

# DINAH'S RAGE: THE RETELLING OF GENESIS 34 IN ANITA DIAMANT'S *THE RED TENT* AND THOMAS MANN'S *JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS*

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## INTRODUCTION

It is commonplace to assert that the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament is based on an androcentric position. Although critics have tried to introduce some sort of female empowerment by reassessing various biblical stories (cf. Savina Teubal, 1984), Genesis remains a man's realm with only a limited female perspective. The case of Dinah's rape by Shechem in Genesis 34 illustrates the marginality of womanhood in the biblical world and theology. The pericope tells us that, while the Israelites are settled near the Hivite city of Shechem in Canaan, Jacob's and Leah's daughter Dinah goes out of the Israelite camp. She is raped by Shechem, the prince of the eponymous city, who then abducts her and makes her one of his household. A deal is concluded by Jacob's sons and the Shechemites, according to which the situation can be made legitimate through marriage if the men of Shechem circumcise themselves. While the Shechemites are weak after the surgery, the Israelites sack the city, kill all the males and take Dinah back.

Robin Parry, along with numerous biblical scholars, notes that Dinah's perspective is totally absent from the narrative (11) and goes on to point out that

if we grant the legitimacy of a female perspective, then we grant that there is more to be said about the incident at Shechem than is said by Genesis 34. This need not be a threat to Genesis 34, but it may point towards the legitimacy of some kind of re-imagining the story from the perspective of the women involved (Leah, Dinah and the Hivite women).  
(23)

This “re-imagining” is precisely what Anita Diamant does in her novel entitled *The Red Tent* which is a hypertext<sup>1</sup> of the Patriarchal Saga (Genesis 12 to 50) from the female point of view. Diamant’s narrator is Dinah, and the retelling of the Shechem pericope from Genesis 34 acts as the pivot for the entire novel.

The “definitive” hypertext of Genesis is of course Thomas Mann’s *Joseph and his Brothers* which must necessarily be evoked when one looks at any other hypertexts, such as Diamant’s. *The Red Tent* retells primarily the Jacob section of Genesis, which means that a comparison with the first part of Mann’s tetralogy (*The Stories of Jacob*) is most appropriate here. In many ways both works are very much on the same wavelength, especially in terms of keeping God as an autonomous character out of the story and giving humans center stage. However, in terms of gender politics, Mann remains much closer to the ethos of the biblical hypotext than Diamant. As in Genesis, far more psychological depth and a greater range of action are given to the male characters than to female ones in *The Stories of Jacob*. Setting out to “correct” this imbalance, Diamant can be seen as engaging in debate not only with the androcentric position of the Bible’s first book but also with that of her illustrious German predecessor.

## IS IT RAPE?

In line with a view expressed by certain biblical scholars, Diamant and Mann undermine a key aspect of the Dinah pericope: the notion that Dinah is in fact raped by Shechem. Here is how the rape is reported in the Bible:

Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, “Get me this girl as my wife.” (Genesis 34:1- 4)

At first glance—and this has been the traditional view—rape appears to be the central event in this passage. Indeed, a number of biblical scholars go along with this interpretation (cf. Peter Lockwood, Joseph Fleishman). However, there is a school of thought according to which the question of Dinah’s violation is not as clear-cut as it might appear. Nicolas Wyatt, for example, considers the vocabulary used in this pericope and compares it to the wording of another Old Testament episode: the rape of Tamar by Amnon in 2 Samuel. In the latter case the Hebrew term for the sexual act conveys the notion of humiliation and sexual violation. But in the Dinah and Shechem pericope a different word is used, leading Wyatt to conclude: “Gen. 34:2 may therefore be understood simply as stating that Shechem *made love* to Dinah. We

may even suppose that she was a willing partner, because far from possessing her out of selfish lust, we read [sic] immediately afterwards that he loved her and wanted to marry her" (436; my italics—V.T.).

Amnon, on the other hand, is an unambiguous rapist in that he merely uses his victim and then casts her aside like a rag, saying the following to his servant after the rape: "Get this woman out of here and bolt the door after her" (2 Samuel 13:17). Tamar's reaction to Amnon's behavior makes it just as clear that this is sexual abuse and nothing else: "'Don't, my brother!' she said to him. 'Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of this disgrace?'" (2 Samuel 13:12-13; cf. Robin Parry 22). If we accept David Noel Freedman's argument that the same author (Super-J) wrote both the Shechem/Dinah and Amnon/Tamar pericopes, the case *against* viewing Genesis 34:2 as rape becomes even more compelling (Freedman 54).<sup>2</sup>

These considerations can justify Anita Diamant's decision to turn the traditional rape scenario into a love story in *The Red Tent*. The characterization of the love-sick Shechem in the hypotext is already unusually developed, providing Diamant with a good basis for her own version of the prince. As Joseph Fleishman points out with respect to Genesis 34:2-4, 377

Shechem's feelings following the abduction and consummation of the marriage are revealed by the words "Being strongly drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and in love with the maiden, he spoke to the maiden tenderly" (v. 3). This is deep penetration into Shechem's feelings and it serves to explain his actions. Such penetration is not characteristic of biblical stories. (103)<sup>3</sup>

In order to turn the prince into a true lover, Diamant begins by reversing the sequence of events constituting the first encounter between Dinah and the prince. In the hypotext this sequence lends a certain ambiguity to Shechem's feelings since Shechem has sexual relations with Dinah first and only then falls in love with her, which explains the traditional view that this is rape. In *The Red Tent*, the prince meets Dinah at the royal palace first, they fall in love and only then is their love consummated. Having "modernized" the chronology in question, Diamant places the story on a firm romantic footing and can proceed to explore the emotional bond between Dinah and the prince.

The term "romantic" is an appropriate anachronism here because Diamant's prince is in many ways closer to today's notion of the sensitive, enlightened man than what is typical of biblical males (Fleishman's above-cited passage notwithstanding). Thus, as Dinah tells us, "he felt more than the simple stirring of desire, or that is what he said after we had redeemed our promise and lay in each other's arms" (Diamant 184). This chivalric/romantic separation of sex from love is accompanied by another "modernized" aspect of the prince's character in *The Red Tent*—the concern for the feelings of the woman during sexual intercourse, which again has nothing to do with sexuality in Genesis: "I did not cry out when he took me, because, though he was young, my lover did not rush. Afterwards, when Shalem lay still at last and discov-

ered that my cheeks were wet, he said, ‘Oh, little wife, do not let me hurt you again’” (Diamant 190). The result is the idea of love as partnership—a concept particularly distant from the experience of Dinah in Genesis 34 where the woman remains an object even if rape is ruled out. It is no wonder that Diamant changes Shechem’s name to Shalem—a word related to the Hebrew root for “peace” or “safety.”<sup>4</sup>

378 Thomas Mann’s prince, on the other hand, is closer to his prototype in Genesis 34, appearing as a spoiled dandy rather than a romantic lover. Whereas Diamant’s Shalem promises something very unbiblical to Dinah—monogamy (Diamant 191), Mann’s Shechem views Dinah as one more prize for his harem and is not so much in love as in rut: “Her ungirded dress made of blue and red wool covered only one shoulder while the other, naked one was exceedingly lovely in its slenderness—the embodiment of love [...]. However, he thought of consummation immediately and then of nothing else” (Mann 124; this an all subsequent translations from Mann are mine—V.T.). And yet, this much more biblical notion of love in Mann’s novel is far from the traditional view that Shechem rapes Dinah. Thus, when it comes to the consummation of Shechem’s longing, Mann tries to downplay the violence inherent in the situation:

Sichem went straight to the coveted consummation with her, and she did not even raise any substantial objections. She was an insignificant thing, submissive and unable to judge or resist. When something happened to her clearly and vigorously, she accepted it as a given—as something natural. Besides, Sichem caused her anything but harm. His other little sisters, including Rehuma the first and preferred one, were also friendly to her. (Mann 128)

Considering Mann’s presentation of Dinah, it is noteworthy to read Robin Parry’s assessment of Genesis 34: “The text is singularly clear in exposing the discursive economics of male sexuality, with its exchange of object-females among subject-males” (Parry 10). Mann fully adopts this position by turning Dinah into “an insignificant thing, submissive and unable to judge or resist” (see above), which makes Dinah’s plight merely superficially dramatic. It is only thanks to the mental and spiritual emptiness of Mann’s Dinah that the rape from the hypotext is turned into a form of “vigorous persuasion” in the hypertext. In essence, there is no rape because Mann, in line with Genesis 34, denies Dinah the completeness of character and the fullness of humanity. This is very different from Diamant’s Dinah who is turned into a tragic heroine when her brothers kill Shalem.

## DESTROYED PROMISE

Diamant builds her tragic heroine by “deobjectifying” her, i.e., by turning Dinah into a subject with a complex world of feelings: “I was happy to be alone, thinking only of my beloved, numbering his qualities, imagining his virtues. I stared at my hands and wondered what it would be like to touch his gleaming shoulders” (Diamant 185).

Compared to the pragmatic, procreation-based sexual behavior of women in Genesis, the yearning of Diamant's Dina is much closer to The Song of Songs than to anything found in the first book of the Bible. And as for the sexual experience itself, Dinah in *The Red Tent* is worlds away from Mann's passive creature whose only sexual behavior is *not objecting*: "We clung to each other until Shalem's desire was renewed, and I did not hold my breath when he entered me, so I began to feel what was happening to my body, and to understand the pleasures of love" (Diamant 190). It is against this context of subjective emotional depth that we can measure the grandeur of tragedy created in *The Red Tent*.

Furthermore, Diamant makes sure that her heroine is full of young promise so that when the horrible events in Shechem take place and destroy that promise, we are left with a sense of wasted potential. Mann's Dinah has no potential, which is why her subsequent fate appears grotesquely meaningless—a mere footnote: "As for her, she wasted and shriveled away long before her time" (Mann 136). Diamant, on the other hand, prepares the tragedy of Dinah's life by stressing the young girl's thwarted aspirations. An example of this in *The Red Tent* is the excitement experienced by Dinah at the prospect of joining the birthing cycle of life:

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I stared at the tiny buds on the baby boys who ran about naked, and spied upon mating dogs. [...] One night Inna caught me by the side of Judah's tent, where he and Shua were making another baby. The midwife grabbed my ear and led me away. "It won't be long now, my girl," she told me, with a leer. "Your time is coming." (Diamant 168)

The dramatic irony in Inna's words is grim because we know that Dinah's time is not coming. And this can be linked to the general dramatic irony inherent in hypertextuality as a genre. The difference between hope and reality in *The Red Tent* is particularly strong because anyone familiar with the Genesis hypertext can begin grieving for the heroine even prior to the actual tragedy.

Diamant keeps building up the notion of "waiting to live" throughout the first half of the novel. Particularly striking in symbolic terms is the attention given to Dinah's first period. This event is perceived by the heroine as the most sought-after transformation in her life: "It seemed I had been waiting forever for womanhood [...]. My childhood is over. I will wear an apron and cover my head. I will not have to carry and fetch during the new moon anymore, but will sit with the rest of the women until I am pregnant" (Diamant 170). What follows is an elaborate initiation ceremony that underscores the life-giving powers of women and their connection to the earth (as opposed to the death-giving men of Dinah's family): "She [Leah] arranged my arms wide, 'to embrace the earth,' she whispered. She bent my knees and pulled the soles my feet together until they touched, 'to give the first blood back to the land,' said Leah" (Diamant 172). The life-giving blood of menstruation on Dinah's body is going to be pitted against the blood of Shalem spilled all over her when the prince is murdered in the nuptial bed (Diamant 203).

By ruling out rape, Thomas Mann increases the pathos associated with Shechem's death. Although the spoiled and superficial prince is not presented as worthy of admiration in *Joseph and his Brothers*, he does not deserve to die. In Diamant's case, the elimination of the rape scenario serves to *redefine* Dinah as a tragic heroine. Instead of drawing her pathos from having been the victim of sexual abuse, Dinah in *The Red Tent* suffers a loss presumably even more catastrophic. The man she loves is murdered in her bed! The last part of Diamant's novel illustrates the magnitude of Dinah's plight in that the heroine never recovers from the events in Shechem, leading a life that is but a bleak shadow of what might have been had Simeon and Levi not committed their crime.

## THE PATRIARCH

**380** At the center of Genesis 34 is a treacherous genocidal event—the sacking of a whole city—which necessarily raises questions of basic good and evil. This is important because a towering figure, such as Jacob, ends up drawn into the drama surrounding the bloodbath. The question of how well (morally-speaking) the patriarch performs under the circumstances may be merely a thematic undercurrent in the hypotext, but in *Joseph and his Brothers* and in *The Red Tent* the assessment of Jacob's behavior is crucial. If we consider Jacob in Genesis 34, the patriarch appears in a generally positive light. On the basis of “Jacob's silence while his sons agreed in his presence and in his name to Dinah's marrying Shechem,” we can comfortably assume that nothing in Genesis 34:5-17 indicates any objection on Jacob's part to the marriage of Dinah and Shechem (Fleishman 107). This is further supported by any lack of evidence that the patriarch of Genesis is part of the circumcision trick set up by his sons.

Still more compelling is the fact that Jacob berates the murderers for sacking Shechem in Genesis 34:30. On his deathbed Jacob even curses Simeon and Levi for what they did in Shechem: “Simeon and Levi are brothers—their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly [...] Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel!” (Gen. 49: 5-7). If we go beyond Genesis proper and consider the historical context of the text's composition, then it is fruitful to consider Peter Lockwood's hypothesis regarding Jacob's conciliatory attitude toward Shechem:

Genesis 34 is a socio-political document, presenting in an even-handed manner both sides of an on-going debate in Israel about the preferred manner of dealing with people of other faiths and cultures. Within the story, Jacob represents the broader and more pragmatic approach of tolerance, assimilation and cooperation, whereas Jacob's sons represent the religious passion (one might almost say fanaticism) of those who are willing to pay whatever it costs to take a stand on matters affecting orthodox worship and practice. (99)

Thomas Mann and Anita Diamant chose to imagine a Jacob with a heavy conscience based on the patriarch's awareness of his sons' terrible designs. The Jacob of *The Red Tent* is seen through Dinah's accusatory eyes, which makes him appear as an absolute moral failure. To begin with, Diamant's Jacob adopts the position of Simeon and Levi from the Bible where the brothers say the following in justification of their treachery: "Should [Shechem] have treated our sister like a prostitute?" (Genesis 34:31). The traditional idea that a woman's sexual life must be regulated by the males of the clan is voiced by Diamant's Jacob in a manner that does nothing to improve the hypertextual patriarch's character: "'The prince of Shechem has claimed her. His father comes to pay the full bride-price of a virgin. And so I assume that she was until she went within the walls of that dung heap of a city.' Jacob was bitter. 'She is of Shechem now, I suppose, and of no use to me'" (Diamant 195). In contrast to the biblical Jacob, here the father has virtually thrown away his daughter, thereby giving tacit consent to the massacre.

This consent is evident in *The Red Tent* from Jacob's behavior in the face of Dinah's wrath after the sacking of Shechem: "He blamed Simon and Levi and turned his back on them. But I saw full understanding in his clouded eyes as he stood before me. I saw his guilt before he had time to deny it" (Diamant 206). Although there is no reason to assume any hypocrisy in the hypotextual patriarch's rebuke of Simeon and Levi (Genesis 34:30), Diamant's Jacob admits his insincerity by not even answering Dinah when she curses him. Since Diamant is concerned with gender politics, the vilification of Jacob serves her purpose of increasing the scale of Dinah's prototypically female tragedy, i.e., the suffering of womanhood in general at the hands of men throughout history. Dinah's agony becomes greater by association with someone as epically magnificent as the third patriarch of the Judeo-Christian tradition. This is instrumental in transforming Dinah from a biblical footnote into a central character with whom so many can identify.

However, given all these arguments, it is also possible to turn around and posit that Jacob's negative presentation by Diamant is not without connection to Genesis 34 after all. Although the hypotext's patriarch does castigate his sons for what they have done in Shechem, the wording of this condemnation is worth looking at closely: "You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed" (Genesis 34:30). What exactly is Jacob condemning here? The murder? He will certainly do that on his death-bed (Gen. 49:5-7), as has been pointed out earlier. However, in this case something else is at issue. A genocide has just taken place and "Jacob's daughter has just been raped and abducted, yet the 'born-again' patriarch can only think about his own status and safety" (Peter Lockwood: 98).<sup>5</sup> This biblical Jacob is in a way not too far removed from Diamant's Jacob who appears equally self-absorbed when he says that the non-virginal Dinah is of no use to him (above). The Jacob of Genesis 34 can

be seen as an egoistical character who sees not only his daughter but also everyone else as a function of his special status.

The awareness of that special status determines Thomas Mann's picture of Jacob's guilt in the Shechem massacre. Jacob's notions of Judaism are virtually absent from *The Red Tent*, leaving only a human being to act out human motives and passions. Mann's Jacob, on the other hand, is a mythical-religious mind first and an individual second. He sees himself, as well as his clan, as a spiritual elite and seeks to fit all his actions into patterns established by illustrious patriarchal precedent (cf. Raymond Cunningham 55-56). The result is that "Jacob's awareness of imitation, and his active seeking of it, are of fatal consequence in the Shechem episode" (Charlotte Nolte 81). Placing himself in Abraham's role (Genesis 17:23), Mann's Jacob sees the circumcision of the Shechemites as a bond with his tribe: "He had remembered Abraham and the way he, following the Lord's command and seeking to ally himself with Him, one day had circumcised the flesh of his entire household" (Mann 131). However, whereas the Jacob of Genesis 34 appears to know nothing of his sons' wicked plans, Mann's Jacob only *pretends* to be blind: "More than once he wanted to raise his hands and beseech them; but he feared the superior strength of their outraged brotherly pride, their justified right to take revenge" (Mann 132).

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The notion of "their *justified* right to take revenge" rules out any true blindness on Jacob's part. Therefore, I cannot agree with Charlotte Nolte, who argues that in *Joseph and his Brothers* "it is Jacob's pleasure in imitation which allows him to be deceived about the brothers' true intent" (81; my italics—V.T.). What partially redeems Jacob in Mann's novel is the narrator's attitude of indulgent understanding. The patriarch's mythic thinking, which perceives the world in terms of fulfilled promises and eternal return, is made responsible for Jacob's tolerance for his sons' violent intent: "To put the question delicately, was he even secretly a little grateful to them for not making him privy to their plans [...]? Hadn't God, the King, called out to the sound of harps that he, Jacob, would take possession of the gates of his enemies?" (Mann 132).

Diamant denies Jacob even this partial shifting of responsibility, holding him fully accountable for his actions. The Jacob of *The Red Tent* is just a rotten human being rather than a mythic dreamer. The difference between Mann's and Diamant's presentation of Jacob's guilt is to a large extent determined by the question of perspective. According to Wayne Booth's classic contention, an external point of view applied to a character who does something wrong increases the character's negative presentation. This happens because no redeeming characteristics or considerations within the character's thought process are available to mitigate the reprehensible action (cf. Booth 245-49). Thus, given that the point of view in *The Red Tent* is Dinah's, her horror comes to the fore, turning Jacob into a despicable villain and nothing else. Mann, on the other hand, can adopt his indulgent position precisely because he does not bother with Dinah's point of view and her anguish, delving instead deep into the recesses of Jacob's mind.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Gérard Genette's definition of hypertextuality is as follows: "I use this term to indicate any connection between text B (which I will call hypertext) and a pre-existing text A (which I will of course call hypotext). Text B is grafted onto Text A in a way that goes beyond mere commentary [...]. Therefore, I will call hypertext any text derived from a prior text" (11–14; my translation—V.T.).

- 2 Joseph Fleishman adopts a different approach. He allows for the possibility of force used by Shechem against Dinah but goes on to suggest that kidnapping for the purpose of marriage may have been a legitimate practice in sedentary Canaanite society. The nomadic Hebrews would have seen this, however, as an affront (105). Fleishman bolsters this argument as follows: “Hamor, the father of Shechem, who negotiated with Dinah’s family in order that they agree to marry her to Shechem (v. 8-17), did not ask Jacob or Dinah’s brothers for forgiveness” (104). Thus, even though force would have been used, according to this interpretation, it was still not a crime—at least in the eyes of the Shechemites. In the case of Tamar and Amnon, there is no doubt that an outrage has taken place—from any point of view.
- 3 Joseph Fleishman even argues that the use of the term “young maiden” (“girl” in the New International Version of the Bible) in reference to Dinah is an indication of Shechem’s feelings of love (104).
- 4 In fact this word is used in the hypotext (Genesis 34:21) where Shechem explains the circumcision requirement to his people and argues that the Hebrews are safe—“shelemim.” (Peter Lockwood: 101)
- 5 It is possible to shift the focus of Jacob’s concern from himself to the entire clan, which in fact does come through in Genesis 34:30. However, even in that case, as Richard J. Clifford and Roland E. Murphy point out, “Jacob’s rebuke considers only the safety of the community” (35). The word “only” is important here because the patriarch is still unconcerned with the tragedy of Shechem or his daughter’s experience. So either way, whether it is egoism or ethnocentrism, Jacob’s position is morally weak. In fact he admits this indirectly by cursing Simeon and Levi for “killing men in their anger” in Genesis 49:6. The sons are no longer seen in the death-bed episode as those who endangered the safety of the clan at Shechem but as murderers. And if Jacob failed to point that out right after the massacre, some of the spilled blood soils his hands too.

between Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving reveals Pastor's sudden estrangement from the house of the Alvings after Mrs. Alving made an attempt to escape. The heroine herself understands the reason for this estrangement: "Oh, yes! [...] I was a runaway wife. One can never be too careful where such reckless women are concerned" (G 116). Mrs. Alving has realized that the only way to achieve something in society is to work in the shadow of her husband, who, despite his debauchery and drinking habits, still occupied a high social position: "you know, of course, how charming Alving could be. Nobody could believe anything but good about him. He was one of those people whose reputation is proof against anything they may do," Mrs. Alving tells Pastor Manders (G 117). To do otherwise, to protest openly, would have meant that Mrs. Alving would have had to follow the destiny of an outcast.

It is also important to note that in *Ghosts*, Ibsen further develops the theme of hereditary transmission of the predecessors' sins to subsequent generations, which he initiated in *A Doll's House*. Mrs. Alving attempts to keep her child away from his father so that he inherits neither his father's disease nor his dissolute behaviour or "irresponsible ways." She is even determined that her son inherits none of his father's money. Mrs. Alving calculates the exact sum of her husband's estate and puts it into an orphanage, intending to have Oswald benefit only from her account. As Templeton states, **393**

The money for the orphanage has been carefully determined; it is, [Mrs. Alving—SK] says, her "purchase price," the exact amount that made the lieutenant [Alving—SK] such a good catch. She has calculated the precise figure so that from now on she and Oswald will have only the money she herself has earned. And finally, she explains with immense naïveté, "My son will inherit everything from me." (154)

Therefore, Mrs. Alving consents to live in the shadow of her husband in order to earn money and provide for her son. Hence, her motivation for becoming a strong woman, theoretically capable of living on her own, is conditioned by "feminine" motives<sup>8</sup>, i.e., the maternal instinct to protect her child.

Thus, in *A Doll's House*, Ibsen depicts how a woman comes to realize that she might be an equal to a man, and in *Ghosts*, on the basis of Mrs. Alving's character, he demonstrates that a woman has the potential—no matter how vague and illusionary it might be—to lead and to occupy traditional masculine positions, albeit still motivated by "feminine" reasons and forced to do it in the shadow of a man.<sup>9</sup> Ibsen's *Ghosts* also was written as a response to the negative criticism and attacks on *A Doll's House* (Templeton 146). According to Templeton, Ibsen himself noted in a letter to the Swedish feminist Sophie Adlesparre that "*Ghosts* had to be written"; "After Nora, Mrs. Alving had to come" (146). Indeed, having made his heroine, Mrs. Alving, return home after an attempt to escape from her dissolute husband and choose to preserve the illusion of a traditional family on the surface for the sake of her son, Ibsen lifts the façade of patriarchal values, by revealing all the wrongs that it concealed, and, as Templeton notes, attacks "the sacrosanctity of the family" (159), which often victimized a woman and placed her on a lower, inferior position.

A woman's role in a family is greatly challenged in his later play, *Hedda Gabler*. According to Allphin, "[f]rom May to November of 1890, Ibsen had been intrigued with the problem of what a highly talented woman with no outlet for her creativity might do in a torpid marriage" (19). Hedda Gabler, the main character from the eponymous drama, occupies a prominent place among Ibsen's female protagonists. The heroine was indeed so strong that she was ahead of the time for which she was created. As Templeton states, "[w]hen *Hedda Gabler* appeared in the Oslo bookshops in December, 1890, it received the worst notices of any of Ibsen's plays since *Ghosts*, nine years earlier" (204). The reason for such disapproval, as the critic demonstrates, was the fact that the protagonist was perceived as simply unreal:

394 Reviewers in Scandinavia, England, and the United States accused Ibsen of wilful obscurity on the grounds that a Hedda Gabler could not exist [...] The play's early commentators [...] refused Hedda the status of woman because they found her unwomanly. Like the early critics of *A Doll House* who rejected the play on the grounds that no real woman would leave her children, *Hedda Gabler*'s detractors dismissed it as mere anecdote because its protagonist was an "inhuman woman—a savage [...] atrocious and intolerable." (Templeton 204-05)

From the beginning of the drama, Hedda is presented as a strong individual, who is the head of the family, besides the fact that she is also a dependent—she has no money and lives on her husband's aunt's annuity in a rented house. Ibsen switches the gender roles between Hedda and her husband, assigning his female protagonist characteristically "masculine" features, among which he places a particular emphasis on her affection for guns—a typical phallic symbol—which frightens her husband:

Hedda [*at the centre doorway, looking at [Tesman—SK] with concealed contempt*]. My pistols . . . Jörgen.  
 Tesman [*alarmed*]. Pistols!  
 Hedda [*with cold eyes*]. General Gabler's pistols.  
 [*She goes out to the left through the back room.*]  
 Tesman [*runs to the doorway and shouts after her*]. No, for the love of God, my darling  
 Hedda . . . don't touch those dangerous contraptions! For my sake, Hedda! Eh? (HG 198)

Hedda is also deprived of distinctive "feminine" emotions, such as love, and is presented as a rational, cold-blooded person. When the friend of the house, Judge Brack, asks her whether she is in love with her husband, Hedda replies: "Ugh . . . don't use that glutinous word!" (HG 202).

Hedda wants to take complete control over her own destiny. Fully understanding society's laws and principles, she realizes the need to marry in order to occupy a decent place in society. Thus, she married herself to Tesman, thinking that he might be the best match for her: "And then when he came along and was so pathetically eager to be allowed to support me. . . . I don't really see why I shouldn't let him?" (HG 203). However, as Templeton notes, "the bumbling man whose timidity she pitied

(7). Indeed, by attaching her drama to a well-known intertext, Ukrainka radically revisits one of the major myths of European masculine-centered culture and grants the centrality to a female character, Donna Anna.

There are two, quite contrasting, female figures in this drama: Dolores, a self-sacrificing and masochistic woman, and Donna Anna who is strong and domineering. Dolores is Anna's antipode. I contend that Ukrainka takes the feminist argument to a higher level by creating the masochistic character of Dolores to strengthen the "masculinity" of Anna. This duality resembles the female pair of Mrs. Elvsted-Hedda Gabler from Ibsen's play. But, while Ibsen's "masculine" woman is threatened by her female antipode—bourgeois, Christian, non-feminist Thea Elvsted—who at the end wins over Hedda's husband by agreeing to help him restore the late Lövborg's notes, Ukrainka's Dolores is not a real opponent for Anna; rather, she serves to underline Anna's superiority.

Anna attempts to take her destiny into her own hands. She comes across as a very proud, strong woman, intelligent and capable of manipulating society when the need arises—that is, when her husband is murdered by Don Juan. If we forget for a moment Anna's wavering between power and love at the beginning of the drama, she appears as a stereotypically "masculine" character, thirsting for power and high social position.<sup>21</sup> Even Don Juan notices this and states in one of their dialogues that she does not resemble a woman: "Anna!/ I did not know you until this moment. It's as if you were not a woman,/ and your charms are greater than a woman's!" (*SH*, VI: 161).<sup>22</sup>

At the beginning of *The Stone Host*, Donna Anna is set to marry—of her own free will (something Ukrainka stresses)—the Commander, a man who occupies a high position in society. Donna Anna thinks of her husband-to-be as "a stone," "a mountain" (*SH*, VI: 81, 111),<sup>23</sup> and as a symbol of indissoluble law and reason, which separates her from the world of passion and feelings. Ukrainka depicts the Commander in terms of "wisdom." He is very considerate of tradition and expects his future wife to be the same. In his own words, "It is not I who will tie her [hand in marriage—SK] but God and the law./ I will not be any freer than she is" (*SH*, VI: 87).<sup>24</sup> For him the act of taking the marriage vows, the "high oath" (*SH*, VI: 87),<sup>25</sup> is the utmost moment of truth, which cannot be broken by anyone. So solemn is the Commander's commitment to law and tradition that Donna Anna calls it "[...] terrifying" (*SH*, VI: 88),<sup>26</sup> and although her intonation betrays that she only feigns fear, this foreshadows upcoming events, where reason will be pitted against love.

Love is embodied in the character of Don Juan, who never obeys tradition and accepts everything with humour and irony. For Don Juan, the intimate and personal is higher than the collective, social law. For this reason, he chooses to become an outcast.

The fourth act presents Anna's doubts about whether she was right to choose the Commander as her husband. It seems to her that the constraints of society, which she accepted by marrying him, are proving to be too much for her. Anna wonders

whether she can bear such social restrictions and whether her desire to gain power, next to her husband, is worth pursuing after all. As Aheieva states,

Anna feels her soul growing hard because of the irreconcilable doctrines of traditional behaviour, [the requirements of—SK] court etiquette [and—SK] the aimless existence within the framework of habitual women's interests (clothes, jewellery, church preaching). [...] It seemed to her that she might reach the top rungs of society, forbidden to women, with the help of man-the-leader, man-the-“mountain.” However, for the young wife, the mountain castle turns out to be only a comfortable prison. (113)<sup>27</sup>

The rigidity of Madrid society irritates Anna; she misses the happiness and entertainment of Seville. In chasing power, Anna realizes that she has to trade in her previous carefree Seville life, and this leads to her depression. On seeing Anna's frustration, the Commander suspects that she might be regretting her choice: “You sigh? Well, you knew beforehand/ what duties awaited you here. You have chosen your destiny consciously [...]” (*SH*, VI: 127).<sup>28</sup> The Commander seems to enjoy the law itself, unlike Anna, whose highest gratification comes from the pursuit of power, and for the sake of which she agrees to submit to the law. The Commander understands Anna's needs and knows how to tempt her. He secretly reveals to her the prospect of occupying the throne one day, which raises Anna's spirit. In her words: “Forget my caprices—they have passed long ago” (*SH*, VI: 127).<sup>29</sup> The Commander then recognizes Anna's power and strength: “These are the words of a real Grandess!” (*SH*, VI: 127)<sup>30</sup>

Although the Commander positions Anna on the pinnacle of power next to him, she still knows that she is under his rule. However, when the Commander dies at the hands of Don Juan, Anna has the opportunity, to quote Aheieva again, to “[...] fulfill her desire of occupying the highest societal ranks, of conquering the highest castle,” but “not [as—SK] an imprisoned princess [...] but [as—SK] a sovereign lady, a master of the situation” (119).<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Anna realizes that a woman cannot achieve anything on her own in this society—she needs masculine support. As Aheieva states, “[w]ithout the support of [...] a man the patriarchal woman cannot rise to the heights” (119).<sup>32</sup> Therefore, Anna decides to involve Don Juan, luring him to serve her. Her desire to manipulate Don Juan reminds us of Hedda Gabler's attempt to control Lövborg. Anna does so by paraphrasing Don Juan's own romantic words: “Would the bondage/ of such rigid etiquette/ ever be terrifying for me, if I knew that inside my stronghold/ my beloved awaits me?” (*SH*, VI: 144).<sup>33</sup> Later Anna offers Don Juan the Commander's position and proposes marriage (thereby acting out a typically masculine role): “Why would not you also live here, on the pinnacle?” (*SH*, VI: 156),<sup>34</sup> “Would it not be better if we combined our strength to conquer that mountain firmly” (*SH*, VI: 157).<sup>35</sup> While Hedda's attempt fails, Anna is successful in her control over Don Juan.

Anna has assimilated into society so thoroughly and mastered the lessons of her late husband so well that she herself has become the very society she disdains. By absorbing so much of the Commander's doctrine, she has transformed herself into

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## ENDNOTES

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In Zhuravs'ka's opinion, the defeat of the main female protagonist, Donna Anna, in *The Stone Host* symbolizes Ukrainka's condemnation of the image of the Nietzschean woman, propagated in the number of works of the European authors, among which the scholar names Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*.

  - 2 All translations are mine. The original quotes, which are transliterated according to the Library of Congress System (<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~tarn/courses/translit-table.html>), will be provided in the footnotes. "Zhoden z retsenzentiiv ne sprobuvav postavyty «Blakytynu troiandu» v kontekst feministychnykh idei. Navit' ibseniv's'ki vplyvy krytyky obmezhuvaly «Pryvydamy» [u danomu vypadku Aheieva maie na uvazi temu spadkovosti—SK], khocha koly idet'sia pro inversiiu genderovykh rolii, to ne zhadaty «Lial'kovyi dim» prosto nemozhlyvo."
  - 3 The topic of intertextuality is fairly broad. Here are some of the more interesting sources: Graham Allen, *Intertextuality. The New Critical Idiom* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Monika Kaup, *Mad Intertextuality: Madness in Twentieth-Century Women's Writing*. Horizonte, Band 12 (Trier: WVT, 1993).
  - 4 Lesia Ukrainka, "Novye perspektivy i starye teni ('Novaia zhenshchina' zapadnoevropeiskoi bel-letristiki)" [New Perspectives and Old Shadows ('New Woman' of West European Fiction)] (1900), "Michael' Kramer: Posledniaia drama Gerharta Hauptmanna" [*Michael Kramer: The Last Drama of Gerhart Hauptmann*] (1901) and "Evropeis'ka sotsial'na drama v kintsi XIX st." [European Social Drama at the End of the 19th century] (1901). Reprinted in Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomakh. Tom 8: Literaturno-krytychni ta publitsystychni statti* [Collection of Works in Twelve Volumes. Volume 8: Critical and Publicistic Articles].
  - 5 Published in Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomakh. Tom 11: Lysty (1898-1902)* [Volume 11: Letters (1898-1902)]: "[...] prochytala [...] skil'ky dram Ibsena" [...] read few dramas by Ibsen]; "Anichkov chytav lektsiuu publichnu pro Ibsena i tezh nevdalo" [Anichkov gave a public lecture on Ibsen, and it was also unsuccessful]; "Bachyla ia nedavno Ibsenovu «Noru» tut na stseni" [I recently watched Ibsen's *Nora* on stage here]; "[...] a monograficheski tol'ko i stoit pisat', chto o takikh veshchakh, kak, napr[imer], drama Ibsena" [...] in terms of monograph, one should write only about such things as, for instance, Ibsen's drama].