Gender in Genres:
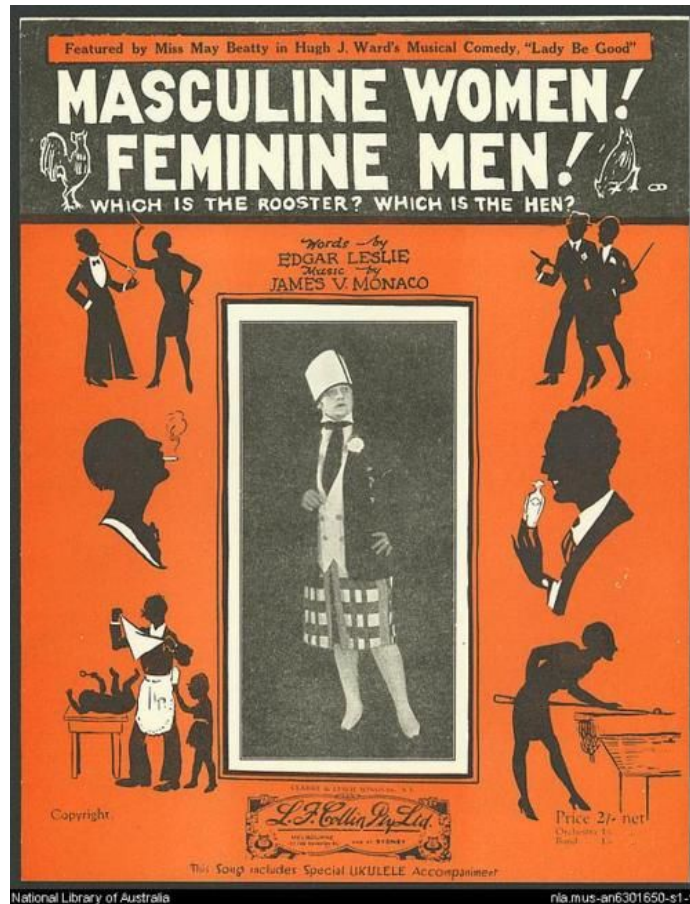
How Genre Conventions Shape Character's Performance

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Introduction

"Literature is the archive of a culture. We turn to literature to discover what makes other human beings suffer and laugh, hate and love, how people in other countries live, and how men and women experienced life in other historical periods" (Moi 268). With this statement Toril Moi perfectly explains the power that literature holds in society and over the readers' perceptions, how it shapes the way one encounters others. She elaborates on this power with the statement: "When a reader feels that a book really speaks to her, she feels less lonely in the world. Literature holds out the hope of overcoming scepticism and isolation" (268). This illustrates the power literature has to influence the reader's experience and identity through the representation of characters, as one can feel validated in one's experience and social identity by seeing it reflected in literature. David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano demonstrate this through the research project they conducted into the influence that reading fiction can have on the reader. They prove that reading literary fiction that represents experiences and identities which differ from the reader's supports the reader's Theory of Mind (280). This refers to the ability to understand and empathize with identities and experiences that are foreign to the reader, which allows for the navigation of complex social relationships and encounters (377). Kidd and Castano describe Theory of Mind as a critical social capacity (380) which not only illustrates the power that literature has but suggests the importance and benefits of a varied portrayal of social identities in literature.

An additional benefit of diverse representation of social identities, is that of readers being able to find role models they can identify with. This can influence career paths and career aspirations as Julie L. Quimby and Angela M. DeSantis were able to prove through tests conducted on a group of female undergraduate students (297). Quimby and DeSantis state that "Identification with role models is critical in the career decision-making process" (297), that people tend to look for role models that are similar to them in an "easily

identifiable way such as race and gender" (297) and that a lack of role models has been shown to be a barrier to entering new fields (297).

This is particularly relevant in the context of literature which is popular or well known, as the representations of social identities depicted in those texts have the possibility to influence a large number of readers and as the impact that literature can have on society is mediated and magnified when it is read by a larger audience (Grabes 4). A book reaching a large audience can be caused by the work or writer being awarded with a literary prize, as they drive up sales, and therefore the number of readers, of the winning works (Driscoll 119). Prizes are also a mark of appreciation and a declaration of the quality of the book, marking it as "outstanding works of literature" (Driscoll 120). Moreover, a prize is considered to be a proof of the quality of the themes contained in the work by the literary field and the readers, through which the depiction of social identities, too, can receive appreciation and validation (Driscoll 120). With this ability to increase a work's reach and prestige, literary prizes are an interesting area to investigate in the context of the importance of diverse social representation in literature.

While the original intent of this thesis was to focus solely on literary prizes and investigate the relationship between the size of a literary prize and the portrayal of gender in the winning novels, the focus of the research had to be reconsidered. This was due to the fact that, while initial results from the novels seemed to support the hypothesis of larger prizes being awarded to literature that portrays conservative gender roles and performances and smaller prizes being awarded to literature that portrays progressive gender roles and performances, the inclusion of a control group drew this conclusion into question, as its results did not correspond with those of the novels. This control group consisted of *Runaway* by Alice Munroe, *Nirvana* by Adam Johnson, *Leaving Elvis* by Michelle Michau-Crawford and *Our Disorder* by Martin McIness. Munroe and Johnson won big prizes, the Nobel Prize

for Literature and the Sunday Times EFG Short Story Award respectively, while Michau-Crawford and McIness won smaller prizes, the ABR Elizabeth Jolley Prize and the Manchester Short Story Prize respectively. However, the texts in the control group showed no division of portrayal of gender roles and performance between large and small prizes, but rather showed that across the prizes the stories all displayed a conservative portrayal.

Whether the novel portrayed conservative or progressive gender performances and roles appeared to be greatly influenced by the genre of the novels. Both the novels that had received the large prizes displayed conservative gender performance and roles and could be identified as historical novels. The novels that had won the smaller prizes and shared similar portrayal of gender performances and roles, however, could be identified as female bildungsromans.

This led to the hypothesis that the portrayal of gender roles and performances may be influenced and shaped by genre rather than being tied to the size of the prize, as all texts sharing the same genre label also shared similar dominant gender roles and gender performances by characters. While the findings do not support my initial thesis question, they are still substantial. Therefore, I will discuss the findings and strive to illustrate how the gender representations in these texts is influenced by the genre the text can be considered to be a part of based on its characteristics, under the adapted thesis question: How does genre influence the portrayal of gender performances and roles in literary prize winners?

Both gender and genre are topics that have been thoroughly discussed in the literary field. Genre has been recognized as "being central to the notion of literature" (Reinfandt 65) by critics as genres represent established conventions that define what is permitted for a writer and expected by a reader (Long 16). Kenneth Millard even describes genre conventions as a contract between the writer and the reader (1). Scholars argue that specific conventions have established themselves for the separate genres, "catering to certain types of

readers or segments of the marketplace by focusing on certain types of content and/or narrative strategies" (Reinfandt 64). This suggests that genres have also developed their conventions that can influence the manner of portraying gender, which can cater to the intended reader, as it is an aspect that can influence a reader's choice and enjoyment of a novel, as previously mentioned.

These approaches can be divided into two categories, according to Ingrid Hotz-Davies, who argues that two trends can be distinguished, considering how the English novels of the 20th century navigate the topic of gender. She states that while all novels deal with the topic of gender, there are those who take gender seriously, discuss it and the anxiety surrounding it and those who side step it, treat it as if it does not matter and ignore the categories and the expectations which come with them (85). This concept that all novels deal with gender illustrates the strong presence that the topic has in the literary field, as every writer has to engage with it in some way while writing a novel.

The relevance of gender representation and performativity within literature and of research focusing on the topic has been repeatedly established for many varying fields of literature (Gooden and Gooden; M. Rose; Cooper). Gender representation in novels is considered a potential catalyst for movements for social change (E. Rose 257) as it "can profoundly influence individual and cultural self-understanding in the sphere of everyday life, charting the changing preoccupations of social groups through symbolic fictions by means of which they make sense of the experience" (Felski in E. Rose 356). As previously mentioned, many scholars, including Gayatri Spivak, believe that encountering other people's experiences can influence the reader, as literature can train the imagination to listen to the voice of the Other (Morton 13). Hillis Miller perfectly summarizes this relevance of representation in literature. He states that "Though literature refers to the real world [...] and though reading is a material act, literature uses such physical embedment to create or reveal

alternative realities. These then enter into the ordinary 'real' world by way of readers whose beliefs and behaviour are changed by reading" (20). Scholars appear to recognize the importance and the influence of gender in literature within the world of literary prizes as well, as it is a topic of scholarly discussion. However, the focus of this discussion is on the gender of writers rather than on the portrayal within the works (Kirk). This shows that despite gender being recognized as an influential aspect in the literary field, there is not yet much research into the gender portrayal within award winning literature.

This relevance of gender in the literary field is furthermore underlined by the amount of research focusing on the topic by scholars such as Josep Armegon, Marta Bosch Vilarrubias and Angels Carabi, who explore masculinities in the whole of the field of literary studies and as many other scholars apply gender theory to canonized authors such as Hemingway (Kale) and Shakespeare (Callaghan). Additionally, gender representation has been discussed in the context of several genre's such as war literature (Cooper), the Renaissance (M. Rose) and children's literature (Trepanier-Street; Diekman). However, few have made the connection between the genre and its conventions influencing the portrayal of the gender performance directly. Instead the relationship between gender representation and genre tends to be approached as one of correlation, rather than causation. Research projects appear to concentrate on what kind of gender representation can be found in a genre rather than examining how the representation is shaped and influenced by the genre's conventions, which is what this thesis focuses on. Moreover, little of the scholarly discussion examines gender within the female bildungsroman and historical fiction. Researches concerning historical novels and the female bildungsroman do at times include sections that discuss gender within the genre (Labovitz, Hoberman). However, it remains in the context of its own topic and as a minor aspect of the research project, as these two genres and their influence on the gender portrayal are rarely the focus.

The novels that are examined in this thesis are Hilary Mantel's *Bring up the Bodies*, Kate Atkinson's *Life after Life*, Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* and Lisa O'Donnell's *The Death of Bees.* As the original focus of the thesis was on the influence of the size of the prize on the gender performance within the winning novel, the novels that were selected for this research are winners of both small and big prizes. The former two novels are the winners of the Man Booker Prize and the Costa Novel respectively, while the latter two received the Commonwealth Writers Prize and the Goldsmiths Prize respectively. The novels received these prizes in 2012, 2013 and 2014. As previously mentioned, the original research project furthermore included four short stories: *Runaway* by Alice Munroe, *Nirvana* by Adam Johnson, *Leaving Elvis* by Michelle Michau-Crawford and *Our Disorder* by Martin McIness. However, due to the new focus of the research project these stories were used as the control group rather than as part of the analysis. The novels have been divided into two categories for the purpose of the analysis; the historical novel and the female bildungsroman. *How to Be Both* was placed in both the category of the historical novel and the female bildungsroman as it is made up of two narratives that have different characteristics that qualify them for separate genres.

The novels are analysed separately, and the analysis is based on several concepts from the discourse surrounding the topic of gender. At the basis of these concepts lies the notion that "[o]ne of the most important social structures that organizes social interaction is status – a category or position a person occupies that is a significant determinant of how she or he will be defined and treated" (Lindsey 2). Gender is one of these statuses ascribed to people and one of the most important and influential (Lindsey 2). A status can have a high or low prestige, indicating ones standing in society (Lindsey 2). This is particularly important concerning gender, as "to date there is no known society in which the status of a female is

consistently[1] ranked higher than that of a male" (Lindsey 2). With these statuses come roles, which is the behaviour that is expected and associated with a status and performed according to social norms (2). Scholars consider social norms to be shared rules that "guide people's behaviour in specific situations" and "determine the privileges and responsibilities a status possess" (2). These social norms bring forth gender roles, the behaviour that is expected of a person based on their gender and which are often rigid and can become restrictive of a person's freedom of action and performance (Lindsay 3).

Also used in this thesis is the concept of hegemonic masculinity and femininity, which is based on the concept of gender roles. Hegemonic masculinity or femininity is a term that is used to describe that which is the dominant form, the masculinity or femininity that is performed by enacting the gender roles that are valued the most in a specific culture and time period (Connell 211). These hegemonic masculinities and femininities are often reinforced by systems and institutions such as schools, raising and educating children in a manner supportive of the hegemonic ideal (Connell 205). Using this concept to analyse what the hegemonic masculinity and femininity in the novels are, makes it possible to determine whether the characters gender performance is subversive or conforming. This will in turn, aide in answering the research question as it allows for a clearer overview of how gender is performed throughout the novel.

This thesis is furthermore based on the notion that gender is not a natural fact that is rigid, but rather a performance constructed by the individual and their surroundings, which gives a person of female biological sex the freedom and opportunity to perform masculinity and for a person of male biological sex to perform femininity and not be bound by their sex. This is encapsulated by the concept of gender performativity, defined by the writings of Judith Butler. She wrote *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity* (1992) as

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[1] Emphasis added

a way of challenging the heterosexism in feminism and the policing of identities in queer spaces (Butler, *The Body* 84). Butler argues that the categories of man and woman, and male and female, are essentially called into being and shaped by the discourse surrounding these categories, rather than being defined as a fact by biological differences.

Butler explains that a person is given their gender by the repetition and reinforcement of gender roles throughout a person's life (*Gender Trouble* 125) rather than it being a natural fact. She states that gender is "a stylized repetition of acts … which are internally discontinuous […] so that the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (*Gender Trouble* 179). This definition supports the argument that masculinity and femininity can be performed by male and female characters alike, through which they could enforce or subvert the expectations placed upon them by the traditional gender roles that are based on their biological sex.

Additionally, a constructionist view of representation as well as a reflective view is assumed in this research. A constructionist view indicates that meaning is constructed in and through language but that language also reflects the opinions and meanings which already exist (Hill 15). Because representation is constructed, it is important that it is accurately reflective of the cultures and societies it represents and that instances of power work towards an accurate representation (Hill 42).

The analysis of the novels is based on these concepts and focuses on several aspects of the representation of gender. It discusses the characters' own gender performativity as well as the established gender roles, discussion of gender within the text and characters' biological sex. The analysis is centred around the events and actions represented within the novels rather than on form, as the focal point is how the writer constructed and portrayed the

characters' performance of gender through their behaviour, actions and how they respond to events in their lives. This focus includes the manner in which characters perform their own gender but also how they perceive other performances, how their performances are perceived by others and the relationship these performances have to the hegemonic gender roles. A performance is partially gendered by how it is perceived by society and the people surrounding the character, which is why it is important to include this perception as well as the active performance. During this analysis, the thesis divides the attention and analysis equally between the representation and performance of masculinity and femininity within the works. Rather than focusing simply on the representation of one specific group, such as women, it examines all of the gender representation and performances in order to examine the relation between all gender performances portrayed in the novel and the genre conventions, to draw a complete conclusion.

The identities and performances of the characters are then analysed in the context of their genre and how they have been shaped by the genre and genre conventions in order to establish the influence of the genre on the portrayal of the gender performances. Through this, the research examines whether a novel's genre and its conventions influence the degree of diversity in representation of social identities in prizewinning literature. It additionally aims to demonstrate the importance and implications of diverse social representation in literature, specifically within the field of literary prize winners. Due to this explorative nature of the research project the analysis of the novels, sources and concepts takes place in an investigative manner rather than an argumentative manner, as its aim is to answer a question rather than prove a hypothesis.

This exploration takes place in two chapters, which focus on historical fiction and the female bildungsroman respectively. This division allows an examination of the genre's respective conventions and characteristics and to explore them alongside the novels. The

chapters are subdivided into three sections. In the first I establish the genre, its conventions surrounding the portrayal of gender and the themes and conventions that can be applied to the portrayal of gender performances. Following this, I detail how the gender performances and roles are portrayed and perceived by characters and if it is directly discussed, how this is done. I have chosen to present these observations in a separate section of the text as to provide the reader with a clear, coherent and thorough overview of all the different aspects that construct the portrayal of the gender performances. These two sections are brought together in the final section of each chapter in which I aim to use the established conventions and the findings from the novels to illustrate the connection between the genre conventions and the portrayal of gender performances and roles and the influence of the former on the latter. This is followed by a conclusion in which I bring the findings of both chapters together to answer the research question.

Chapter 1

Historical Fiction

Historical Fiction and Genre Conventions

In this chapter, the focus will be on the three novels *Bring up the Bodies* by Hilary Mantel, *Life after Life* by Kate Atkinson and one half of *How to Be Both* by Ali Smith and the historical novel as a genre. It will discuss the manner in which the novels portray gender and gender performance and the relationship of that portrayal to the genre. Historical fiction has been researched and defined by a plethora of scholars. The most prominent definition by Avrom Fleischman defines the genre through several characteristics; "historical novels are set at least 40–60 years in the past, involve historical events which affect the characters, and include at least one 'real' person and a realistic background" (qtd in Hoberman 14). The novels will be discussed in relationship to the genre, as all three of the narratives fit this definition. It has additionally been argued that the historical novel does not vary from the traditional novel in "formal techniques and cultural assumptions" (Shaw, Form, 23) but that historical novels are an extension and modification of the genre, a mode. It specifies thematic features that are common within the genre, but not formal structures or semiotic medium through which the text is to be realised (Frow 65).

Novels of the genre can furthermore be divided into three categories, in each of which history and a historical setting plays a different role (Shaw Redgauntlet 3). History can serve as "a source of imaginative energy, to fuel what was essentially a timeless story" (Shaw Redgauntlet 3), as a "pastoral realm", "a screen on which to project present concerns" (3) and as the work's subject "representing the dynamics of the past and exploring its relationship to the present" (4), which can also be described in a simplified dichotomy of novels interested in representing history and novels that are not (1). While historical fiction can never be

completely representative as it will always focus on certain aspects and neglect others (Shaw Redgauntlet 3) scholars agree that historical fiction can address history in a substantial and significant manner (Shaw Redgauntlet1) (Hoberman 2). Some argue that historical fiction should be based on "careful research and rigorous analysis of evidence" (Slotkin 221), and that this is often the case in postmodernist historical fiction (Bachner 197). Scholars, however, also argue that in historical fiction the writer portrays the circumstances they think would be the most important and impactful and then produce a narrative that they believe could plausibly have been produced by those circumstances (Slotkin 221). Due to this, historical novels are defined by probability based on history, as they either represent something that happened or give the reader an entry into a story that appears probable (Shaw Forms 21).

It has therefore been suggested that historical fiction should not be seen as an accurate representation of the truth, but as complementing the truth with possible truths (White 147) and that, because of this, it could be valuable to read historical fiction adjunct to the work of historians (White 154). This is furthermore supported by the argument that much of daily experience is untouched by history (Shaw, Redgauntlet 44), or at least eludes those versions of the past that reaches people (Hoberman 12) and could therefore be represented in historical fiction. This shows a very varied discourse about whether historical fiction should be accurate, to what degree and what constitutes as accurate. This is particularly important when investigating these novels, as striving for accuracy could explain conservative gender representation and performance.

A point that scholars are clear on, however, are the merits of historical fiction. Scholars believe that in addition to being valuable when read adjunct to historians' texts, historical fiction could stimulate the interest in the study of history (Slotkin 221). However, the act of combining history and fiction had been condemned for a long time because it was

seen as keeping history from being treated as a science which led to historic fiction suffering

from neglect and contempt in the '80s (White 149-150). Nevertheless, historical fiction is

popular again. This resurfacing of historical fiction is arguably due to other ways of

interpreting and understanding history not being sufficient (White 151). As general history is

focused on the white man, historical fiction offers an alternative history and reality

(Hoberman 3). Marginalized groups who do not see themselves represented in these

insufficient mainstream historical texts can utilize historical fiction to present narratives that

focus on their stories while still being historically plausible (Hoberman 3). Scholars argue

that there is an active need for new historical fiction that is responsive to the new and critical

historiography as "[t]he old master narrative, the old historic-fictional myth, reifies certain

forms of moral and political desire" (Slotkin 230). This is supported by the distinguished

historian, Nathan Huggins, who said that "[o]ur times seem to call for new myths and a

revised master narrative that better inspire and reflect our true condition" (qtd in Slotkin 230).

This can be applied to the importance of gender, gender representation and gender

performance in historical fiction since historical fiction allows writers to rewrite the "old

master narrative" (Slotkin 230) and to incorporate gender performances and portrayals that

would allow for readers to reimagine history and see themselves represented.

There is little discourse surrounding gender in historical fiction: scholarly discussion

tends to focus on gender in history and gender in novels, often focusing on specific works or

other subsections. The discourse that does discuss gender in historical fiction focuses on how

writers alter and adapt stories. Scholars argue that to reach plausibility, writers have to

reinforce stereotypes and their readers assumptions about the past (Hoberman 4) since there

is a lot of pressure in the genre to recreate standard versions of the past which reinscribe

women's exclusion (4-5). It is furthermore established that the standard for historic fiction is

to portray women as marginalized and powerless, reinforcing stereotypes of women and

women's roles in history (Hoberman 6). However, writers can resist the pressure of the genre by showing transgressions against gender boundaries and same sex relationships and refuse to privilege heterosexuality as the norm (Hoberman 11). Another manner of showing this transgression is to employ the cross-dressing heroine plot as it is seen as a signature for transgression of norms of gender and sexuality (Fletcher 73). This gives writers the opportunity of evading the restrictions of the genre that several scholars describe as conservative (Fletcher 75) (Hoberman 10).

Portrayal of Gender Performance in *Bring up the Bodies*, *Life after Life* and *How to Be Both*

The first of the three novels of which the gender portrayal will be examined in this chapter is *Bring up the Bodies*, a historical novel written by Hilary Mantel. It is set in the time of King Henry VIII and focuses on the period in which the King becomes disenchanted with his second wife Anne Boleyn and instructs Thomas Cromwell to devise a plan to put an end to this marriage. The book is narrated through a third-person omniscient narrator and is focalised through Cromwell. Besides Cromwell, the focus is also on the King, his current wife Anne and the woman he wishes to marry, Jane Seymour. The book presents the different manners in which masculinity and femininity can be performed through these main characters and through the narration of the events.

The depiction of how gender, ideal gender roles and gender representation are perceived by the characters and the society in the novel begins before the story itself begins, in the lists of characters. Women are simply described through the relationships they have to men, gaining their position and importance from them, while men are described through their profession or position (ix). This idea of women deriving their position or value through their relationships with men is furthermore supported directly by Katherine of Aragon, who states

that a woman is only as important as the man she is with (87). Women are perceived by society as having no power and virtue and as having to adapt to their circumstances as they cannot influence them (170). That is, unless men can attribute unfortunate circumstances or bad choices to women's power over men (277). The people and King of England believe, for instance, that Anne bewitched the King, as he would not have broken with the church to marry her if he was in a clear state of mind (277). Not only are women regularly blamed for men's problems and mistakes, by the same men, they furthermore face harsher punishments for those mistakes or crimes than men (365). Women are kept in this inferior position by education being withheld from them, as the men in power believe they do not need it for their purpose as housewife (13). The only reason why a father would have his daughter educated would be to increase her value in marriage (14). In this narrative, men clearly see women as objects, the value of which can be changed, and which can be traded and sold (326, 363). All three of which are furthermore illustrated by the manner in which the men in the novel discuss women, comparing them to cattle and to horses (222, 363). If a woman has engaged in a lot of sexual activity she is "well used" (111), men look for fattening to indicate pregnancy (53) and when choosing a woman for marriage, they pay attention to whether she is of fertile stock (322). A woman that is no longer wanted by anyone is, much like cattle, worthless (371). Men moreover perceive women as weaker and more foolish than men (333), as they are easily led astray (189), easily conquered by flattery and steered by men (57). They consider women to be vain and greedy (117), to only care about clothes and looks (76) and to use spite, guile and deceit as their weapons (297).

The manner in which women are perceived by men and the characteristics men ascribe to women inform expectations which restrict women's gender performance. Additional expectations and restrictions are expressed by several characters throughout the novel, when gender performance and gender roles are explicitly discussed the focus is

exclusively on the women. They are expected to listen (197), should not discuss sex (257) or be interested in sexual desires and pleasures (290). They should be subordinate and submissive (188), not have a will of their own but be broken to the will of the men in their life (312). Women who stand up to men or take on leadership positions are seen as unnatural as it is their natural role to be led (188, 317).

As one may expect, men's positions are more comfortable as they have a lot more freedom and power. While women are only able to work their way up the social ladder through marriage, which can be seen as something of bad taste, men have the possibility to work their way up through their skills. It is possible to achieve positions of power, despite a lowly background, as it is exemplified through Thomas Cromwell (54,66), who is only teased for his lowly ancestry (60), instead of slandered like women would be (184). Similarly, men are treated less harshly than women when they make mistakes, which is illustrated by the Seymour family in which the father steals his son's wife. He is forgiven by the King, and remains the head of the family. The wife on the other hand is exiled to a convent and is labelled as a traitor (12).

While it is true that the men are generally freer than the women, the men too are restricted by the expectations and rules of the gender roles. For instance, it is stated by a Lord that a man is only a man if he behaves like one (215). Mark exemplifies this as both men and women no longer consider him to be a man but see him as one of the women due to his feminine behaviour and interests (15). This is an illustration of the pressure that is placed on the men to perform masculinity. Not complying to these expectations results in being considered a woman, which, as previously established, would mean that one is worth less than a man. This societal pressure is so strong that being kept from performing masculine activities, such as jousting (175) or hunting (4) is seen as equivalent of castration, the physical loss of one's masculinity (175). Men are expected to have typical masculine

interests and characteristics and are prohibited to perform femininity, such as caring about looks and clothes and crying (113). They are expected to be men of action (193) to bridle their whim and be able to put themselves to use (337). While these expectations and the hegemonic masculinity are partially discussed through conversation between characters, most of it is expressed through Cromwell and other men admiring characters who are exemplary in their performance of masculinity, such as the King.

The court and the people of England consider the King "the most blessed of men" (68) and as an example of what a man would be like under perfect circumstances (68). He is described as massive, 6'3 tall, bullnecked and fleshed out, with every inch of him bespeaking power (35). "He carries himself magnificently and his rages are terrifying" (35) and members of the court argue that "other kings would love to look like him" (36). He is valiant (68) and his interests are stereotypically masculine like hunting, building fortresses, artillery and making weapons (212). The descriptions of the King emphasise power and stature as important, by positioning him, a big, strong, a powerful man and leader (68), as the example of the perfect man and describing those characteristics as defining to who he is (68).

While the active description by other characters and the manner in which he portrays himself characterises him as a powerful and masculine man, it becomes clear that he has several stereotypical feminine traits and virtues as well. Rather than through direct description by other characters, this feminine side is established through his actions and his behaviour, which the reader witnesses through the narrator. He is gentle and refined, devout and erudite (68), all of which are concerned as feminine. However, the King also shows negative feminine traits such as powerlessness, specifically when it comes to women (319). He is furthermore fragile, both in his mood and his ego. When something happens that is displeasing to the King, his men have to be careful around him as he may be moody (183). Rumours about a man being better endowed than the King have to be denied in his presence

as he might feel insecure (368). This illustrates that not only does the King perform feminine traits, the pressure on him to be seen as solely masculine is so heavy that these feminine traits are omitted from description and discussion and that any rumours that threaten his masculinity have to be supressed. Even a king is restricted by gender roles[2].

In addition to being elaborately discussed by the characters, the rules for women's gender performance are elaborately illustrated through characters. While hegemonic masculinity is portrayed through the king, the hegemonic femininity is portrayed through Jane Seymour, as she is humble, shy (210), quiet and basically invisible (11). She looks to men to tell her what to do (197) and, unlike Anne, agrees to become the King's mistress when she is told to (97). She does not have opinions or ideas of her own and won't get in the way (229).

Anne Boleyn, on the other hand, serves as warning tale to the other women of what happens to women who do not perform within the socially approved gender roles. Anne performs both extreme masculinities as well as femininities. She is very warlike and refuses to be meek (77), has a high sex drive (52), talks about sex (257), is cruel and violent (178), won't be guided (188) and is calculating and strategic (204). On the other hand, she also performs what is considered feminine by being very irrational and guided by emotions (77), being fickle with her affections (37), impulsive (369) and by caring a lot about her looks (76). Anne's masculine traits and performance are surrounded by gossip (52, 257) and commentary (178, 188) from other members of the court, describing her as unnatural (317), which emphasizes the restrictions placed on women's gender performances. While a large portion of her characteristics are used to explain her demise, such as her fickleness and irrationality, the focus in that context is on her masculine performance such as the warlike (77), cruel and

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[2] While illustrating the pressure, the King himself, however, remains in a paradoxical place where he is allowed more freedom, as much of what he does is seen as an example of the ideal man, however he is pressured to be the ideal man by the emphasise on his masculine traits.

violent nature (178) which caused the King to be disenchanted with her and her sexual nature which gave grounds for the suspicions of extramarital affairs. The fact that the King went to look for a humble and submissive girl such as Jane, who is the opposite of Anne and her masculine traits and performance, only highlights that the masculine performance is seen as a fault by the King and therefore by the rest of the kingdom.

Through the discussion of gender roles and performance, the characters' performances and the reaction to these performances Mantel establishes a conservative discourse surrounding gender. Despite the fact that main characters perform gender outside of the expectations, conservative dominant gender roles are established, and the characters are utilized to emphasize and support these conservative roles and expectations.

The next historical novel included in this research is *Life after Life* by Kate Atkinson. The novel follows Ursula, a girl born in 1910 who, when she dies, is born again with a vague knowledge of her previous life and therefore lives many different lives. The novel details the experiences that her and her family go through in the time of and surrounding the second world war. Much like Mantel, Atkinson showcases several gender performances and prominent gender roles through the performance of the characters, the manner in which they are treated and the discourse that surrounds them. She furthermore touches on several social issues pertaining to gender through the characters' experiences. While the book is set in a much more progressive and developing era than *Bring up the Bodies,* the gender roles that are dominant are still conservative. However, the book is situated in a changing time and expectations and restrictions that are established earlier on in the story are broken and exceeded later in the novel.

Within the novel, expectations for women are strict. The societal expectations dictate that they should become housewives (80) and even if a woman was to circumvent those expectations and receive an education the most that she is expected to be able to achieve

would be becoming a secretary (170). Young women are encouraged to develop a capacity for monotony, preparing them for a life as housewives (80) as other options to leave the paternal house are limited (393). Their parents and teachers teach them to aim for married life, which is seen as an accomplishment (368) and contrasted with the fate of being an "old maid" which is to be avoided at all costs (323). Women's happiness and worth is directly related to their capability of finding a husband, a woman who is unhappy or unpleasant is immediately assumed to be unlucky in this aspect (316). To be given this chance of leaving the paternal house by being married, women are expected to remain virgins (37) and if a woman does not and has a baby outside of wedlock she no longer has options for the future (40-41). This is such a strong social expectation that mothers prefer for their pregnant daughters to be kidnapped and sold into slavery (40) to them having a baby outside of wedlock. If a woman who has had a baby or sexual intercourse outside of wedlock still receives a marriage proposal they are considered to be lucky and should be grateful for the opportunity (258), seeing as a woman without her virginity is not intact and therefore worthless (260) according to dominant gender norms. In the novel, it is furthermore established that if a woman is married, it is her responsibility to keep the man by offering comfort and relief. She is not supposed to be demanding or aggravate him, should not have opinions or challenge him (412). Submission is similarly expected in social context as verbal harassment is expected to just be taken and not replied to (319).

From a young age girls are additionally taught by their parents and books to avoid masculine behaviour. At young ages this manifests in not being allowed to take charge, be bossy (46) or be naughty (301). This rule remains prominent later in life as women are told to avoid drinking a lot of alcohol (255) or performing masculine jobs (108). The role division of activities during the war illustrates this as the men go off to war and the women stay behind and support them from afar by knitting for them (77). However, working class women are

given more space to perform masculinity. By dominant societal norms it is considered acceptable for them to do physical work, as they need to support their families, even though both of these activities are considered to be masculine by the same norms (182). This freedom temporarily expands to other women in the later parts of the novel as it becomes temporarily socially accepted for women to perform masculinity by doing men's jobs while the men are away at war (108). Both of these instances illustrate that women performing masculinity is therefore only socially condoned when it arises from necessity.

Similarly, to *Bring up the Bodies, Life after Life* focuses on the women when it comes to gender roles and expectations. Roles and expectations for men are present as well, but in smaller numbers. For instance, men are expected to be strong (221), manly and are not allowed to be squeamish (561). It is imperative that a man is so masculine as to never be compared to a woman, as that would be seen as an insult (422). The biggest expectation that is placed on men is that of taking care of their family. This is so important that other shortcomings, such as cheating or gambling (35), can be excused as long as this responsibility is met (35). The responsibility represents masculinity to such an extent that if a man was to fail and be forced to ask someone for money this would make him less of a man (267).

These dominant gender roles and performances are furthermore illustrated by the presence of several social issues in the novel, as they give examples of the relationships and power imbalance between the genders. Rape, abuse and harassment are returning themes, especially in the main character's life. Ursula's encounter with these themes begin early on as she is harassed and raped by her brother's friend in her teenage years. Her reaction and manner of thinking about it showcases the dominant opinions about such themes. She believes a kiss is something a man can simply take without invitation, consent or consequence (221). Ursula never receives any sexual education in school, nor does her

mother ever address the topic, as Sylvie believes the female body is something that is secretive and should not be discussed nor displayed (28, 45, 217). Ursula therefore lacks knowledge of sexuality and sexual intercourse and related topics such as consent and relationships (235) due to which Ursula fully believes that her rape is her own fault (226-7). She believes that she must have provoked the man's action or deserved it for some other reason, as a man could not be in the wrong and if something bad happens to a woman it must be her own doing (228). Ursula furthermore believes that it was her responsibility to know how to defend herself, that she should have stopped it and that because she did not it is her fault (232). She is moreover taught that the abortion she has after her rape is a sin (268). This leads to Ursula accepting an image of herself as tarnished and sinful which causes her to remain, till her death at her husband's hands, in an abusive marriage as penance for her rape and abortion (264 –287, 268, 274). This dominant belief of the woman being to blame in instances of abuse and harassment and the imbalance of power between men and women is furthermore illustrated by Ursula's teacher. As he continuously harasses his female students none of the women ever stand up to him or report him (247)[3]. Atkinson furthermore briefly touches on the social issue of homophobia by showing a character with the opinion that homosexuality is seen as something that can be cured. Homosexuality in men is perceived as a lack of masculinity and as a feminine trait, which can be fixed through training (496). This illustrates the sentiment that femininity is seen as a lack of masculinity, as worth less and as something that men are prohibited from performing.

Atkinson furthermore illustrates these gender roles, performances and relationships through the portrayal of her characters. She establishes conservative models of gender relations and performances through Sylvie and Maurice. Progressive and subversive

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[3] Atkinson furthermore addresses issues such as the suffragette movement. The suffragette movement is described in negative terms, which underlines the preferred gender role of women being subservient (58).

performances as well as commentary and criticism is presented through Pamela, Ursula and Izzy. However, Atkinson does represent the subversive views through characters who are generally not taken seriously.

Sylvie is the character who represents the dominant and conservative views, as she argues that it's wrong for women to be touched by any man but their husbands, even if it is their doctor (28) and that being a mother and wife is a woman's destiny and responsibility (63, 233). She identifies with a conservative definition of femininity, in which she wants to nurse, heal and protect her child and does not believe in any other purpose for her or any other woman (92), as nursing, cooking or typing are the only useful things a woman can do (81). She strives to raise her daughters in these roles and with the previously discussed expectations by emphasising these views frequently[4] and when her children suggest paths outside of these roles, she dismisses it as a joke (291). Her conservative views are furthermore illustrated by her reaction to Ursula's abortion and her marriage to Derek. She believes that Ursula is tainted and incomplete as she is no longer a virgin (258-60) and that her abortion was a sin (268). Sylvie furthermore states that Ursula should be grateful that a man would marry her in such a state (258-60), as this keeps her from the embarrassing and unacceptable fate of remaining alone (58).

Maurice is the child whose opinions concerning gender roles and performance resemble those of Sylvie the most. He believes that girls cannot do sports or other masculine tasks and that men are inherently better than women (61). He is also the character besides Sylvie who conforms to the gender roles the most in his own performance as he remains stoic and strong

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[4] While Sylvie is the most conservative presence Atkinson does elaborate on why she is. Sylvie is an example of how being raised with these values and dominant gender roles shapes a person as she on the one hand is the one enforcing this view of gender roles and performances on her family, but on the other hand she would much rather do physical labour on a farm (108). This indicates that she would not support these roles if she and not been raised to believe that they were right.

when in pain (38) and refuses to cry (61). He performs a very aggressive masculinity, as he fights a lot (67), is destructive (72) and is physically aggressive towards his sisters (72). He enjoys shooting and killing animals as a child and he remains much the same while growing up (153).

His sisters are slightly less conforming, but both fulfil stereotypical feminine gender performances to a certain extent. Both grow up with feminine interests (109), feminine characteristics (153) and eventually grow into stay at home mothers (408 – 409). However, both also diverge from the dominant gender roles. Pamela is bossy (46) and performs masculinity through being physically aggressive and standing up for herself (72) as a child. In her teenage years, she disobeys her father to have her hair cut short and therefore takes control over her appearance (182). Additionally, she goes to university to study sciences, defying her mother's wishes and the dominant gender roles (187).

Despite the two sisters having similar beginnings in their gender performance, Ursula's performance is much more multifaceted, due to her many lives. In several of these lives Ursula believes being a wife is what she is meant to do and makes it her goal (260). Once she does enter motherhood, it completely consumes her and she conforms to the gender roles and performance expected of her (408). Nevertheless, in several other of these lives she is a working woman who lives by herself, has an affair with a married man and works herself up the hierarchical ladder of government work, defying several gender roles (289-378, 449-558). In these lives she is, however, also occasionally stereotypically feminine and conforms to the dominant gender roles as she always carries lipstick with her (451) and hides her drinking habit as it is not ladylike (255). This duality of her gender performance is also found in her childhood mentors, as she is led from childhood to adulthood by both Dr Kellet and Izzy. They introduce her to the adult world with Izzy, in accordance to gender roles, in charge of ladylike behaviour, fashion and looks. Dr Kellet on the other hand, gives her an education in

philosophy and is in charge of her intellectual and mental development, teaching her to think for herself. While this division conforms to the gender roles, this leaves Ursula with an education and personality that balances between feminine and masculine. Ursula's life appears to be an exploration of several manners of performing gender for women of this period but above that an exploration of the hardships that come with that, as previously mentioned.

Izzy's performance is similar to Ursula's as they both balance masculinity and femininity. While she does perform a lot of stereotypically feminine gender performances, she also breaks with many gender roles. She is vocal against marriage (360) and believes a woman should be independent and be able to take care of her own needs (181). She writes a column about the modern woman (183) and speaks out about the hardships of being a woman, such as feeling unsafe and threatened in public (206). She furthermore frequently performs masculinity when it comes to sex as she is very open and free about it and objectifies young members of the opposite sex (215).

Much of her comments about independence and the modern woman, however, are made in the context of most men having left to fight in the war, which again mediates this progressiveness by anchoring it in necessity (181). Her modern stance and progressiveness is furthermore negated somewhat by the other half of Izzy's gender performance. She believes that a woman should always look good (196) and while her column is about the modern women and emancipation, it is also filled with tips on how to attract men (183). She moreover believes that a woman could make their life less wretched by marrying rich (197), which she eventually also does (360). This in turn negates her arguments against marriage and for independence. Her emphasis on beauty additionally illustrate her conformance with dominant gender roles as she believes that a girl's priority should be their looks and not an interest in learning or sciences (187).

While most of the novel's portrayal of gender is fairly conservative, Atkinson manages to incorporate and portray a diverse number of gender performances through her characters. She incorporates several nuanced gender performances through Ursula's several lives. Atkinson moreover illustrates the possibility of a gender performance which incorporates, sometimes conflicting, aspects of both masculinity and femininity through Izzy and Pamela.

The third novel that will be examined in the context of the historic novel genre is *How to Be Both* written by Ali Smith. Half of the book[5] is set in 15th century Italy and follows the life of painter Francescho del Cossa, making it a partial historical novel. The historical half of the novel depicts how Francescho became a painter, attempted to make a living by painting and tried to make a name for himself. Smith engages with the dominant gender roles and gender performance of the time through the character of Francescho, who, in this narrative, is a biological female presenting as a man[6]. This performance however is not a choice out of gender identification, but rather because it would be impossible for Francescho to realize their artistic talents as female representing (216). These limitations for women are discussed through Francescho's experience, as their father explains that if they wanted to paint as a woman, the only manner of doing so would be by entering a nunnery (216). Women being denied opportunities to follow a vocation or being restricted in the manner in which they could stems from the idea of women being worth less than men, which was dominant in this era. This is illustrated by the exchange between Francescho and Mr. de Prisciano after Mr. de Prisciano discovers that Francescho is biologically not male. He describes Francescho as being less than he thought they were (299). While Francescho manages to turn the phrase around to mean that they are only a little less, namely missing one part, it does emphasize the fact that men are valued above women. Francescho furthermore states that they believe that

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[5] Depending on the edition, the half will be the first or the second half of the book.

[6] As it is never clearly discussed whether Francescho identifies with the male or female gender, or both throughout this thesis they will be referred to with the gender-neutral pronouns 'they' and them.

many wonderful painters are lost because women are not encouraged to paint and do not receive a proper education to do so (331).

The manner in which Smith choose to represent Francescho draws attention to the fluidity of gender and gender performance. It illustrates that gender is what one performs, rather than being connected to one's biological sex, as all that is necessary for Francescho to be perceived as a boy, in this novel, is a change of clothes, "a bit of imagining" (216) and some discretion (216-217). This is supported by the fact that when Francescho encounters George, they believe her to be a boy solely based on George's appearance and behaviour (191, 237). This also demonstrates how gender is tied to perceiving and being perceived. Not only can one alter how others perceive one's gender by performing gender in a certain manner, how others perceive one's gender can also be tied to the perceivers gender performance and identity. Francescho identified George as a boy, as his perception was based on his own performance, identity and understanding of the performance of masculinity. This is furthermore illustrated by both men and women identifying a painting of Francescho's eyes as belonging to someone of their own gender (354). Smith additionally touches upon the idea that gender performance does not have to be tied to gender identity as Francescho is forced to perform masculinity through their circumstances, but it is never established whether they also identify as such. Not only does Francescho's character deal with gender fluidity and representation, it furthermore addresses the issues one may face if identifying as non-binary. Francescho discusses the difficulty of being both a woman and a man, such as the different expectations concerning behaviour attached to each (235), but also the practical difficulties of binding their chest (238).

Smith presents a very progressive portrayal of gender performance within this historical narrative. Although it is a historical narrative, Smith discusses present day issues and makes gender performance a central theme in the narrative.

The Novels in the Context of Genre

　　While all of the narratives are part of the genre as it is defined by Fleischman, they show different degrees of progressiveness and conservatism in their representation of gender and gender performance. Mantel appears to have written the most conservative gender representation, Atkinson appears to have incorporated some progressive representations and Smith's is the most progressive out of the three historical narratives. The difference between Atkinson and Mantel's work can partially be explained by the period they are set in, with Atkinson situating her narrative during the timespan between 1910 and 1967, a period filled with societal changes, while Mantel sets her narrative in the 1530's. As previously discussed scholars argue that historical novels should and generally attempt to be an accurate portrayal of the time they set their narrative in (Slotkin 221). This could explain the gender representation in Mantel's and Atkinson's work. Smith's narrative, however, is set in the 15th century and is progressive in its portrayal of gender and gender representation.

　　This difference can be explored and analysed through the categorization of the use of history in historical novels. History can be used for different purposes in a novel, not all of them tied to accuracy, which could allow writers to write progressive gender representation and performance in any period. Examining the three novels, it becomes apparent that all three writers used history differently. Mantel appears to use the history mainly as a subject, while also using it as a source of fuel for her "imaginative energy" (Shaw Redgauntlet 3). She doesn't, however, explore the relationship to the present, which is a significant part of that category as it is the second of the two aspects that define it. Atkinson appears to use it as a source of fuel, giving her the possibility to imagine many different possible lives for Ursula and her family based on what she sees as history. Smith appears to utilize the historical setting in all three of the manners, as she uses it as imaginative fuel, projects present day concerns such as gender inequality and explores the relationship between present and past as

Francescho quite literally crosses over from the past to the present. No book fits into only one category completely and while all of the novels belong to more than one category, they do so to a different extent. The more the narrative is concerned with simply representing the past, like *Bringing Up the Bodies*, the more it depicts gender and gender performance conservatively. The two novels which are concerned with using history to project on and to explore the relationship between the past and the present, however, explore gender representation in a more multifaceted and progressive manner. This suggests that not only does genre influence the representation of gender, but so do sub-sections of those genres.

The aforementioned difference between these books can furthermore be examined through of the idea that writers of historical fiction reach plausibility by appealing to their audience's knowledge, expectations and assumptions on the topic. Smith's narrative concerns a historical figure about which little is known (Gilbert). This arguably gave her more freedom to portray gender and gender performance differently, as the reader had little knowledge to base their expectations on and which puts less pressure on Smith to conform to stereotypes. This is supported by scholarship as it argues that it is easier to write about a period in history about which less is known as one has to take into account less facts while crafting a narrative (White 151). This freedom from expectations may furthermore have been increased by the fact that the book was aimed at the English-speaking market, for which knowledge of 15th century Italian social conventions likely is limited. The fact that the historical narrative was presented in the context of a contemporary novel and not a historical novel had a similar impact on the expectations and pressure concerning historical accuracy. This is due to the fact that readers would not approach the text with the expectations of accuracy associated with a historical novel which alleviates the pressure that is otherwise placed on the writer.

Furthermore, the pressure of expectations and assumptions was likely less heavy because the narrative is partially surreal. The fact that Francescho's consciousness travels to

the present day, allows Smith to avoid playing into what the reader would see as plausible, as the story has already partially left the realm of plausibility. This can also be argued for *Life after Life* as the surreal element of Ursula dying and being reborn with knowledge from her former life can change readers expectations of the degree to which the story should adhere to their assumptions about history. This opened up the possibility for Atkins to include gender performance that diverges from the stereotypical roles, such as Izzy's, Ursula's and Pamela's. These findings demonstrate that the conservative gender portrayal is tied to the genre of historical fiction, as the more the novels move away from the genre and towards other genres such as surrealism, the more progressive the portrayal of gender and gender representation are.

Chapter 2

The Female Bildungsroman

The Genre That Is the Female Bildungsroman

This chapter will focus on *The Death of Bees* by Lisa O'Donnell and *How to Be Both* by Ali Smith and the genre of the female bildungsroman. The chapter will examine the whole of *How to Be Both*, including the half previously discussed in chapter one, where I established that the novel does not entirely fit into the genre of historical fiction[7]. Both the historical narrative as well as the contemporary narrative from *How to Be Both* fall into the genre of the female bildungsroman as they depict narratives of an adolescent girl's development and maturation, as does *The Death of the Bees*. Therefore, this chapter, in the same way as the previous chapter, will examine the manner in which both novels portray gender and gender performance and the relationship of that portrayal to the genre.

The genre of the female bildungsroman has only fairly recently been discussed as such, with the term entering feminist literary criticism in the 1970's (Lazzaro-Weis 17). The female bildungsroman is considered as a manifestation of the realist novel and the bildungsroman (Midalia 3), much older genres. The term bildungsroman was coined in 1819 and was considered to be a novel that follows the early "emotional development and moral education" (Millard 3) of its protagonist, however, it has also been adopted to describe a novel simply portraying coming of age stories that contain "youthful development" (Millard 3). This

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[7] Not only does it have many characteristics that divert from the genre, it could also be considered a "complicitous critique" (Bentley 99), a form of writing that presents itself as part of a genre but simultaneously critiques characteristics that are associated with the genre (Bentley 99). *How to Be Both* illustrates an alternative manner of portraying gender and gender performance in historical narratives and through this critiques the manner in which historical narratives tend to it, which, as established above, is to adhere to conservative gender roles.

development brings the protagonist into conflict with older generations and eventually leaves him at the threshold of maturity (Buckley qtd in Labovitz 2). In contemporary bildungsromans this convention has become less influential as the narratives now often no longer end with the protagonist reaching adulthood but leave the process incomplete (Millard 5). Both traditional and contemporary bildungsromans focus exclusively on male protagonists (Millard 4) which led many writers and critics to realize that the "traditional humanist idea of an internally developing individual as a unified, masculine, white, middle-class self no longer corresponds with the awareness of the complexities of personal development in the contemporary world" (Šnircová 135). This led to many writers adapting and appropriating the traditional bildungsroman to portray women's narratives (Slaughter) to represent current society thoroughly. This contemporary female bildungsroman is incredibly popular in the market, making female centred narratives profitable and therefore more frequently published (Jones 2). Its popularity may partially be due to its realistic nature as many readers turn to realist fiction to understand and come to terms with reality (E. Rose 348) and find their own identity and possibilities in its context (E. Rose 356). Especially women turn to modern fiction to see themselves represented as older literature was mainly written by men (E. Rose 349). Not only can these novels have a great impact on individual people (Felski in E. Rose 356), fiction is furthermore considered as a potential trigger for movements and social change (E. Rose 257). This is also the case for the female bildungsroman, as some critics even argue that the genre developed with a purpose of changing society (Labovitz 251) and that it has the capacity to "affect attitudinal and behavioural changes in the daily lives of female readers" (Midalia 91). Additionally, the genre is recognized as giving a voice to "previously unacknowledged or silenced areas of female experience" (Midalia 90). Not only does this emphasizes the importance of the representation in literature, but also of the representation of gender and women in this specific genre.

The female bildungsroman resembles its predecessors in various aspect such as the development, maturation and identity of the heroine being influenced mainly by life experiences rather than formal schooling (Šnircová 142) (Labovitz 246). Likewise, the female bildungsroman, stepping in the footprints of the contemporary bildungsroman, does not conclude with the protagonist arriving at maturity with a clear future ahead of her (Labovitz 247). It is furthermore common for the heroine not to "capitulate to societies expectations" and for the narrative to finish with an indeterminate ending (Hoover Braendlin New Directions 162), much like the contemporary bildungsroman. The heroine possesses a great awareness of how her personal identity and life evolve in relation to social structures and other people (Fraiman qtd in Šnircová 137) and often "liberates" herself from these structures and the call for capitulation to their bourgeoisie values (Hoover Braendlin New Directions 162). These conventions concerning the heroine's reaction to societal structures could also influence the heroine's reaction to gender roles, as gender roles and societal expectations that influence gender reperformance, can be considered societal structures. The gender roles that the heroine takes on and her relationship with her own gender performance and those of other characters are shaped by how she is socialized by the people in her environment (Labovitz 41), much like the rest of her identity and development. While this is a partial similarity with its predecessors (Hoover Braendlin New Directions 165), this is also a point where the female bildungsroman departs from the traditional form and displays its own characteristics. The female bildungsroman's heroine often struggles with accepting her identity and attempts to overcome these influences as well, as she tries to achieve independence (Hoover Braendlin New Directions 166). One manner of attaining this independence is the converting of the oppressing influence, which is often represented by the mother (167). The heroine encounters the struggle for freedom in other aspects of her life

besides the freedom from influences and expectations, as it is a common theme for the heroine to struggle for a more physical sort of freedom as well (Labovitz 248).

This resistance to restriction of the heroine is one aspect that has caused the genre to be seen as the contemporary genre that has been influenced by feminism the most (Hoover Braendlin Salvation 18), as a challenge to the conservative ideas about female identity and as an opportunity for women to explore the different kind of identities at their disposal (Labovitz 7). This includes gender identity and performance as critics have discovered the trend of questioning the gender binary in the female bildungsroman (Šnircová 142). Writers employ several methods to do this, which includes having the female character take on typical male roles, such as that of a punter, or by having the heroin have "'male' emotional reactions" (Šnircová 142). The heroine of the female bildungsroman is typically rebellious and unconventional (Labovitz 246). She rebels against the very structures of society, seeks to dispose of stereotypical roles (Labovitz 251) and strives to enter spheres that were formerly closed to her (246).

Frequently, this resistance to stereotypical roles comes forward through the heroine's dislike for domesticity or having to take on domestic roles (Labovitz 252). These domestic or family responsibilities often restrict and even exclude self-development and adhering to traditional patriarchal role divisions impedes self-determination (Hoover Braendlin Salvation 20). This is one element of a much bigger theme that has been found in the female bildungsroman, the heroine being restricted in her aspirations and development by the reality of her circumstances (Hoover Braendlin New Directions 161). This reality is shaped by the continuous presence of the patriarchy, be it overt or subtle. This presence can be symbolized by people, trying to enforce patriarchal roles (Hoover Braendlin Salvation 18), or from within the heroine herself, through amongst others self-doubt (Labovitz 249-50). This, too, she tries to resist (Labovitz 250). The resistance is furthermore exemplified by the heroine's narration.

Critics have recognized that the heroine often relies on her intellect rather than her emotions in her narration, which goes against the traditional view of women relying on their emotions (Hoover Braendlin *Salvation* 19). The heroine of the female bildungsroman "refuses to be a captive to any pre-existing norms, forging instead new definitions of self and society, and discovering a whole, integrating self, which 'transcends limiting sex-role patterns'" (Grace 137).

Critics argue that the female bildungsroman has the structure, themes and tropes it has because it reflects the progress in the real world (Midalia 91). This allows the novels to portray the possible lives of girls and women (Midalia 91). However this also includes the portrayal of typical tropes such as dominating parents and absent fathers (Hoover Braendlin *Salvation* 18-19). Because it reflects the real world the female bildungsroman cannot and is not inherently emancipatory, but rather has the potential, according to critics (Midalia 103). This leaves room for characters to explore emancipatory roles and performances as well as for the writer to engage with reality and place characters in stereotypical performances.

The Gender Portrayal in *How to Be Both* and *The Death of Bees*

As mentioned above, the gender performance in the historical half of *How to Be Both* was discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, this chapter will continue with the novel's other half in order to examine the portrayal of gender performances and roles. However, the historical narrative will be included in the analysis of the connection between the gender performance and roles and the genre.

The contemporary half of the novel focuses on George, a teenage girl. It depicts her travels to Italy with her mother, to see Francescho's fresco and her experiences grieving her mother after she passes away. Much like in the historical narrative, Smith engages with dominant gender roles and showcases several gender performances through the performance

and experiences of the characters and occasionally through discussion between the characters, such as George and her mother.

Similarly to Francescho, George does not conform to gender roles assigned to her biological gender. She presents masculine in her appearance, as everything about her indicates that she is male to Francescho when they first see her (191,237). The only aspect of her physical presence Francescho recognizes as feminine, which leads Francescho to realize she is biologically female, is the sound of her voice (251). George is aware of the dominant gender norms and the expectations based on these norms, that come with being female, such as being quiet, demure and emotional (14, 74). She generally refuses to subscribe to these traditional expressions of femininity and often rejects aspects of herself that could be seen as feminine performance. George is not in touch with her feelings (54), nor does she want to be. Her own blushing bothers her because it betrays emotion and she does not want to be seen as soft, weak and emotional (64). Instead George tends to engage in a more analytical approach, analysing what she is expected to be feeling and what she is feeling instead after her mother passes away (14). This approach returns in many aspects of George's life, as she also explores sex in a very factual, detached and almost clinical manner (32-38, 50), independently and pro-actively. This non-emotional, distanced approach is traditionally not associated with femininity. George furthermore rejects stereotypical femininity by establishing her dislike of typical feminine interests such as romantic comedies (160) and showing her distinction from other girls by adapting non-typical interests, such as old art house movies (160). When she does exhibit behaviour that conforms to gender norms, like caring for her brother when he is emotional, feeding him and making sure he is ready for school through which she takes over the mother role, she only does so out of necessity. George only takes these tasks upon herself because neither her father nor her mother are available to fulfil them after her mother passes (44,177, 153). However, George also does not

want to be seen as a boy, as she eventually insists on no longer being called "little prince" (17) by her parents and for them for refer to her by her full and feminine name, Georgina (17). While George does reject traditional femininity and behaviour associated with it and adopts a masculine appearance as well as masculine behaviour and character traits, she does not identify with being male. George furthermore makes sure to always include she and he when describing a person whose gender identity she does not know (28, 181), as she consciously avoids the standard he and is aware that any person may identify differently to their assigned gender. This indicates that the writer is aware of the belief that gender that is performed through behaviour and biological gender are to be considered separately and do not need to be tied to one another.

Throughout the novel it is established that George's mother, Carol, is the one from whom George learned this attitude towards gender as Carol considers herself a feminist (93), repeatedly reminds George gender is not important (51-2) and argues that a person can be both male and female (8), opposing the gender binary. Carol herself, too, defies many gender roles. She largely does so through her relationships, as she is the one at home who makes the decisions (18) and tells her husband what to do (20), which diverges from the gender norms that dictate the division of roles in the household. The division in the relationship is furthermore subversive as Carol is the intellectual in the relationship, has intellectual power over her husband (20,122) and is older than him (19). These positions are traditionally distributed the other way around. Carol additionally performs a traditionally masculine role as she is the one who has an extramarital affair with a woman (116-125). Not only is this subversive of gender roles, it also is subversive of heteronormative society. Carol is aware of the expectations that are placed on her and the fact that she does not fulfil them (93). Similarly to George she has a very analytical approach and mind-set (60) and rejects many parts of the maternal role (7). However, Carol is not only subversive in how she fulfils gender

roles through her performance, as she also fits with several stereotypes such as being moody, emotional (7, 94), superficial (21) and sentimental (30). While she does not fit with most aspects of the stereotypical maternal femininity, she is the parent that is invested in their relationship with the children the most and is viewed by their children as a confidante (22, 30, 37), conforming to the caring, maternal role partially. Carol is the character through which the writer enables George's subversive performance by using Carol's subversive performance to create a space within their family in which it is possible to perform gender subversively and by creating an example on which George's character can be built.

George's father, on the other hand, is the character in the novel who performs his gender in the most stereotypical way. While Carol fulfils the maternal role partially despite the fact that she does not identify with it, George's father only briefly engages emotionally with his daughter when she directly confronts him with a problem (37-8). Throughout the rest of the novel he is emotionally and physically distant from his children, never engages with them (11) and is dismissive of their ideas and values (11, 18-9). He does not take his daughter seriously and is insensitive towards George's problems, as he wishes he has a daughter with "normal neuroses" (39). He shuts himself of from his family and his emotions after the passing of his wife and turns to drinking as a refuge from that (43), which conforms to dominant gender norms. These suppressed emotions breach the surface when George confronts him with the fact that she would rather confide in her mother (37-8) and results in a brief show of sentimentalism as he follows his wife's wishes for the distribution of her ashes.

The novel focuses its effort to subvert the dominant norms of gender performance and to support the concept of gender performativity on the female characters. Smith uses these female characters to explain feminist ideals such as women standing up for their opinions (19-20) and to shine a light on issues such as how history often forgets important female historical figures and their achievements, such as Rosalind Franklin (109-10, 173). The

female characters are furthermore utilized to reverse traditional power relationships such as that between the male artists and the female muse. Art is used to objectify men in the manner women are usually objectified, viewing their bodies as an object only and discussing the appeal of a man's buttock (201). This also creates a space for the appreciation of the beauty of the male body, rather than only allowing for the appreciation of is performance and strength (200). Smith moreover uses the female characters to normalize discussing the female body as when Carol discusses the vaginal shapes represented in Francescho's painting (110), George's embarrassed reaction is portrayed as childish and an overreaction (110). When George attempts to stop her mother from talking Carol simply answers her daughter's embarrassment with a few reassuring words and continues to discuss the vaginal shape. This establishes that such discussion should not be met with such a reaction but should be allowed to be held freely. Smith furthermore touches upon the relationship between gender and power through George's experience with the pornography that she explores, as the video she keeps coming back to is one which illustrates the inequality of power between men and women. This exemplifies the fascination and a certain level of acceptance and approval of this inequality that is present in modern society. Smith contrasts this with George's reaction, who sees everything that is wrong with the scene and vows to come back to pay homage to the girl in the video (35). Additionally, Smith utilizes the subversiveness of the female characters to overturn the experience of a young character's first love and make this too subversive of stereotypes. George's relationship with H on its own is already subversive of the heterosexual norm that is attached to a young girl's gender performance, as they both take on the role of being romantically involved with a girl (100, 172), which gender norms dictate as a masculine performance. The relationship is furthermore subversive of the manic pixie dream

girl[8] trope and the relationship between her and the main character. This main character is generally male and needs the extraordinary and quirky female character to make him see the world in a different light, which also tends to be her only purpose (Solomon 3). In this narrative, however, the main character whose life and constitution are changed by the manic pixie dream girl (86, 170) is female, which places George in a stereotypically masculine role. Smith gives her female characters the possibility and opportunity to exists outside and inside of gender performance dictated by gender norms, as she lets them reject several aspects of femininity as well as conform to other aspects. She illustrates that the two do not need to be mutually exclusive and portrays the women as complex, multifaceted and intricate human beings, who can perform masculinity as well as femininity.

The male characters are more restricted by gender norms in their gender performance than the female characters. George's father, one of the few male characters mentioned in this narrative, only performs within stereotypically masculine gender roles, unless it is in the context of a relationship to a female character. However, even then the subversiveness is fuelled by the female character and not George's father himself. Not only do the male characters lack in subversive gender performance, as the only present male character is portrayed as a simplistic character and as performing hegemonic masculinity, the men are furthermore exclusively side characters. The father as well as Henry, only exist in their relationship to the female characters, the focus remains on the women's stories. Even in small scenes such as Carol's childhood video, Carol and her mother are in focus while the grandfather is off screen (23). Additionally, even of the minor characters more than half are women, such as both Carol's and George's love interests, George's fellow pupils and her

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[8] H is classified as a manic pixie dream girl because she fits the stereotypical characteristics of being different and quirky (83, 86) and helping the main character exit their depression (170), their comfort zone (86) and helping her view the world in a different way (172), outlined by Nathan Rabin when he coined the term (Solomon 3)

teacher, which illustrates this focus on female characters even further. Due to this attention female gender performances are emphasized, while performances by male characters are marginalized, which presents the male reader with less characters to identify with and makes it difficult to examine them.

Lisa O'Donnell's *The Death of the Bees*, much like *How to Be Both*, focuses on the experiences of two teenage girl main characters. The novel tells the story of two girls, Nelly and Marnie, who, after their mother suffocated their father and subsequently hung herself, decide to hide the deaths rather than to report them out of fear of being placed in foster care. Despite initially attempting to care for themselves, the girls eventually accept the help of their neighbour Lenny, who cares for them by feeding them and giving them emotional support. Although the story is technically about three main characters and narrated by all three of them, for this dissertation I will consider Marnie and Nelly as the main characters of the novel, as the novel focuses on them and their experiences. The plot is almost exclusively driven by the girls' experiences and decisions and Lenny's narration largely focuses on them and their impact on his life. It is their decision to hide their parent's death and to accept Lenny's care for them that propels the story forward, while Lenny is largely a passive character besides his efforts to care for the girls.

Of the two sisters, Marnie is the only one that performs masculinity. She does so from childhood, adopting a more dominant personality and a leadership position as she begins telling other children what to do while still on the playground. This leadership is accepted by the children (41) and later on by her friends (93). Her masculine performance is reflected in smaller aspects of her life, such as the fact that as she swears a lot (12), but it also manifests itself in the manner in which she deals with emotions. She assumes that interest expressed by members of the opposite sex has to be sexual and when they are of a romantic and emotional manner and bring forth an emotional response from her as well she does not know how to

interpret these feelings (113). Her aversion to emotions is underlined throughout the novel as she repeatedly avoids emotions by focusing on facts and the job at hand (15). She additionally avoids the motherly role of consoling and caring for Nelly. Instead, when Nelly becomes emotional, Marnie treats her harshly and becomes emotionally distant as she stops engaging with Nelly (16, 86, 92, 112). Nevertheless, she also performs stereotypical femininity, mirroring what she has observed in her surroundings (63). Marnie takes pride in her appearance, and always wants to look her best and most desirable (22-3), much like her mother (31). This is illustrated by her encounter with Vlado, during which he is disappointed and derisive towards her. She concludes that his reaction must have been due to her appearance, as she was not dressed well enough and not wearing heels (136). She sleeps with her boss (33) to find confirmation of her desirability and worth (110, 147), which she has learned are tied to one another from the norms presented by her surroundings (64). However, most of Marnie's subversive and masculine gender performance seems to be rooted in internalized misogyny, as she rejects traditionally feminine characteristics in others (142) and herself and prefers masculine performance, unless it concerns her appearance and sexuality, in which case femininity is approved.

Nelly on the other hand is in many ways the opposite of her sister as she performs a more traditional femininity, which is based on the example of the girls' grandmother (30, 56-7). The performance that is illustrated by Nelly emphasizes characteristics such as talking in a "proper" way (7) and caring for cleanliness (8). She sees gracefulness as a requirement to be a real lady (29) and loathes women who are loud, uncouth, grotesque and who wear tight clothes (30). Moreover, she performs traditionally feminine stereotypes as she is emotional and weak (15). However, while she performs traditional femininity she does reject many aspects of the hegemonic femininity of the time and place as well, as she considers practicality more important than aesthetics (96) and avoids drawing attention to her

appearance through lipstick (229) or by wearing revealing clothes (72) as she does not want to be reduced to her appearance (151). She refuses to do anything simply because it is expected of her or because everyone else is doing it, she rebuffs anyone trying to influence her and only adopts aspects that she believes to be useful into her life (91, 96, 229). Similarly, to her sister, Nelly has adapted both male and feminine characteristics into her performance.

In addition to the main characters the novel portrays a large array of varying women and gender performances by women, presenting the reader with many different possible manners of performing gender as a woman. Marnie's group of friends for instances includes a stereotypical feminine girl (19) next to an aggressive and butch girl (19, 39). This diversity also returns in the sister's role models, as on the one hand the reader is presented with a lady like grandmother who is graceful and proper and other hand encounters the girls' mother, Izzy, who is loud and sexual (29-30). These two characters formed Marnie's and Nelly's gender performance. This and the contrast between the two girls illustrates the writer's understanding and awareness of the concept that gender and gender performativity is constructed and taught, rather than being inherent.

In a manner similar to *How to Be Both*, *The Death of the Bees* focuses on female characters and their gender performance, with the male characters being somewhat less present. This, as previously mentioned, gives the male reader less to identify with and makes it more difficult to examine male characters' performances. The male character that is the most present in the novel is Lenny, the girls' neighbour. While the elderly gay man does not perform gender in any subversive nor conforming manners, which would allow for an analysis, he is the character through which gender performance is discussed in the novel. He broaches the subject of gender performance while speaking to the sisters and acknowledges that gender performance can be separate from biological gender (77), reminding one of Marnie's friends that it is possible and fine to be gay and to perform femininity. He, however,

also recognizes that it is easier to occupy a masculine role in such a situation. Through this he states the fact that loving women is generally considered to be a masculine performance (77).

Other male characters, however, are much less aware of and less open to the concept of gender performance and therefore also intolerant of subversive performances. Izzy's father, who becomes the sisters' legal guardian later on in the novel, demands that both girls dress traditionally, behave modestly and obey him as he is the man of the house (261). He himself performs masculinity equally as stereotypical and conform to gender norms as he expects the girls to perform femininity. They have to do the household (258) and have to wear skirts of a length he finds appropriate (261). He is a violent man who beat his wife and daughter into submission and who enjoys traditionally masculine hobbies such as woodworking (217). Gene, the girls' father, while not as traditionally masculine, is similarly stereotypical as he, too, is abusive and misogynistic (17, 29-30). Much like Smith, O'Donnell keeps the focus on the female characters and their gender performance, portraying them complexly and through feminine as well as masculine performance, while the male characters are portrayed much more one dimensionally.

While the male characters own gender performance is not elaborated on, comments made by other characters do establish what kind of gender performance is considered to be normal for male characters. Marnie states very clearly that she believes men are not supposed to cry and be scared (142) with which her friends agree. This restriction is elaborated by the example of Sandy, the character of an adolescent boy. While it was socially acceptable for him to be affectionate, sensitive and emotional when he was young, it is no longer socially acceptable to perform such femininity when he grows up. When he does do it, he is reprimanded and laughed at (42) by his mother and bystanders. It is however socially permitted for men to perform femininity if it is clearly established that this is considered as a joke, which is exemplified by Gene, who wears the wedding dress during his wedding

ceremony (59). Both the example of Gene and Sandy furthermore establish that men who do perform femininity are considered to be laughable by their social surroundings. Women are less restricted by social norms in performing masculinity as established by Marnie, who never receives a comment on her masculine behaviour from friends, family or other people in her social surroundings. Women's masculine behaviour being socially accepted is furthermore emphasized through the character of Marnie's friend, Kim, who is considered as masculine (94) butch and aggressive (93) by her friends but is never reprimanded or ridiculed for it. This indicates that not only do women have more freedom considering their gender performance, masculinity is furthermore valued more than femininity which makes it more acceptable to adopt.

The Genre and The Novels

Both *How to Be Both* and *The Death of Bees* show a great number of the previously discussed characteristics of the female bildungsroman in the manner in which they portray gender, gender roles and gender performances. All three female main characters do not conform or capitulate to the roles and expectations that they are, subtly or overtly, being pressured to fulfil. Marnie does not become more feminine or well behaved and continues to perform both masculine and feminine performances that are deemed unsuitable for her by the people in her surroundings such as Nelly, Vlado and Lenny. Additionally, Nelly does not adapt to the girls in school and Francescho continues to perform their gender in the same way to the day they die. George continues to conform to the tropes of the genre and employs an analytical approach and relies on her intellect. Moreover, she continues to perform masculinity, which is illustrated by the fact that even towards the latter half of the narrative Francescho mistakes her for a boy. Neither Marnie nor George become motherly, nurturing types nor do they discard their dislike for domestic work. Additionally, when both of them

are thrust into a maternal role out of necessity, it becomes clear that both of the heroines are restricted by the adherence to these patriarchal roles, as they are no longer able to also take their own needs and feelings into account.

This rejection of the traditional structures and roles is furthermore found in the relationships that the heroines and minor characters have. In *The Death of Bees* the rejection of the expectation to find a husband is subtly illustrated through both Marnie and Nelly, as they both do not have a partner by the end of the novel. Nevertheless, they still have the option in their future. It is, however, also illustrated more overtly through the secondary character, Kim, who comes out as a lesbian and thus discards this option completely. *How to Be Both* progresses similarly, with George realizing that she is falling in love with H, through which she rebels against the societal heteronormative gender norms and expectations of engaging in a romantic relationship with a boy. Francescho rejects several expectations, as people who know them as a woman would expect them to marry a man while others would expect them to marry a woman due to their masculine performance. However, they do neither, rejecting the expectation of finding a partner completely.

Both novels furthermore challenge the traditional societal structure of the nuclear family and the gender roles that come with it. This societal structure is very reliant on the gender binary and the role division that the structure represents is heavily gendered. Both novels challenge this by presenting different varieties of performing gender in the context of a family structure. In *How to Be Both* it is challenged by the fact that the parents take on atypical roles, such as the mother being the one that is more dominant. However, Georges parents also perform their roles in conformance with the nuclear family structure at times, such as her father being emotionally distant and leaving the emotional aspect of parenting to his wife. This illustrates a new alternative for the nuclear family structure in which both the husband and wife have traditionally masculine and feminine traits. *The Death of Bees*

challenges the nuclear family structure by showing a nuclear family with a traditional role division between husband and wife in which everything goes horrendously wrong. However, when the girls form a new family structure with a gay man, who is part of a group that has traditionally been excluded from the nuclear family structure, the family works better than before.

While the heroines reject societal structures and roles, they do conform to the expectations and structures of the genre. Their identity and gender performance is evidently strongly shaped by their surroundings (Labovitz 41). Both Marnie and George are guided and shaped in their perception of gender roles and performances by the performances and opinions of their mothers. George was very directly taught that gender performance is separate from biological gender and grew up in a household that was accepting of subversive performances. Marnie, however, indirectly learned from her mother's and father's performance and adopted part of both, leaving her with a feminine and masculine performance. Nelly's gender performance is, as mentioned above, greatly influenced by her grandmother, who she sees as an example of how she should perform. Francescho's performance is naturally also influenced by their surroundings, but in a different manner. While the other heroines adapt their performances because their surroundings shaped them in subtle ways, Francescho is directly told what performance to adopt. The heroines furthermore demonstrate a very strong awareness of these surroundings and the influences on the development of their identity and performance and actively engage with them. Marnie is acutely aware when she feels like she is being perceived as not performing the correct kind of femininity and George is also very aware that due to social structures she is expected to feel a lot of emotions and take care of her brother, both of which she actively engages with and acknowledges as having an influence on her development.

Although both novels clearly reject dominant structures, roles and expectations towards characters gender performance, they also stay true to another principle of the female bildungsroman, which is leaving space for other non-subversive performances as well (Midalia 103). Both Nelly and Marnie conform to stereotypes as well as they reject them, similarly to their friends, George's father and Francescho. This furthermore allows the novels to portray a diverse array of women performing gender through the heroines and secondary characters which in turn conforms with the theme of the genre of exploring and presenting many different gender identities to the reader (Labovitz 7).

This ties in with the realistic aspect of the novel, which is furthermore represented in the novels portrayal of patriarchal presence, a trope in the female bildungsroman (Hoover Braendlin Salvation 18). The presence is portrayed subtly, through things such as comments directed at Nelly and Marnie and Marnie's internalized misogyny and patriarchal values concerning others (142) and herself (136). A more overt presence is also portrayed, through experiences such as Marnie's and Nelly's encounter with their grandfather, who attempts to force patriarchal values on them and Francescho having to change their entire gender performance to have access to more opportunities.

This clearly demonstrates that the gender roles and gender representation and, through this, the gender performance in the novels is strongly influenced by the conventions of the female bildungsroman genre.

Conclusion

All things considered, the portrayal of gender in novels is most certainly influenced by the genre the novel belongs to. Just as the portrayal can influence the readers perception of the world, their own place in it and that of others as well as societal changes, genre conventions shape the way characters perform and perceive gender performances and roles. While all of the novels examined in this thesis can be classified as engaging with the theme of gender seriously and discussing the categories and expectations that come with them, the novels do vary in how they portray gender and what kind of gender performances they portray, due to their genre.

The historical novels are influenced by their genre's convention to represent history, to do so accurately and portray a plausible narrative. To conform to these conventions and reach that plausibility writers often reinforce stereotypes to appeal to the readers previous knowledge and expectations. While the historical novel could be a tool to represent narratives from history that have otherwise been marginalized by the focus on the white man in mainstream history, this possibility is countered by influence of the conventions and the conservativeness of the genre. This is reflected in both novels as women have little to no freedom and are expected to perform hegemonic femininity, which often includes traditional feminine roles such as being obedient and demure. While men have more freedom in life, both male and female characters in the historic novels are restricted in their gender performance and mostly conform to the gender roles and the hegemonic masculinity and femininity. Character that subvert from those performances are punished, their subversive performance is hidden away from society, they are not taken seriously or they grow to perform a conforming performance later on. Atkins breaches with this convention slightly as some of her characters perform conflicting aspects of both femininity and masculinity, however, generally they do return to hegemonic performances.

Smith's historic narrative does not conform to those conventions, as, even though she does illustrate the hegemonic gender performances and roles of the time and highlight the restrictions for women, she does so by having her character perform a subversive performance. This is, however, not due to the lack of influence of genre, but due to the fact that the novel belongs to the genre of the female bildungsroman. The conventions of the female bildungsroman genre are decidedly different from those of the historical novel and therefore influence the gender portrayal in a noticeably different manner. The female bildungsroman developed to portray narratives in which the focus is on the development of a young woman, which is greatly influenced by her surroundings. The genre conventions dictate that this young woman does not capitulate to societies expectations, has great awareness of social structures and strives to liberate herself from them as well as from physical restrictions. While these conventions influence the gender performance of characters indirectly, unlike the historical novel, the female bildungsroman also has conventions which influence these directly. The genre is intended to challenge conservative ideas about female identities and give readers the opportunity to explore different female identities, for example through the heroine who rejects domestic roles. The heroine's gender performance is furthermore influenced by the convention that she often takes on male roles or has male emotional reactions and that she relies on her intellect rather than her emotions. These conventions can be seen to have a very strong influence on the gender performance in both of the female bildungsroman's that this thesis examined as heroines from both novels reject domestic behavior and other aspects of femininity, embrace several masculine traits and do not capitulate to the expectations society places on them. Moreover, the convention of presenting the reader with different female identities can be witnessed in both novels, as both portray a wide array of women performing gender in different manners. Both novels furthermore actively engage with concept of gender performance through the experiences and

actions of the characters, a manifestation of the convention of challenging conservative ideas concerning women's identities.

The conventions clearly also influence the performance of other characters as one convention of the female bildungsroman is that the narrative includes a strong presence of the patriarchy, which is often represented by other characters. Male characters tend to remain in the margins in these novels, due to the convention of focusing on female experiences and identities, however, several of the men that are present fulfil the former convention. Their gender performance is influenced by the convention of the presence of the patriarchy, as they are made to symbolize it and therefore often perform hegemonic masculinities. In O'Donnell's work this presence can additionally be seen in the internalized patriarchal and misogynistic ideas of one of the heroines.

Similarly to the historical novel, the female bildungsroman has the possibility to represent narratives that were previously silenced, like those of diverse and subversive gender performance, but while the conventions of the historical novel seem to restrict this potential, the conventions of the female bildungsroman seem to encourage it.

While this thesis is limited by its scale and the fact that this only allowed for a small portion of prizewinning literature and genres to be examined, the conclusions and findings drawn from it may be applicable to other genres. However, it would be beneficial for future research to examine a wider range of genres to support this idea. For this research, it may be helpful to work with clear categories concerning the gender performance as it will enable the researcher to maintain a clear overview. Furthermore, it could be valuable to revisit the original question with a larger scope, as other conclusions may be found. Additionally, it may be interesting to examine the connection between the size of the prize and the genre of the novels that they are awarded to as both historical novels in this research were the winners of the bigger prizes and the female bildungsroman's were awarded with smaller prizes.

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