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Patriarchy in Post-1989 Poland and Tokarczuk's Dom Dzienny, Dom Nocny (The Day House, the Night House)

Justyna Sempruch
Queen's University

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Abstract: In her paper "Patriarchy in Post-1989 Poland and Tokarczuk's *Dom Dzienny, Dom Nocny* (The Day House, the Night House)" Justyna Sempruch analyzes Tokarczuk's 1998 narrative in the context of the post-communist revival of patriarchy in Poland as well as the parallel Western feminist impact on women's writing in Poland. These two distinct socio-cultural developments, as reflected in Tokarczuk's novel, expand the concept of a subversive household into a transnational dis/order that abolishes borders between domestic (national) and foreign structures: an increasing masculinization of the power structures (political arena and "scientific" practices) impacts the management of the social and the most private aspects of women's lives in post-1989 Poland while the growing popularity of "intellectual" feminism, borrowed from U.S. and French second-wave feminist positions, encourages a local "digging into" a collective "feminist" past. Tokarczuk's narrative belongs to a category which draws on Irigaray's theories and displays preoccupations with the failure of the sexual revolution. Sempruch argues that Tokarczuk's narrative reflects on the Western feminist formulations of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis as a discourse normalising patriarchy, as well as on re-evaluations of hysteria as the unheard voice of the woman whose language is reduced to psychosomatic symptoms.

Justyna SEMPRUCH

Patriarchy in Post-1989 Poland and Tokarczuk's *Dom dzienny, dom nocny* (The Day House, the Night House)

In this paper I analyze Olga Tokarczuk's 1998 narrative *Dom dzienny, dom nocny* (The Day House, the Night House) in the context of post-communist revival of patriarchy in Poland, as well as with regard to the parallel and ongoing Western feminist impacts on women's writing in the country. These two distinct socio-cultural developments, as reflected in Tokarczuk's novel, expand the concept of a subversive household into a transnational dis/order that abolishes borders between domestic (national) and foreign structures. On the one hand, an increasing masculinization of power structures (e.g., the political sphere and "scientific" practices) impacts the management of the social and the most private aspects of women's lives in post-1989 Poland with the consequence of such matters as abortion is illegal and contraception and divorce are discouraged. There is a return to social policies based on marriage and the family as primary paradigms of women's identities. On the other hand, the growing popularity of "intellectual" feminism, borrowed from the U.S. and French second-wave feminist positions encourages a local "digging into" a collective "feminist" past. Tokarczuk's narrative belongs to a category which draws on Luce Irigaray's theories and displays preoccupations with the failure of the sexual revolution and the theorizing of women's difference as a source of cultural possibility rather than a source of oppression. Equally, this narrative reflects on the Western feminist formulations of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis as a discourse normalizing patriarchy, as well as on re-evaluations of "hysteria" as the unheard voice of the woman whose language is reduced to psychosomatic symptoms.

According to Kazimiera Szczuka, Tokarczuk represents "the most important contemporary myth-writer, searching for literary images of religious, unconscious and archetypal structures in spaces of 'minor' and borderline plots" (20; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine). In analyzing various poststructural feminist developments, Szczuka places Tokarczuk among authors exploring transgression and metamorphic potential of the "feminine" subject, such as Emma Tennant, Jeanette Winterson, and Angela Carter. Negotiating gender, nationality, and religion, Tokarczuk's text demonstrates the formations of the new positive "feminist subject" that Rosie Braidotti has strived to mark with recognition: the subject of becoming (*Metamorphoses* 53). In particular, the notion of foreignness, evoked in Tokarczuk's text rejects a contingency of disorder and confusion, implying a need for a new order of signification, a potential that permeates the structures of the national home. I start with Marta, Tokarczuk's figure of the crone, whose presence interconnects seemingly textual fragments of the otherwise disjoint and detached narrative structure. Marta, a "weird" woman living in a cottage by herself, connects stories, tales, and legends simply by blurring a boundary line between what is usual and feasible and what is not. According to the narrator (who is also Marta's closest neighbour), Marta has "nothing to say about herself," and acts "strangely" and "unpredictably," out of context: "As if she had no history. She only liked to talk about other people … also about those who probably did not exist at all -- later I found some proofs that Marta liked to make things up," and fabricates places in which she puts people, like plants (*Dom dzienny* 10). In winter, Marta's cottage is dark, moist and cold, while its mysteriously "fragile" inhabitant (her hair is "all silver," her skin is "dry and wrinkled," she is missing some teeth) simply disappears "like everything else here" (9).

In summertime Marta visits the narrator frequently but seems to be distant, neither listening nor worrying about the consequences of her own talking. She is indifferent, even somehow cruel, for instance when she feeds her cocks, and then kills and devours them all over two autumn days (12). In her extravagant habits, Marta confuses the binaries of day and night, warmth and coldness, life and death. In integrating polarities, she undermines the structure of traditional concepts of the linear time, amount, or degree that is "proper" and "well balanced" (the day is for work, the night is for rest, hens

are kept for eggs, etc.), and develops her own sovereign morphology within this traditional structure. In a metaphorical extension of night into winter, Marta "sleeps" through the winter and like everything else about her, her hibernation is extreme, death-like, crossing the border into the forbidden and the unthinkable. Her resting body lies in the dark cellar, carefully stored in the midst of apples and potatoes, suspended in time and language. Half animal, half human, Marta "wakes up around March" and returns gradually from her womb-like winter retreat to her "day house" routines. By advocating this bodily transcendence, Tokarczuk's narrative moves towards Irigaray's insistence to disengage the feminine and, in particular the maternal from the one-dimensional picture of the phallogocentric objectification (Irigaray, "The Bodily Encounter" 34). Marta -- in a link to Braidotti's postulate of "incorporeal materiality" that defines the body "not only as material, but also as a threshold to a generalized notion of female being, a new feminist humanity" (*Metamorphoses* 58) -- is rendered explicitly transcendental. To put it differently, Marta implies the re-thinking of space, time, nature, materiality, and symbiosis. The circulating, flowing, and transgressive nature of eroticism that codes Braidotti's cultural "nomadism" as "feminine" meets in Marta's particular morphology of desire with Kristeva's "feminine sacred" and Irigaray's "feminine divine." Marta's peculiar way of coping with the seasons undermines the stability of her household as well as her (human) body, which would "normally" need to be taken care of, whatever the season: dismantling the permanence and continuity of a "kept" household, Marta reveals some metamorphic and incomprehensible capacities of adjustment to the conditions and manifestations of the socio-cultural causalities.

With all the physical transmutability of her body, her origin and "substance" we could trace Marta back to the "ghost" of the pre-Oedipal mother, a phantom of the "speaking subject" as emerging from culturally forbidden spaces. To elucidate this, I turn to Madelon Sprengnether's notion of the pre-Oedipal mother and her "effect of the spectral" in order to elucidate Marta's articulation of her cultural validity as related both to a "speculation" ("spectacle," "suspicion") and "appearance" in the face of the semiotic that does not speak or read "the symbolic." In a way, Marta's language, as well as her circular biography, can be associated with a "feminine plotting" defined by Szczuka in the Polish cultural context as the "weaving, intriguing, or gossiping" of an uneducated, "simple" woman, very often a housewife (69-70). In spreading gossip about other people, Marta is spreading silence about herself. "After all, to plait, or to weave," in Szczuka's association with feminine modes of speech, "indicate time spent in an uncreative manner", time that elapses unproductively. This type of "plotting" is often linked with incomprehensible or incomplete utterances, such as babbling, jabbering, talking nonsense, characteristic of marginalized but culturally present linguistic spaces: baby talk, or language appropriate to a mentally disordered, delirious or sclerotic person (Szczuka 70). Echoing Felman's and Irigaray's deconstructions of the "feminine" manifestation of symbolic language, Szczuka refers to aphorisms and generally adopted axioms in Polish such as women's ability to "grind" or to "mince" with their enormous tongues, or to "wag" their tongues and gossip. With Marta, however, these feminine manifestations are reversed or suspended. Instead of plotting, Marta is un-plotting her story. Thus, rather than negating herself as the subject, as Szczuka has envisioned the gossiping woman, I see Marta as continuously "becoming" thus manifesting her presence against time as a category of passing and creating new orders of signification. In Tokarczuk's text, the "feminine plotting" is linked with women's hair, since Marta, earlier a wig-maker, continues to preserve some of her tresses and occasionally wears them when she visits the narrator: "Whenever I asked her to tell me something about herself … she changed the subject, turned her head towards the window, or simply continued to cut the cabbage or plait her own or not-her-own hair" (*Dom dzienny* 10).

In occupying this multiple subjectivity, Marta -- the incongruent and un/plotting "subject" -- evokes the borderlands as interlaced with dialogical sites of language: where "subjects are constituted in language, but that language is also the site of their destabilization" (Butler, "Discussion of Stanley Aronowitz" 135). Marta's (and the narrator's) village represents a crossroads inscribed into constant transformations of culture, and therefore, destabilization of time. The settlement is placed in-between

geographically "authentic" and imaginary spaces: in the vicinity of Wambierzowice and Nowa Ruda, a nationally ambivalent territory (in Poland today), adjacent to the German and Czech borders, thus fusing culturally different historical traces. This trans/national dynamics of location reconstitutes tradition as a fluid continuous concept-process, projecting the village as a space of Marta's etiology, and reinforcing the narrator's addiction to the archaic mother. Collecting the different stories of people inhabiting this equivocal territory, the narrator is a "dispersed" figure, a cultural negotiator maintaining her integrity by developing a metamorphic tolerance for contradictions. In fantasizing about Marta, the narrator evokes the "porousness" of her own homeland, and attempts to keep up with its configurations and changes that are simultaneously acknowledged and symptomatic of memory loss. In suggesting different types of Marta's death and subsequently of her various resurrections, the narrator evokes repeatedly the reversibility of the journey along the umbilical cord. Marta, in fact, can be seen as a negotiator between the phallic and the *omphalic*, mediating (or "denaveling," to use Bronfen's term), between the 'symbolic castration' that denies her the ability or right to speak the symbolic language and the "real incision" that draws/lures her back to semiotic pleasures. In depicting Marta's negotiation "with her entire past and present" (*Dom dzienny* 10), Tokarczuk herself becomes a gossip-writer, closely resembling an inventive but ambiguous fortune-teller whose predictions develop into the intrinsic model of her narrative, a metaphoric picture of her own methodology. Configuring thus marginal, apparently trivial and inconsequential fables and legends, the narrator manages in the end to threaten the dominant cultural discourse by imposing a new one. As a multiple speaking/becoming subject, Marta represents a crossroads of identifications that, according to Butler, are carried precisely and inevitably by language.

Most significantly for my further reading, it is Marta who draws the narrator's attention to a peculiar statuette in a wayside shrine, and who "comes up" with the story of the medieval, sacred/heretic and transcultural figure of St. Vigilance. A popular saint venerated by people on both sides of the Polish-German border, St. Vigilance is also known as Wilgefortis [Wilga], Święta Troska, or Kummernis von Schonau. As a fictitious narrative figure, Wilga represents a peculiar fantasy of gender blurring all culturally sanctioned boundaries at once: nation, religion, body, as well as the illimitable process of signification itself. What operates at the level of this illimitable fantasy refuses to dissociate from the ways in which material and metamorphic processes of life intermingle: "On the cross was a woman, a girl, in such a tight dress that her breasts under the paint cover appeared naked … There was a small shoe sticking out under the dress; the other foot was bare, and this is when I realized that a similar statuette was in the wayside shrine on the road that led to Agnieszka. That one had a beard though, that's why I always thought that it was Christ in an exceptionally long robe. The inscription underneath read: 'Sanc. Wilgefortis. Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat,' and Marta said that it was St. Vigilance" (*Dom dzienny* 53).

Marta's life story unfolds via yet another account: written by Paschalis (a gender-confused monk of German origin) "under the patronage of the Holy Ghost and the superior of the Benedictine Cloister" (54). The legend can be read both as a manifestation of a "sacred transvestism" (see Clément and Kristeva 31) and of the bodily heresy that abandons gender for an experience of the sacred outside of religious structure. As a site of cultural transgression, Wilga-Kummernis-St.Vigilance performs at once a gender spectacle and a transmutation of significance, deviating from singular patterns of control and order. Born as a daughter, Wilga was already "born somehow imperfect" in the eyes of her father, a knight and a devoted warrior (54). Her "feminine" body, as if trying to compensate for this "inaccuracy," develops, under the care of Wilga's beloved stepmother into a medieval ideal of femininity: "Those who saw her admired the miracle of creation in silence" (55). The continuous absence of her father (frequently participating in the crusades) and the unexpected loss of her stepmother (dying of a haemorrhage) contribute to a gradual decline of Wilga's home in Schonau. Shortly after his second wife's death, the father gives all his other daughters away in marriage, but Wilga, the youngest, is temporarily sent to a convent. The nuns, on Paschalis's account, "accepted the girl with joy, and it

soon became apparent that her physical beauty equalled her spiritual beauty, and was even surpassed by it … and even a dark chamber appeared full of light, and her speech was exceptionally wise for her age, and her judging was mature. Her slim body discharged a balsamic scent, and roses were found in her bed, although it was winter. Once placed in front of a mirror, a face image of the Son of God appeared on its surface and remained there until the next day" (57). Wilga enjoys her life in the Convent, a refuge eradicating her unwanted sex. The Judeo-Christian concepts of the virgin and the mother are installed in the narrative as suspended between the virginal body and its self-destruction (transformation) in pregnancy. Legalized sets of rules govern this historical feminine body: if a virgin, a woman must remain so until she marries, otherwise, she is a harlot. A wife-mother she must obey her husband and remain faithful; if she commits adultery she could be penalized by death; if she chooses to retain her virginity, her only refuge is to become a nun and she must experience the vocation as becoming the bride/servant of the great Father. Either way, she remains imprisoned in the polluted body of Eve.

Identifying subconsciously with a creature "beyond sex," Wilga attempts to resolve the dilemma of a Christian woman caught in the dichotomy of Eve-versus-Mary. This dichotomy is strongly projected in the Polish tradition of feminine patriotism which draws on the model of Maryja (Mary) whose miracles save fortresses and convents surrounded by enemies, such as the Convent of Częstochowa under the patronage of the Black Madonna. Wilga identifies with the Virgin, "who triumphs where the first Eve failed, who refuses where the first Eve was tempted" (Warner 245). While participating in her "novitiate" -- a "preparation time for giving oneself to the Master" (*Dom dzienny* 57) -- she imagines to be the bride of the divine Son, "void of" her physical body and joined with him in "the moment of ecstatic union" (Warner 129). But the father was relentless and did not want to hear about giving his daughter away to the nuns for good. There, he believed, she would have become something separate and un-utilized. In giving her away in marriage to Wolfram von Pannewicz, he would almost give her to himself, in other words, to the male kind that he represented through God, so as to rule and watch over the creatures of God. Wilga's persistent refusal to leave the convent transforms her virginity into a rebellion that nullifies the Law of the Father, as well as (his) God, as "an effective instrument of feminine subjection" (Warner 49). In attempting to resolve her particular entrapment, Wilga, demonstrates that what is at stake is her relationship with the law. Like Cixous's model of Eve, Wilga "is not afraid of the inside, neither her own, nor that of the other" (Cixous, "Extreme Fidelity" 134). Her relationship to the law mirrors in fact "her relationship to the inside, to penetration, to touching the inside" (*Dom dzienny* 115).

Wilga's pregnant "inside" is linked to her "feminine" body imprisoned within the *parthenos*, a Christian shield against physiological and psychological contamination that now turns into a weapon against the Father's will. Virginity thus, "one of the most powerful imaginary constructs known in the history of civilizations" (Kristeva 163), becomes a cynical armor protecting her autonomy, her right to choose between the two sanctified modes of marriage: "So the father told her: 'With your body you belong to the earth, and there is no other master than me. To that his daughter replied: I have a different Father in heaven and He is preparing a different bridegroom for me. These words made the baron angry and he said: I am the master of your life, He is the Master of your death (*Dom dzienny* 58). Given no choice, Wilga escapes to the woods and abandoning both the secular and the religious order lives in a cave as a hermit, a version of Mary Magdalene, the embodiment of Christian repentance. There, she spends her days in meditation and fasting. Like St. Catherine in Kristeva's commentary, Wilga "undoubtedly draws great satisfaction from that mind game, by mortifying herself. But the same game builds up her moral being … and her capacity to overcome every privation, every ordeal, beginning with disgust -- the oral ordeal. Catherine refuses to get married, devotes herself to Jesus, and stops eating. The fast begins at age sixteen -- she allows herself only bread, raw vegetables, and water" (Clément and Kristeva 118).

As villagers discover Wilga's ability to "work miracles" (*Dom dzienny* 59), she becomes popular as a powerful and beneficent ascetic. Known as "Kummernis," (the German *Kummer* means grief, sorrow, and mourning) she "heals the maladies of the soul and sufferings coming from the emptiness of the heart" (60) and is frequently called "to those who were dying to guide their souls through the labyrinths of death" (61). The word of her fame spreads and, as Paschalis's account continues, Kummernis is eventually kidnapped by her father and imprisoned (63). Forced to marry Wolfram, she seeks refuge in meditation, concentrating on the figure of Christ, the redeemer. Paschalis's story reaches its climax when Wilga's father opens the door of her cell to finally make his daughter fulfil her earthy duties:

> Kummernis stood in a windowless chamber, but it was not the woman whom everybody knew. Her face was covered with a silky beard; her loose hair was falling down her arms. Two naked girlish breasts stuck out of her torn low-necked dress. Her dark but soft eyes followed the inquisitive faces and stopped at the baron. The maidens began to make the sign of the cross and knelt down one after the other. Kummernis, or whoever she was, raised her hands, as if she wanted to clasp all of them to her breast. She said quietly: My Master saved me from myself and bestowed his beard upon me. The same evening the baron ordered the chamber to be walled up with the monster in it. (*Dom dzienny* 65)

Following this passage, Tokarczuk makes us believe that to achieve her goal, Wilga has to outwit the Law of the Father; to sacrifice her feminine body, mark it with some negation of the sanctified "feminine," commit a cultural slip towards sacrilege, heterodoxy, deviation. Her metamorphosis into a hybrid figure, a gender-crosser, connects her with the mystic tradition of "moving from one sex to the other" mentioned by Clément and Kristeva as "common currency in the history of mysticism" (31). The oddness of Wilga's experience lies, however, in the fact that "the mystic does not stop at that difference: he passes beyond … And, although one has the right to scream, to stammer, or to sing, it is forbidden to articulate. To fix the sacred outside the instant is sacrilege" (Clément and Kristeva 31). In fixing the sacred outside the instant, Kummernis, like Consolata in Tony Morrison's story, commits a heresy, reaches the limits of logic that connects the saint with the heretic, the Virgin with the witch. In imposing a new order, she passes to a logic of another comprehension: that the subject is indeed becoming, remaining forever imperfect, conferring flexibility and energy to communicates the limits. Wilga incorporates also Kristeva's sacredness as bound to sacrifice: "to succumb to duty, to immolate oneself for a tyrannical ideal, with all the jouissances that mortification procures, but all the uneasiness as well, even unto death" (Clément and Kristeva 120). Moreover, in her commentary on Saint Teresa of Avila, Clément and Kristeva refer to the sacred as involving "a suggestion of disbelief" (37), as well as a familiarity with "the 'other' logic." Like Teresa's, Kummernis's "intense and evasive body" (above all, her face covered with the miraculous beard that continues to grow) turns her "religious experience" into "a confrontation with abjection" (Clément and Kristeva 37). Her experience with "the sacred" is different from paternal religion, since it takes place in a dimension that eclipses linear modes of spacing. The sacred "passes in a boundlessness without rule or reservation, which is the trait of the divine, while the religious installs a marked access road, with meditations provided for the difficult cases"; the sacred "erupts in its time, or rather in its instant, since its nature is to turn the order upside down" (Clément and Kristeva 30).

Although sentenced to death, Kummernis continues to "rewrite" the female model of Eve by her distorted ("upside down") femininity. Shortly before her execution, Kummernis, as a fantasy of gender -- a creature that is part Jesus, part Eve, and part Mary -- re-enacts two scenes of temptation simultaneously, that of Eve in Eden, and of Jesus in the desert. In resisting the seductive promises of the devil who appears in her cell, she resists the paternal speech in the Name of her/the Father: "'You could have loved and been loved,' [the devil] said. 'I know,' she replied. 'You could have carried a child in your womb, you could have heard it from within, and then you could have given it to the world,' he said. 'Betrayed it to the world,' she said. 'You could have bathed, fed and caressed it. You could have watched it grow; its soul and body becoming so much like yours. You could have given it

to your God'" (*Dom dzienny* 66). Her dialogue with the devil permits a heretic resistance and allows Kummernis to continue becoming; to "resist," as Clément and Kristeva believe "would be the word befitting the sacred" (53). As an extension of the father, the devil represents the symbolic order of the 'community' that, like the Cloister, is a site of support and oppression. The devil explains: "Your stubbornness here, in solitude, with a face of a stranger instead of your beautiful appearance, makes no sense. You are not Him. He poked fun at you and now he does not care. He forgot about you, went to create worlds … left you to face the stupid folk who want you to be sanctified or burnt at the stake just the same" (*Dom dzienny* 66). Kummernis's resistance against this community is a revolt that blurs the demands of secular and religious institutions of the social order. Her gender crossing, in this religious context, suggests more than suspension of her sex: in involving the figure of Christ as actively participating in Kummernis's transition, and therefore sabotaging the patriarchal order, Tokarczuk destabilizes the religious system of signification as a constant and monologic structure. As a border-crosser, Kummernis devalues symmetricity of signification, fluctuating and altogether weakened by the charisma of her virginal/maternal body. The archaic authority of the "mother," several times signaled by the "presence" of Kummernis's open breasts, is ultimate in the scene with the devil: "'Look at me,' said the devil. She clasped him harder to her breast … caressed gently his smooth skin. Then, she took out her breast and positioned the devil to suck it. The devil struggled out of her embrace and disappeared immediately" (*Dom dzienny* 66).

In her attempt to nurse the devil, Kummernis transfers Madonna's milk into a fluid charged with semiotic power, neither directed against nor supporting the Father, but an all-encompassing power of life. This particular fluid conceptually resembles Irigaray's fluid "which is not a solid ground/earth or mirror for the subject" but "is mobile," arousing phallocentric fear (Whitford 28). Like Kristeva's Virgin, Kummernis "obstructs the desire for murder or devoration by means of a strong oral cathexis (the breast), valorization of pain (the sob) and incitement to replace the sexed body with the ear of understanding" (181). Designating maternal power as "the spasm at the slipping away of eroticism" translated into tears, Kristeva suggests that we "should not conceal what milk and tears have in common: they are the metaphors of non-speech" (174). The breast has indeed the final word in Kummernis's conversation with the devil, who takes flight from it as if from holy water. It returns and consolidates the powers of the material subject of becoming, its undeniable "corporeality" that brings us back and communicates "sexual difference." In the process of subject formation, Kummernis dis/connects with various figures, with death and life, with the demonic sexual rites of witches and the excessive spiritualization of her body. Which one perseveres is to be verified by her father who carries out her crucifixion: "If God is in you, you should die like God" (*Dom dzienny* 68). Kummernis's violent death resembles again the death of Jesus and makes her a beloved local saint. The eccentricity of the female martyr, deriving from "sexual difference," speaks, however, against her official sanctification.

Paschalis, who devoted years to composing Kummernis's biography, is also an interesting figure of in-between gender. With a beautiful face of a girl, "he was born [like Wilga] somehow imperfect, because as long as he remembered, he did not feel well within himself, as if he made a mistake at birth and picked the wrong body, the wrong place and time" (*Dom dzienny* 74). Paschalis's dilemma is his gender perplexity, which he attempts to resolve by inhabiting the "pleasant spaces" of the same female Convent in which Wilga once lived. The biography, at first his only pretext to stay among women (who make him feel like one), becomes gradually the object of his intense although "vague" desires. Kummernis herself, although long dead and physically distant, becomes his messenger of an unexplored eroticism, a new order of signification. Later, on his journey to plead for Kummernis's sanctity, he meets a woman prostitute who puts a dress on him. The process of new subject formation requires thus a preemption of his sexuality, a prohibition of cross-dressing which eroticizes the law (see Butler 245). In linking the prohibited desire to the law, Paschalis follows Kummernis: as gender-crossers, both have realized that the act of crossing "works through compelling eroticization" and through "making the law and its prohibitions into the final object of desire" (Butler 245). Kummernis with her

bare breasts and beard and Paschalis in a dress and stockings borrowed from a prostitute, are eroticized but therefore also alienated and rejected. Paschalis is told eventually by the bishop that his account "is not finished"; like his sexuality, it is unclear and heretical.

Paschalis's identity as "being in drag" is distinguished thus by a movement towards the other (the "tasteless oddity"), a practice of reversal in which identity and its supposed unity is precisely evaded and abandoned. Drag is the fantasy in which gender is doubled up and exaggerated, in which identity is fissured. By that token, drag is also an ethical representation of gender as a fantasy. Paschalis not only fails to persuade the bishop that the thoughts and conduct of Kummernis were in conformity with Catholic doctrine, but, apparently, he allows himself to be subjugated by a heretic woman. This woman, in the multicultural context of Marta's story, resembles Gloria Anzaldúa's figure of *la mestiza* who continually walks out of one culture (gender, nationality) into another, because paradoxically she is "in all cultures at the same time" (Anzaldúa 77). As a type of *mestiza*, conscious of crossing borders, Kummernis represents an un/belonging woman, both the heretic and the sacred, whose cultural vulnerability begins with gender (trouble), with the "porousness" of her body and its disruptive excess of femininity. Tokarczuk's Kummernis translates this abject excess into a sacred disorder that shatters the dominant culture through transgression. In exposing the artificiality of "fixed" identity, she negotiates the stigma of "feminine imperfection" that is no longer an essence "lying unchanged outside history and culture" (Hall 213). In this cultural negotiation, the artificially projected linearity of the umbilical cord has been effectively diffused and its diffusion unfixes the origin to which no absolute, final or nostalgic returns are possible.

Note: The above paper is an excerpt from Justyna Sempruch, *Fantasies of Gender and the Witch in Feminist Theory and Literature*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press <http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/comparativeculturalstudies.html>, 2008.

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Author's profile: Justyna Sempruch teaches women's studies at Queen's University. She has published numerous articles on philosophical and socio-political intersections of gender, nationality, and ethnicity, as well as on the literature of cultural diaspora and nomadism and her book, *Fantasies of Gender and the Witch in Feminist Theory and*

Literature is published by Purdue University Press (2008). In her current research, Sempruch is interested in inter-disciplinary approaches focusing on global and comparative cultural aspects of/in feminist studies.