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## Stories of femininity and survival: Flesh And Blood by Michèle Roberts

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Although some feminist Jungian criticism has been done on the novels of Michèle Roberts, it tends to concentrate on identifying archetypal images of women in the texts. This essay provides a new analysis of Roberts's novel, Flesh and Blood (1995) by combining aspects of feminist archetypal theory with other (mainly French) psychoanalytic feminist theories.

I suggest that although archetypal images of the feminine are useful, they are also limiting. Roberts attempts to widen definitions of the feminine, and overcome the splits in the female psyche which patriarchal definitions of the feminine produce, by returning to the mother. I use the work of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray to examine Roberts's view that in order to challenge the male Symbolic Order, women must attempt to symbolise the mother-daughter relationship. I link this to Juliet Mitchell's description of the woman writer as a hysteric, and show how this description can be used to look at both Roberts's female storytelling characters, and Roberts herself as a contemporary novelist negotiating the constraints on women which patriarchal definitions of the feminine produce.

Flesh And Blood is made up of a series of stories which move through different gender perspectives. These shifts in identity, along with shifts in time and place, enable Roberts to examine the constraints which patriarchal society imposes on women.<sup>1</sup> Roberts takes the Jungian view that masculine and feminine are images which are available to either sex.

I see them not as essential attributes of a given biology, but as images of forms of energy existing within each of us in different ratios. The feminine way tends towards receiving, opening, waxing and waning, relating,

uniting. The masculine way tends towards dividing, ordering, separating, naming. (Roberts 1983b: 65)

Because Jung's definitions of the feminine are stereotypical (women are closer to Eros or soul, while they lack Logos, which is access to the spirit or intellect 2) Roberts draws on feminist revisions of Jung, namely the work of Nor Hall (1980).<sup>3</sup> The proximity of Roberts's definition of the feminine to that of Hall can be seen from the following:

Watching the moon in the course of its monthly growth and diminishing is a way of reminding ourselves that the periodic need to be in-full-view and the opposite periodic need to be alone or withdrawn are not only natural but essential to the feminine. (Hall 1980: 4)

The word "natural," however, seems to indicate a biological link between women and the feminine. Thus, despite Hall's conviction that "[f]emininity is a mode of being human that can be lived out ... by both men and women" (Hall 1980: 4), female and feminine become inextricably linked. Demaris Wehr says that "for Jungians the feminine is ... biological, innate, even ontological" (Wehr 1988: 10). Rather than deny this link, Roberts attempts to widen definitions of the feminine by examining ways in which women might include the masculine principle. Later in this essay I will show how Roberts suggests that for a wider definition of the feminine it is also necessary to focus on the mother-daughter relationship. In doing so she turns away from Jungian theory, and aligns herself more with the work of French feminists, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray.

The spiral structure of Flesh And Blood facilitates the examination of gender divisions, allowing transitions between male and female, masculine and feminine.<sup>4</sup> In the first chapter we meet Fred, who metamorphoses into Freddy. These both turn out to be aspects of the female character, Frederica. Fred is on the run after murdering his mother. He sees himself as a *male* criminal, "one of those men, framed in black, on a police poster" (Roberts 1995: 1), yet he is in a dress shop, a space we perceive as "feminine." When Fred encounters Madame Lesley

he has already disguised himself in a flesh-pink dress. To Madame Lesley he is a girl, yet the reader sees him as a boy cross-dressing. Roberts offers the possibility for "he" to become "she" by blurring the line between reality and the unconscious. This ambiguity is intentional as can be seen from her notes: "the idea of a sex-change as part of the narrative/ technique, part of the subject of metamorphosis, part of the plot ... let the reader work out the trick" (Roberts 1998: 204).

Clare Hanson (2000) denies this process of metamorphosis. In her reading of Flesh and Blood, she states that the novel "opens with the story of Frederica" (Hanson 2000: 241). I find her interpretation problematic, in that Fred's story only becomes that of Frederica in the second chapter. Indeed, we do not make all the connections between Fred and Frederica until the end of the novel. Hanson glosses over this crossing of gender boundaries by imposing a linear reading on a non-linear narrative. This denies both Roberts's playfulness (because with Hanson's interpretation the reader is not being asked to "work out the trick") and also the process of metamorphosis (which Roberts's notes show is meant to be there).<sup>5</sup>

Frederica is called "Freddy" as a child, indicating that childhood is a time of less well defined gender boundaries. The headmistress, Miss D'Arcy, encourages the children to experiment with gender roles in school plays. "Boys pranced in home-made farthingales flirting chicken-feather fans, girls strutted in doublet and hose, carolling up to ambiguous beauties on stepladder balconies, and the panto horse was unashamedly hermaphrodite" (Roberts 1995: 9). However, when Freddy is old enough to go to the nun's school, she is forced to deny her masculine side in order to fit in with the Catholic church's definition of the feminine. The "healthy mixing" (ibid: 9) promoted by Miss D'Arcy must stop.

The Catholic faith is prescribed to Freddy as a cure for nonconformity: "The Catholic religion would be a good dose. To get me regular, normal. To cope with my growing pains" (ibid:12). With the onset of menstruation she is marked female, and therefore "other" in the male economy. Her period is seen as unclean and must be kept secret from her "sensitive and fastidious father" (ibid: 15). It is worth noting that her father is an effeminate figure, yet, as a male, he holds the

position of power within the household.

When Freddy begins to be called Frederica, it is an indicator that she is accepting her feminine identity (at the expense of denying the masculine). Through her mother's magazines, she learns that men know "what real women should be like" (ibid: 16); they must dress to please men. Other, less censored images, are available through her father's collections of reproduction Old Masters and pornographic magazines, both of which portray opposing male ideals of naked women. In apparent contrast, Frederica aspires to the virginal. Her devotion to the Virgin Mary is presented as the manifestation of the need for the mother's love; "[The Virgin] held both her hands out to me in a gesture of complete love, complete acceptance" (ibid: 17).

Roberts has said that she herself experienced feelings of separation from her mother at an early age because she was a twin, and therefore could not have her mother's undivided attention. Hanson says that this, coupled with being half French and half English, goes some way towards explaining Roberts's "constant preoccupation with fragmentation and wholeness, splitting and unity" (Hanson 2000:232). It does seem that Roberts's childhood shares something with the story of Frederica, as can be seen from the following quotation:

So my mother was for me the powerful, queenly Virgin Mary, the land flowing with milk and honey, and I was the Israelites in exile, yearning to be reunited with her. It was to her that I dedicated the May altars that I built ... and to her that I prayed for forgiveness. My anger at my loss of her was, I was convinced, a terrible sin, akin to murder. Guilt encouraged me to make reparation: the mother whom I damaged in fantasy could be magically restored with offerings ... (Roberts 1983a: 54)

Yet the "fragmentation and splits" (ibid: 66) with which Roberts is preoccupied do not only occur on a personal level. As Frederica's father's collection of nudes shows, patriarchy tends to categorise women as either/or: "whore/madonna, you've got a body *or* a soul, you've got brains *or* beauty, you can't be a mother *and* an artist" (ibid [Author's italics]). As the Angel, Cherubina, explains:

"[t]hey like to see you coming out of one door or another. Then they know who you are, what kind of being, and what to think of you" (Roberts 1995: 111). This fragmentation of the female psyche occurs at the point when the daughter leaves the mother, "when you are born out of Paradise" (ibid). Leaving Paradise can be read as either physical separation from the mother at birth, or, in Lacanian terms, as the mirror stage, when the child recognises his/her image in the mirror.<sup>6</sup> This marks the child's entry into the Symbolic, a point I will return to below.

The story of Eugénie illustrates how the male order physically separates mother and daughter. Madame de Dureville bears a daughter, Eugénie, after several stillborn sons, yet she denies the relationship she might have with her in the name of religious devotion. "She put the little one from her as much as possible ... caused her never to be allowed treats or indulgences ..." (ibid: 61) Madame de Dureville's husband considers his wife to be perfect, "a martyr destined for heaven" (ibid:61) Her sense of Christian duty encourages her to send Eugénie away to be educated at the convent, and while the mother strives for transcendence, the nuns instil in Eugénie "a complete conviction of her worthlessness as a sinner before God" (ibid: 63).

Eugénie grows up to be virtuous, but eager to escape the convent. Thus she accepts her father's choice of husband, the sadistic Monsieur de Frottecoeur.<sup>7</sup> Through Eugénie's marriage, Roberts shows that virgin and whore are closer than patriarchal definitions care to admit. Eugénie is raped by her husband and his mistress, yet we see her "palpitating and scarlet under the effects of the sensual delirium she had just passed through" (ibid:70). Rape abdicates responsibility, allowing Eugénie to experience erotic pleasure without abandoning her virtue. Indeed, her compliance and "unflinching obedience" (ibid:78) lead to her taking up the whip as her husband commands, crossing the boundary between virgin and whore, a crossing which places her in a position of power.

However, to try to unite these dualities to form a more encompassing definition of the feminine is still to work within patriarchal definitions. Speaking some years before the publication of Flesh And Blood, Roberts named four archetypes that make up the female psyche: "mother (creating babies and art); lesbian (lover of

women who may also be mother); companion to men (lover, comrade); sibyl (woman who gives birth to poetry and art)" (Roberts 1983a:67). Roberts explains that these are "shifting points" (Roberts 2000) in a woman's life.<sup>8</sup> Susan Rowland (1999) correctly points out that these are not archetypes, because archetypes are essentially content free. Rather, they are Jungian personality types, all of which can coexist within a person in different proportions. These personality types were initially developed by Toni Wolff.<sup>9</sup> Rowland says that Roberts treats them as "*fictions of identity*" (Rowland 1999: 37 [Author's italics]). I find this helpful because if they are seen as fictions, they can be contested.

One example of this can be seen in Roberts's description of the female artist. In patriarchal society, female creativity is suppressed; great art can only be produced by men. In Flesh And Blood, Frederica's desire to produce art causes gender confusion. The artist is not a role suitable for women. To overcome this, Frederica cuts off her plait and wears trousers and heavy shoes. Cross-dressing allows her to assume a masculine identity, helping her break free of the limitations imposed on women by the male order.

The freedom gained by cross-dressing is examined in more detail through the character of George/ Georgina, whom we first meet in the story of Félicité. Félicité fears marriage to Albert: "Marriage ... would be a brown mouth that bit you primly then swallowed you alive" (Roberts 1995:29). Her childish behaviour is a method for catching men's attention, yet it is not Albert whom she most wants to capture, but George. George is an artist who responds in an opportunistic way to Félicité's flirtation, the result of which is a sketching trip where he seduces her. "This was the great moment of her life. She was about to give herself to her lover, just like all those women in books. She arranged herself in a pose of controlled languour, like a model in a painting" (ibid: 52).<sup>10</sup>

Félicité has learnt how to be feminine from the images she has encountered in books and paintings, images which reproduce patriarchal values. As an object of exchange within the male economy, she can either *give* herself to her lover, or be *taken* in marriage; neither role offering her the freedom she craves. When she says to George, "You don't understand. I want to be free. Like you" (ibid: 53) she

has already realised that the bohemian idea of free love only benefits men. Indeed, after giving herself, she is more trapped than before, and when Albert finds her he asserts his ownership by raping her.

Later in the novel, George is revealed to be a cross-dressing woman, Georgina. As with Frederica, cross-dressing allows Georgina to fulfil her desire to produce art, and for her work to be received without being derogated as "feminine." The revelation that George is a woman forces us to review her encounter with Félicité. We now see it as a lesbian affair, yet this does not change the imbalance of power. Dressed as a man, Georgina took advantage of Félicité. This shows that women's assumption of masculine roles is problematic to some extent, in that it can result in a reversal of patriarchal values. Although, in Jungian terms, it is necessary for women to become acquainted with their contrasexual "masculine" element in order to attain unity, to assume it completely would be to deny the feminine and create an imbalance as detrimental as that created by the wholehearted assumption of femininity.

Roberts seems to posit the experience of being in between, or crossing over, as fulfilling the shortcomings of masculine and feminine roles. For women, this is the place where the split enforced by patriarchal culture can be healed.

[Georgina] allowed herself two selves, two lives, or was it three? Her life as a woman in London, her life as a man in France, his/her experience at the moment of crossing over from one to the other and back again.

(ibid:155-156)

The moment of crossing becomes a possible third state of being, which Roberts compares to a marriage.

Two bodies, apparently separate and different, male and female, which were joined together by the to-ing and fro-ing between them... She [Georgina] married two split parts of herself, drew them together and joined them, and she also let each one flourish individually. (ibid:156)

The idea that experiencing masculine and feminine aspects of the self can lead to unity corresponds to the Jungian process of individuation. Jung uses the term individuation "to denote the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'in-dividual,' that is, a separate, indivisible unity or 'whole' ..." (Jung 1996: 275).

Yet, as I said at the start of this essay, Roberts looks beyond the Jungian idea of uniting masculine and feminine in her search for a wider definition of the feminine. For this reason I will now look at Flesh And Blood in relation to the work of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray.

Cixous locates the difference between men and women in the libidinal economy, occurring at the level of sexual pleasure or *jouissance*: "women's libidinal economy is neither identifiable by a man nor referable to the masculine economy" (Cixous 1981a: 95). She says writing is a way for women to claim space for themselves within patriarchal culture, and draws a connection between motherhood and creativity; "There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink" (Cixous 1981b: 251). This reflects the situation which Roberts depicts through the characters of Frederica and Georgina. Both are artists who have had to cross-dress in order to survive, yet as women they can give birth to children as well as art.

For Cixous, the mother can also function as a metaphor. She says that inside every woman is the hidden source, the locus, of the other. This other is the nurturing mother. By locating her, women learn to love themselves, "to give me my self as myself" (ibid: 252). Because the other is hidden within women's bodies, learning to love the other is akin to bisexuality. For Cixous, bisexuality is the presence of both sexes in oneself, and the non-exclusion of neither. She says that while men strive to keep "glorious monosexuality in view" (ibid: 254), women will benefit from pursuing this idea of difference. Roberts seems to agree with Cixous here, proposing that one way of marrying the masculine and feminine elements of self, and of locating the (m)other, is through writing.

[w]riting's a bisexual practice: you have to be both active and passive;  
'masculine' and 'feminine' need to be in relation; mother relates to child

inside the self; all this is an ever-changing dance, never static. I don't use the word 'androgynous' for this - to me it implies fixedness, transcendence. I prefer 'bisexual'. (Roberts 1998: 199)

Women who strive to locate the nurturing other pose a threat to patriarchy. This is illustrated by Frederigo's story of his sister, Bona. Bona is an Abbess who is accused of having flouted the holy rules, and, amongst other things, of committing "lewd acts with the other nuns, in which she usurped the natural function of a man" (Roberts 1995: 126). The male order is threatened by Bona's introduction of the feminine into religious worship. The "receiving, opening ... and uniting" (Roberts 1983a: 65), which Roberts associates with the feminine, incorporates aspects of the maternal and the female erotic.

The Abbess bared her breast. She said: this is my body, which was broken and given for you, and this is my blood, which was shed for you...

Then each of the nuns came forward and kissed the Abbess's breast, and let her mouth rest there, as though she was an infant being nursed by her mother. (Roberts 1995:135)

Introducing aspects of the maternal-feminine into religious practice becomes a matter for the Inquisition. Bona must stand trial, and be judged by male law, the Law of the Father.<sup>11</sup> Again, cross-dressing becomes a means of survival for women. Dressed as Dominican friars, Bona and her co-accused, Giuditta, escape from prison. The escape is arranged by Bona's mother (the father having already resigned himself to his daughter's fate). This salvation of the daughter by the mother undermines patriarchal laws, and moves towards repairing the split between mother and daughter symbolised by the murder of the mother at the opening of the novel.

I now want to take a closer look at the murder of the mother. The novel begins: "An hour after murdering my mother I was in Soho" (ibid:1). It is Fred who is speaking here, and although I have explained that he later metamorphoses into Frederica, I will treat Fred as male for now, as would the reader on encountering

the text for the first time. "Now my mother was dead", he says, "I had killed her. I was a slayer of mothers" (ibid:3).

Luce Irigaray says, "the whole of our culture in the west depends upon the murder of the mother" (Irigaray 1981, quoted in Margaret Whitford 1991: 75).<sup>12</sup> The murder of the mother in patriarchal society is achieved by denying the mother-daughter relationship. The relationship remains unsymbolised, which means there is an absence of : "linguistic, social, semiotic, structural, cultural, iconic, theoretical, mythical, religious or any other representations of that relationship. There is no maternal genealogy" (Whitford 1994: 76).

Fred's "murder" of his mother can be read as a symbolic act which aligns him with, and ensures the continuation of, the existing male order. However, if women attempt to create a different social order this can lead to the murder of women by women. "Real murders take place as part of it, but also (insofar as they can be distinguished), cultural murders, murders of minds, emotions and intelligence, which women perpetuate amongst themselves" (Irigaray 1986: 14, quoted in Whitford 1991: 79).<sup>13</sup> In this sense, the murder of the mother in patriarchal society is two-fold; carried out by both men and women. Thus, when we learn that Fred is really Frederica we are confronted with the possibility that it is not the son who has murdered his mother, but the daughter.

The story of Rosa examines not only what happens when the daughter's relationship with the mother is severed, but also how this relationship might be restored. Rosa's mother flees the house and runs out into a snowstorm to escape the confines of marriage and domesticity. Although this is not literally murder, the mother is presumed dead.<sup>14</sup> Rosa seems ambivalent to the loss of her mother, and assumes the role of wife with chilling complacency. She says to her father, "Don't worry ... you've still got me. I'll take care of the house. I'll look after the other children. Everything will be all right" (Roberts 1995: 97). So the daughter takes the mother's place, even going as far as to comfort her father in bed.

A comment which appears in Roberts's notes links the father's interest in his daughter to the mother's absence;

Her mother closed her eye against her, refused to see or acknowledge her reality, and her father opened his eye of sex upon her and pronounced her *his*. So her only identity was as her father's fantasy sex object. Nothing from the mother to fall back on. (Roberts 1998:202 [Author's italics])

The absence of the mother not only leaves the daughter prey to the father's advances, it creates a space which the daughter, as his dutiful servant, believes she should fill. Interestingly, it is not the possibility of incest which alarms Rosa, but the chance that her father may want to marry her. As in the story of Félicité, marriage is a threat to women's limited freedom.

The confinement which Rosa's mother experienced in her married life is reflected by the snow that builds up around the house once she has gone. Only the father is able to dig his way out. When Rosa realises he has gone off in search of her mother, she understands that she has failed to take her mother's place. This leads to feelings of rejection and worthlessness; "I wasn't beautiful like my mother" (Roberts 1995: 102), "I was starving, I was alone. Abandoned in a desert of snow" (ibid: 103). Irigaray says that if women do not threaten the patriarchal order, if they remain unsymbolised, they will exist in a state of *déréliction*. This explains Rosa's feeling of isolation and loss. Dereliction is akin to being abandoned by God and women who experience it exist without hope or refuge.<sup>15</sup>

What saves Rosa is faith; not in patriarchal religion, but a belief in the return of the maternal. Irigaray says that even to think the mother-daughter relationship is to pose a threat to the patriarchal order. It seems to me that Rosa is "thinking" this relationship when the Angel, Cherubina, appears to her. Cherubina represents the feminine aspect of spirituality which is excluded from patriarchal religion. She is 'cut out of solid moon' (ibid: 95) which links to the "waxing and waning" (Roberts 1983a: 65) that Roberts associates with the feminine, and her appearance is accompanied by feelings of bliss and sweetness. Cherubina leads Rosa back to the mother in "Paradise." Paradise is sensual and light, its fertility contrasting with the cold, barren landscape, dominated by the father, which Rosa has left behind. It is a place where we can all walk, naked and anonymous. Roberts addresses the

reader as "you" here, returning not just Rosa, but the reader, back to the mother.

The mother takes the form of the naked masseuse who will encourage us to "let go" (Roberts 1995: 108). This is a moment of sensual pleasure, of jouissance, where women's writing becomes a joyous flow, a game of writing on the body. "On your blissful skin the hands of the masseuse play a writing game. They spell out, in fingertalk, words and phrases, they trace love messages for your shut eyes to read" (ibid). This leads into the central chapter, "Anon," a prose poem that celebrates a time when the daughter is still physically joined to the mother:

swimming in our waters we listen  
 to ourheartbeat  
 we is one whole undivided  
 you/me broken now mended  
 you/me restored mamabébé  
 our body of love pickedup putbacktogether  
 repaired  
 made whole again (ibid: 109)

By returning to a time before mother and daughter are separated, the poem revisits the pre-Oedipal period. According to Lacan, this is when the child believes itself to be part of the mother, and has no perception of difference, nor of being separate from the world.<sup>16</sup> For the child to take its place in the Symbolic Order, the father must split the unity between mother and child. After this, desire for, and imaginary unity with, the mother must be repressed. As I have said above, the mirror stage marks the child's entry into the Symbolic. For Lacan, entry into the Symbolic is linked to language acquisition. This suggests that language is acquired at the expense of denying the mother-daughter relationship. Roberts is contesting this, using language to reinstate the mother-daughter relationship and thus challenging the male Symbolic Order.<sup>17</sup>

Roberts has said that the language women have is not heard because patriarchal society chooses not to listen to it. However, she believes that male and female language are not that separate, "...they refer to each other, they are confused by each other, they miss each other"(Radford 1978: 18). Irigaray sees women's language as very different to men's, terming it "le parler femme" or "womanspeak" (Moi 1990). She says it occurs when women speak together but disappears in the presence of men. Although Roberts does not see male and female language as so distinct, I think the "Anon" chapter can be seen as an example of what Irigaray's womanspeak might be like: a free-flowing dialogue between mother and unborn daughter.

However, the restoration of the mother-daughter relationship does not necessarily lead to wholeness.<sup>18</sup> For Marie-Jeanne, fragmentation of the self becomes a strategy for survival, one which is maintained even after the daughter is found. The story of Marie-Jeanne begins, "We are two but we speak as one" (Roberts 1995: 142). The split occurs when she gives birth to an illegitimate daughter by Monsieur de Frottecoeur. "We found we were two in that small room in the nun's jail, just as the child got born. We tore in two. That made it not quite so bad" (ibid: 149). Instead of accepting an "either/or" definition of femininity, Marie-Jeanne subverts the male order by assuming two selves. She becomes "they," the Mad Dog girl and the Rock girl, who take to the road and spend the next twenty years searching for their daughter. And when Marie-Jeanne finds her daughter she locks herself in the cage at the fairground in order to stay with her. In this way she accepts the restrictions of patriarchy, yet threatens the male order from within these restrictions by asserting the mother-daughter bond. The daughter, Eugénie, is the virtuous child of Madame de Frottecoeur in a previous story, which encourages the reader to construct various possibilities. Yet there is no single truth. As Marie-Jeanne says to the man at the fairground: "if you have some more cash to spare, we will tell you one more tale. This one, we swear, is the real truth. There are two of us you see. So there are two tales" (ibid: 154). Rather than strive for unity, women can embrace the divisions imposed by patriarchy and become empowered by the multiple truths these divisions create

(which casts doubt on the value of Jungian individuation for women).

Marie-Jeanne's submission to patriarchal law, coupled with her renewal of the mother-daughter relationship, corresponds with the 'acceptance and refusal' which Juliet Mitchell associates with hysteria. Interestingly, Mitchell attributes hysteria to women writers. She says,

[t]he woman novelist must be an hysteric. Hysteria is the woman's simultaneous acceptance and refusal of the organisation of sexuality under patriarchal capitalism. It is simultaneously what a woman can do both to be feminine and to refuse femininity, within patriarchal discourse.

(Mitchell 1984: 289-290)

It seems to me that not only Roberts's character Marie-Jeanne, but Roberts herself, uses this strategy of acceptance and refusal. Roberts suggests that "art" would perhaps be an interesting substitute for "hysteria."<sup>19</sup> Of her own art, writing, she says,

I must enjoy writing novels about people who want to tell stories, because I think that's the impulse perhaps behind a novel ... wanting to tell a story, or wanting to fight your way out of someone else's story that's been imposed on you. (Roberts: 2000) 20

Just as Scheherazade told stories "night after night, to save her life" (Roberts 1995: 6) so Frederica, at the start of the novel, assumed the role of storyteller in order to deal with the split between her and her mother. "So many different voices chattered inside me: that meant I was mad. I wasn't sure if my stories could save my life or my mother's" (ibid: 6-7). The novel ends with Frederica finding out she is pregnant: "[w]e were young, and full of hope. It was the sixties. So we walked back through Soho and into the next story" (ibid: 175). A new mother-daughter relationship is about to unfold, one informed by the stories which have gone before. In this way, the novel resists closure. The negotiation of patriarchy continues, and Roberts leaves it open to other women, other storytellers, to pick up the thread and weave their way back "into the labyrinth" (ibid: 7).

**Endnotes**

1 There are similarities with Woolf's Orlando: A Biography. 1964.

2 See Jung (1959:11-22).

3 Roberts (2000) personal communication.

4 Published notes show that Roberts had this structure in mind while writing the novel: "supposing the novel's shape were a spiral?" (Roberts 1998:207). She has also compared the structure to a zip because of the way the novel is broken into two halves which the reader can join back together (Roberts 2000: personal communication).

5 This is not to say that the only way to read this text is to follow the author's intention, for as Lynne Pearce points out: "[e]ven as the text positions me, so may I (re)position my relationship to it" (Pearce 1997:49). However, in this instance, I feel it is useful to take the author's intention into account.

6 See Benvenuto & Kennedy (1986:52-58).

7 There are parallels between this story and the life of the Marquis de Sade. See Schaeffer (2001).

8 Roberts (2000) personal communication.

9 These personality types were initially developed by Toni Wolff, who named them "mother," "hetaria" (eternal companion), "medium" and "amazon." The first two appear in the sphere of intimate relationships, while the second two appear in reference to the social world, yet they still operate within patriarchal binary logic. For further discussion see Estella Lauter (1985), who refers to Toni Wolff Structural forms of The Female Psyche. Zurich: C.G. Jung Institute, 1956.

10 The correct spelling is 'languor', but it appears as quoted in the edition of the text used for this essay.

11 See Moi's discussion of Lacan in Moi (1990:99-101).

12 Whitford quotes from French text: Irigaray, Luce Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère. Montreal: Editions de la pleine lune, 1981.

13 Ibid.

14 Rosa dreams that her mother is hanging from a steel hook in the butcher's shop while the priest says a requiem Mass and her father kicks at a litter of bones. Thus it is inferred that the patriarchal institutions of marriage and religion have murdered the mother.

15 See Whitford (1991:77).

16 See Moi (1990: 99-101).

17 For an explanation of the structuring of the Symbolic Order see the diagram and discussion of Lacan's "L Schema" in Benvenuto & Kennedy (1986:100-101).

18 According to Lacan, unity is always illusory. The mirror stage presents an image of the total form to the infant, yet this leads to alienation because it can never be touched.

19 Roberts (2000) personal communication.

20 Roberts (2000) personal communication.

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### **First Response**

This is a thoughtful treatment of Roberts' fiction which has some interesting points to make from the point of view of feminist criticism of archetypes and Jungian-inflected psychology. While the essay shares the fault of many Anglophone writers of being overly-credulous toward a limited range of feminist thought from France, it is nevertheless of real value in helping to work toward an adequate understanding of Roberts' fiction.

