of ritualistic theater are also used as part of the women's narratives. In *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*:

Music. STAS has begun to drape DUSA with cloth. They all follow suit, and raid the armoire for hats, scarves and feathers. They begin to move languidly, like Poiret models. One of them opens a Japanese sunshade. Eventually VI climbs onto a low table and the others drape themselves about her in exaggerated poses. They freeze in an authentic tableau. (Gems 2013, 35)

The Artaudian influence is seen in the use of all elements of dramatic performance together to create "rites in which participants are 'reborn'" (Innes 1993, 195). The four women become part of a collective activity that reflects their solidarity and their ability to recreate themselves. Vi who becomes the core of the image developed at the end of the dance is the character who

survives anorexia and manages to find a job towards the end of the play. This reinforces the theme of endurance and continuity in contrast to that of death seen in the suicide of Fish towards the end of the play. This image of endurance and individuality also stands in contrast to the typical harem-like designs by Paul Poiret, which may be seen as a commentary on the role typically devised for women by traditional Patriarchy. In *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, the performativity of the role of the “woman” in society is investigated throughout the play and the scene where they dance and imitate Poiret models symbolically represents the intellectual debates the four women have had throughout the play.

Along the same lines, use of poetry, singing, dancing, and music in Kay’s *Chiaroscuro* sustains the notion that identity formation is a complex process and reflects the uncertainty of the four women who are not clear about where they stand and who look for their place and their voice throughout the play. The poem about the quilt is an example:

Whose were the hands that stitched these stitches?

In what language are these threads

Did the imagination of some strong woman

hold his thing together

has each piece belonged to a different child?

whose were the hands that stitched these stitches?

in what language are these threads? (Kay 2011, 71)

The theme of making art to express inner conflicts and reflect the quest for identity is seen in the form of the question. The poem is made up of unanswered questions. Other themes are also incorporated in the songs about the country of origin and about dreaming in another language (Kay 2011, 72). Dancing is also a means of making identity statements in *Chiaroscuro*. The dance performed by Beth and Opal while Aisha and Yomi recite poetry is an example. *“The lights go down. Beth and Opal start to dance slowly matching each other’s movements like an echo. They are still at opposite ends of the stage. Aisha and Yomi look at each other during their poems as if they are still continuing their conversation”* (Kay 2011, 108). Gradually *“Beth and Opal’s dance becomes more brittle”* (Kay 2011, 109) and later the *“others harmonise as Opal sings”* (Kay 2011, 112). The festivity of the dance of reconciliation at the end of the play sustains the possibility of opening more vistas of inclusion and acceptance. As such, *Chiaroscuro* may stand as dramatic evidence that “[i]t is outside the mainstream that women have been able to create new work informed by debates in feminism about the body, identity, and representation in particular” (Macdonald 2000, 235). Hence, the experimentation with form in the two plays, though more apparent in *Chiaroscuro*, contributes to the resistance strategies adopted by the characters in the two plays.

Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Viand* Kay's *Chiaroscuro*, therefore, belong to the debate over the "[u]niversalistic claims [which] are based on a common or shared epistemological standpoint, understood as the articulated consciousness or shared structures of oppression or in ostensibly transcultural structures of femininity, maternity, sexuality, and /or *écriture féminine*". (Butler 1999,19). The two plays present a myriad of female experiences and a number of variations on female identity, throwing doubt upon the contention that there is a universal female identity shaped through the years of struggle against patriarchal oppression. Each story in the two plays stands as a story of resistance and identity creation in its own right, drawing upon a very personal account of an individual woman. The eight accounts, except for the one that ends in death, open possibilities of freedom, self-fulfillment and self-assertion for female identity. The narratives of the eight women in Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and Kay's *Chiaroscuro* unearth the past, scrutinize the present and journey into the future, "forward into possibilities" (Godiwala 2003, 18), opening vistas for identity politics in general and female identity in particular through raising issues and posing questions that push intellectual and artistic boundaries.

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Ettawassol El Adabi

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