ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS
CULTURAL STUDIES MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

THE ANALYSIS OF MARGUERITE DURAS'S *THE MALADY OF DEATH*: SEXUAL DIFFERENCE AND HOMONEGATIVE FANTASIES

Karel BENSUSAN
114611014

Doç. Dr. Çiğdem YAZICI

İSTANBUL
2021

The Analysis of Marguerite Duras's The Malady of Death:
Sexual Difference and Homonegative Fantasies

Marguerite Duras'ın Ölüm Hastalığı Eserinin Analizi:
Cinsiyet Farklılığı ve Homonegatif Fantaziler

Karel Bensusan

114611014

Tez Danışmanı : Doç. Dr. Çiğdem Yazıcı (İmza) .....
Üsküdar Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyeleri: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Trevor Hope (İmza) .....
Yaşar Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyesi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Zeynep Talay Turner (İmza) .....
İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 29/01/2021
Toplam Sayfa Sayısı: 141

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

1) Marguerite Duras
2) Ölüm Hastalığı
3) Cinsiyet Farklılığı
4) Erkek eşcinselliği
5) Homonegativite

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

1) Marguerite Duras
2) The Malady of Death
3) Sexual Difference
4) Male homosexuality
5) Homonegativity

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a thesis may demand more than one expects. A full determination to go to the distance, being ready to learn by trial and error, reading the same things multiple times all over again and during long hours of isolation.

Thanks to the supports and encouragements of my advisor Çiğdem Yazıcı, this long road has been a pleasant one. I also send my regards to Zeynep Talay Turner and Trevor Hope for accepting my invitation to be part of the jury committee. Our research assistant Dilay Muran's help during the course was also very valuable.

I am very grateful for my lovely mother, father, and sister who have shown all the love and patience to keep my motivation up in any obstacles I have faced during the path. I am also very grateful to Melda Taşkın, for her caring and sharing.

It could have been much harder if I could not share this road with beautiful friends, Kate, Nüket, Samet S., Şeyin Farkında, Aylin, Görkem Waits, Tim Waits, Yakup, Kerem, Alaz, Ezgi, Mine, Müge, Gökçe Gün, Hazal, Asena, Kıvanç, Fatma, Çağla, Nora Luca, Selin, Merve A., Doğancan, Levent, Resul, and the Manifesto crew.

My partner Bengi's emotional and intellectual supports have meant so much value. When I got off course, she was always there to get me back in the line and always kept herself open to discuss about the important points in my thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS……. iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS……...…….....iv

ABSTRACT.....vi

ÖZET.....vii

INTRODUCTION.....1

Marguerite Duras: A Brief Introduction to Her Life and Literary Works… 4

My Personal Background of the Study.....9

Objectives of the Study.....14

Methodology.....18

CHAPTER 1: Literature Review.....22

1.1. An Overview of the Concepts of Homophobia, Homonegativity, Modern Homonegativity, Heterosexism, Heteronormativity, Compulsory Heterosexuality, Homosociality, and Male Homosocial Desire.....23

1.2. Relevant Receptions of *The Malady of Death*.....31

1.3. Luce Irigaray's Feminism of Sexual Difference..... 42

CHAPTER 2: The Erasure of the Feminine Difference and the Mirror.56

2.1. The Contract and His Malady of Death.....61

2.2. Silence: Where Women Exist.....73

2.3. Sleep: The Protective Shield.....77

2.4. Catastrophic Desire.....82

2.5. The Mirror.....85

CHAPTER 3: Homonegative Fantasies of *The Malady of Death*: Male Homosexuality As the Flaw of Otherness and The Representative of Male Homosociality.....89

CONCLUSION.....121

REFERENCES.....129

ABSTRACT

The literary works of Marguerite Duras, a prominent writer of French literature in the 20th century, still maintain the interest they received during her lifetime. Her piece *The Malady of Death* has been one of her most studied works, subject to analyses from differing perspectives. My research question is the analysis of how the concept of sexual difference, employed as a critique of patriarchy, observed within the text is interrelated with the homonegative discourses reproduced by the text. First, I investigate the use of the idea of sexual difference within the text, by discussing it mainly with Irigaray's theory. Besides, I also engage with major themes appearing in the book, such as silence, sleep, love, and death. Second, I analyze the text's homonegative discourses by putting it in dialogue with Duras's other books and interviews, theoretical and ethical claims of sexual difference feminism, especially Irigaray's theory, and the homonegative discourses produced within France at the time. For grasping the link between sexual difference and homonegativity, I trace the rhetoric of the flaw of otherness and Duras's conflation of the patriarch with the homosexual at textual, contextual, and discursive levels.

Keywords: Marguerite Duras, *The Malady of Death*, sexual difference, male homosexuality, homonegativity

ÖZET

Fransız edebiyatının yirminci yüzyılda öne çıkan yazarlarından Marguerite Duras'ın edebi eserlerinin Duras'ın yaşamı boyunca gördükleri ilgi hala sürmektedir. Duras'ın *Ölüm Hastalığı* (*The Malady of Death*) adlı kitabı, farklı perspektiflerden analiz edilerek en çok çalışılan eserlerinden biri olmuştur. Araştırma sorum, metinde gözlemlenen, ataerkillik eleştirisi olarak kullanılan cinsiyet farklılığı kavramının, metnin yeniden ürettiği homonegatif söylemlerle hangi yollarla ilişkili olduğunun analiz edilmesine yöneliktir. İlk olarak, cinsiyet farklılığı düşüncesinin metindeki kullanım biçimini, ağırlıklı olarak Irigaray'ın teorisiyle tartışarak ve ayrıca kitapta yer alan sessizlik, uyku, aşk ve ölüm gibi ana temalarla da ilişkilendirerek inceliyorum. İkinci olarak, metnin homonegatif söylemlerini, Duras'ın diğer kitapları ve röportajlarıyla, Irigaray'ın teorisi başta olmak üzere cinsiyet farklılığına dayanan feminist teorik ve etik iddialarla ve o dönemde Fransa'da üretilen homonegatif söylemlerle diyaloğa sokarak inceliyorum. Cinsiyet farklılığı ve homonegativite arasındaki bağı kavrayabilmek için, "ötekiliğin kusuru" retoriğinin ve Duras'ın ataerkil erkeği erkek eşcinselle birleştirmesinin metinsel, bağlamsal ve söylemsel izini sürüyorum.

Anahtar kelimeler: Marguerite Duras, *Ölüm Hastalığı*, cinsiyet farklılığı, erkek eşcinselliği, homonegativite

INTRODUCTION

Reading Duras's *The Malady of Death*, I re-recognized that homosexuality has been underlined in particular texts, one being *The Malady of Death* itself, as a phenomenon that lacks and denies sexual difference and, on this ground, the homosexual is criticized for his/her "flaw of otherness" (Mangeot & Tin, 2008). In comparison with the overt faces of the negative attitudes towards homosexuals such as condemning homosexuals as sinful based on religious morals or treating them as carriers of contagious sickness, designating homosexuality as the rejection of otherness has been a relatively recent, rather covert, and more seemingly refined type of homonegativity, especially apparent in France. This homonegative account, first and foremost, depicts homosexuality as "the fear of true otherness in its embrace of similitude and narcissism" (Zaoui & Tin, 2008), and the homosexual as someone that loves the same and fails to embrace otherness. According to this view, 'homo[1]'sexual love occurs in a universe where love sources from the selfsame, implying that no other but the self is loved and, this universe is assumed to be a close, narcissistic, and ethically problematic universe by its exclusion of the other. By relying on the same principles, this homonegative rhetoric sublimates 'hetero[2]'sexual love for its embrace of the otherness of the sexual difference, and depicts heterosexual love as a site for opening towards the non-same, and in that manner translates the heterosexist epistemology into an ethical paradigm. The heterosexist epistemology based on "the assumption that heterosexuality represents the principal axis of one's relation to the other" (Dean & Lane, 2001, p. 120) entails a heterosexist imperative in the level of societal bonds and by that manner marks the homosexual as a figure of rejection of these bonds due to its exclusion of the otherness and ceasing the reproduction of future generations. The homosexual is depicted here, almost as an antisocial figure threatening the social order, like a death figure, breaking through the societal bindings that make it possible to maintain a life together as a society in the present and the future. Thus, this homonegative

[1] The prefix "homo" has a Greek origin meaning one and the same.
[2] The prefix "hetero" has a Greek origin meaning one of the two, different.

rhetoric marking the homosexual with *the flaw of otherness* renders homosexuality an ethical and a political issue besides its pathological stigmatizations.

In this homonegative discourse, apparently, the difference between the self and the other is understood as the difference between genders (Warner, 1990, p. 190). Warner (1990) in his paper "Homo-Narcissism: or, Heterosexuality" analyzes the modern organization of sexuality in terms of its heterosexist epistemology:

> In the modern West, having a sexual object of the opposite gender is taken to be the normal and paradigmatic form of an interest either in the other, more generally, in others. That is why our own century has acquired the name *heterosexuality* – a sexuality of otherness. In this organization of sexuality, heteroerotics can be understood as the opposite *either* of homoerotics, *or* in the more general extension, of autoerotics. Indeed, according to this logic homoerotics is an unrecognized version of autoerotics, or more precisely of narcissism; both are seen as essentially an interest in self rather than in the other. The perverse options are therefore the exceptions that prove the rule, since both are overcome in the otherness of heterosexuality. The very categories of hetero-, homo-, and auto-erotics are jointly defined by the same understanding of gender as simple alterity. (p. 190)

Warner points out to the Freudian model of sexuality as the discursive area that categorizes sexuality by the poles of homo- and heterosexuality. Indeed, Freud's theoretical framework is notorious for its formulation of male homosexuality in terms of narcissism and hence as the exclusion of otherness. However, in my thesis, my main purpose is neither to engage specifically with Freud's theory of narcissism nor to bring forward the different directions taken by post-Freudian psychoanalysis in terms of theorizing homosexuality. I am mostly interested in the circulation of this homonegative rhetoric in the accounts that take up a critique of the patriarchy and appropriate this homonegative rhetoric at the same time. I contend that Duras's *The Malady of Death* presents an interesting case for that concern. Duras, within and by *The Malady of Death*, criticizes patriarchal order for its subjugation of the feminine by excluding the feminine difference and points out to the male homosexual as the synecdochic figure of the brother regime. In her rhetoric, the seemingly heterosexual social order is charged with homosexual desire among men, which is already in her terminology the flaw of otherness and narcissism. For that

matter, Duras's choice to make a critique of the phallic order in the figure of a gay male character seems to me to be tied with this homonegative rhetoric that marks the homosexual as the *flaw of otherness*.

In *The Malady of Death*, Duras poetically illustrates her perspective of how the patriarchal discourse's embedded rejection of recognizing the feminine sexual difference as a genuine difference builds a barrier against heterosexuality and heterosexual love. While criticizing the violence exposed by the patriarchal discourse on women and its hindrance to heterosexuality, Duras employs the idea of sexual difference to denounce male homosexuality for her assertion that male homosexuality is founded on the rejection of the female sexual difference and is the most representative form of male homosociality as the constitutive unit of the patriarchal order. The critics of the text mostly pronounced either the heroic feminist upheaval embodied by the female character against the domineering and totalizing attempts of the patriarchal male gaze, or the homonegative discourse embedded within the text. I propose a reading different from these previous tendencies that either confines the reading to a feminist reading from a sexual difference standpoint or from a standpoint that criticizes the text's homonegative discourse. My reading recognizes the established connections between the assertion for the importance of recognizing sexual difference as a condition to demolish patriarchal order and a homonegative discourse denouncing male homosexuality within *The Malady of Death* in order to explore how these two standpoints talk to each other. I argue that Duras's assertion for the sexual difference goes hand in hand with her intertwined assertion that male homosexuality is to be denounced as a locus that produces and reproduces the rejection of the feminine difference.

Before engaging with these views in more detail in the upcoming chapters of the thesis, in this introduction, I offer first a brief account of Duras's life and literary career together with Duras's main interests and tendencies in personal, political, and literary life, and second an account of my personal adventure with the text itself, third the objectives of this thesis, and fourth the methodology I follow in this study.

MARGUERITE DURAS: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO HER LIFE AND LITERARY WORKS

Duras, one of the prominent writers influencing modern European literature, starts her life in 1914 in Indochina, which was back then a French colony and now Vietnam. Her childhood years pass in Indochina and India, where her parents came to work as teachers. Duras calls this place "the core of the world's absurdity, a point where delirium, poverty, death, madness, and life are all jumbled together" (Duras, 2020, p. 3). She spends those years in the paddy fields of that vast land of waters and in adventures with her brothers in the forests, reigned by the feelings of mystery and death, daring the risk of random dangerous encounters with snakes or even tigers (pp. 3-4). This close connection with nature, the sense of challenging the stifling nature, and witnessing the unceasing laughter of people despite the prevailing misery, diseases, and the destructiveness of deaths binds Duras wildly to life (p. 4).

Her father dies when she is four years old. Her mother invests all their family wealth to the paddy field she bought from the consulate for obtaining an additional income to teaching, yet the investment ends up in frustration (p. 8). The paddy field submerges plenty of times due to its geographical nearness to the Pacific, and it becomes infeasible for harvesting. The situation does not alter in spite of her vain efforts put for twenty years to get crops from the field. Having been misled by the power authorities, perennial futile struggles with nature and endless efforts that come off badly turn the mother into an unpredictable madness figure, frequently going through hysteria and tantrum attacks. The family's difficult living circumstances go on irrepressibly. Then indelible marks penetrate young Duras, namely, the powerful sense of uncontrollability of things, the hopelessness of dereliction to an unfaithful destiny, and the feelings of perpetual devastation and deprivation. The aggressive and ruthless attitudes and behaviors of the older brother, whom the mother loves more than Duras and the younger brother, reinforce

the stifling and unreliable atmosphere of the home surrounded by intense silences, and Duras tells that the older brother's mischievous attitudes lay the foundation for her "wariness" towards men (p. 5).

She sets out to write at an early age (twelve) to make the intense silences speak – the overwhelming silence that will resonate in her works throughout her literary career (p. 5). Deciding that the life she lives with her family in Indochina cannot promise her a future as she wishes, at the age of eighteen, she leaves Indochina, where she will never return, and moves to Paris. She gets her degrees in mathematics, political science, and law at Sorbonne University. Although she serves in the French Communist Party from 1944 until her dismissal due to political differences in 1950, she changes her political line in the following years. Later, believing that in order for someone to partake in political organizations one must be either autistic or deaf and dumb, Duras takes side against organized struggles (p. 14). Defining herself as a communist without being part of any political organizations, she takes a harsh stance against the massacres committed by Stalin and the Stalinist models (p. 14). The political movements she supports, later on, are the ones that are based on the abolishment of identities and emerge out of instant bursts without resorting to predetermined fixed goals, ends, or ideologies. She enthusiastically welcomes the student uprisings of 1968 and the Prague Spring (p. 16). However, for Duras, the French Communist Party, is a political organization that sticks to rigid doctrinal ideas and methods, reduces human beings to a single dimension, denies the human contradictions, exercises control over excessive emotions, especially love and sexuality, and does not permit them to flow freely without censorship (p. 16) Duras argues that this attitude would alienate human beings from themselves and criticizes this ideological approach frequently in her both political and literary works.

During the last sixteen years of her life, she lives with her gay lover Yann Andrea. The acquaintance begins with Yann Andrea's beautiful letters to Duras for two years, as he was a devotee to her works. One day after Yann phones him, Duras

invites him home and that's how their –what Duras calls– "*folie à deux*" (madness of two) begins (pp. 106-107). She declares in her interview with della Torre:

> Once again, I discovered, with Yann, that the worst thing that can happen in life is not to love…I still ask myself how it's possible. Our passion has been tragic, like all passions. And it was born out of that non-coincidence, that non-fulfillment of our desire. (p. 107)

Yann Andrea has written one book about Duras under the title *M.D.* in 1983 and another book in 1999, *Cet Amour-là,* about their love. Marguerite Duras has written a book called *Yann Andréa Steiner* (1992) and many works she published from 1980 onwards are pertinent to the intricacies of their relationship.

According to the *Gale Contextual Encyclopedia of World Literature*, commentators on Duras's work commonly classify Duras' writing trajectory by four main periods based on major content and form transformations (Hacht & Hayes, 2009, p. 527). Despite the differences among periods, "the emotional intensity and themes of love, solitude, desire, and despair remain constant throughout" her *oeuvre* (p. 52). The first period begins in 1943 with her first published book *Les Impudents* (*The Impudent Ones*). In this period, Duras' works are relatively realistic and conventional compared to her future periods. The book that gives this period its main character is *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950; *The Sea Wall*), which tells about her childhood, Indochina, and the life she lived there with her family. She retells this story in a different literary form in her book *L'Amant* (1984; *The Lover*) and receives the Goncourt Prize.

The second period is referred to as the "focus on the individual" and the books characterizing this period are *Le Marin de Gibraltar* (1952; *The Sailor from Gibraltar*) and *Les petits chevaux de Tarquinia* (1953; *The Little Horses of Tarquinia*). During this period, Duras focuses on the emotions, experiences, and contradictions of the individuals by limiting her novels to fewer characters and lesser space (Hacht & Hayes, 2009, p. 527). *The Little Horses of Tarquinia* is about the desperation of a group of friends who cannot do much except hoping for the

rain in the face of the suffocating heat of summer. The rain hoped for never falls. Similarly, the exhausted couples would not be able to break away from their tiresome relationships. Moreover, they would not be able to show the courage to move away from their life in an ongoing *ennui*.

The third period is close to the New Novel or Antinovel Movement. In this literary movement, emerging primarily in France after the Second World War, the novel genre changes its content and form. The concern of the novel now becomes an interrogation of issues of writing and language more than the story told. Within this period, Duras pushes the limits of language in her novels *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (1964; *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein*) and *Le Vice-Consul* (1966; *The Vice-Consul*), being the most significant novels of Duras in this period (Hacht & Hayes, 2009, p. 527). The narrator tells a story around forgetting and absence rather than the certainty that memory can bring, thus we cannot find the reliability of the traditional narrator in the storyteller of *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein*. The novel is about Lol V. Stein, who is driven into madness after being rejected by her fiancée and, at the end of the novel her contradictions are not resolved into determinate solutions. The events are not connected or mediated by cause and effect relations. The protagonist Lol V. Stein drifts away from herself in a non-solid life without any sense of orientation. The famous psychoanalyst Lacan, also known as Freud's French follower, places great value on this work. For him, this work offers crucial insights into psychoanalysis's theoretical account of female desire (Hill, 1993, p. 66). Moreover, Hélène Cixous, an influential feminist writer, suggests that Duras's works exemplify feminine writing (Cixous, 1976, p. 879). For Duras, likewise, this work has a unique place in her writing adventure, stating that the female characters in all her works are descended from Lol V. Stein (Duras, 1992, p. 27). Furthermore, reading this work, which has a harsh narrative woven with void, in which the character is swayed, demands a lot from the reader. However, paradoxically, it is more of a demand for passivity, ravishment, or seduction than an active reception of meaning (Foucault et al., 2018). Duras believes that "*The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein* is a book apart, the only one of a kind. It separates the readers-cum-writers

who've identified with L. V. Stein's madness from those who have not" (Duras, 1992, p. 27).

The fourth period called "The Inability to Love" is marked as the period in which Duras gives her most mature texts (Hacht & Hayes, 2009, p. 527). Her writing texture appears to be simplified, purified, and concentrated, in comparison with the previous periods. Sometimes elliptical but emotionally dense sentences no longer than an adjective clause produce a strong impression, kind of "a naked force" (Foucault et al., 2018, p.123). The distinctive writing style of Duras, known as the Durassian style, becomes evident, especially in this period. The novel *The Lover* (1984), which makes Duras internationally famous and, as said before, brings her the prestigious Goncourt award, is written in this period. It has sold 1.5 million copies in France alone and has been translated into 26 languages (Duras, 2020, p. 30). This work, in which Duras narrates her childhood, gains a distinctive and privileged place within the autobiography genre in terms of its fragmentary expression based on images in photographs and non-linear narrative. This period has been studied as a period in which Duras intensely focuses on the theme of inability to love, especially crystallized in the novels *La Maladie de la mort* (*1982*; *The Malady of Death*) and *Les Yeux bleus, cheveux noirs* (1986; *Blue Eyes, Black Hair*). Although love is absolutely impossible to reach, according to Duras, a life without it being tried cannot be considered a genuine life. In this sense, males' inability to reach for the *other* sex or to love the *other* sex and to remain confined in a self-containing universe make them like dead men alive. According to her, especially the males, who are sexually-oriented towards other males, are living death in a universe of sameness where the other sex, that is female, is excluded. Their lives never begin. In this thesis, I study *The Malady of Death* in terms of how it challenges the cultural norms around femininity but while doing that how the text denounces male homosexuality by relating it with the inability to love, the flaw of otherness, imprisonment in the sameness order.

MY PERSONAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

A couple of years ago in a philosophy course, I had the chance to meet *The Malady of Death*, a short piece written in 1982 by Marguerite Duras. My personal experience reading the piece was rather depressing, yet inspiring one. Duras had her special way with words, using them to say everything by saying nothing. As if, the piece was granting some portions of the secret that it kept all for itself. *The Malady of Death* was exceptional, in its mysteriousness, while appearing to tell an ordinary love affair with an unfortunate ending.

The major axis of this philosophy course was chiefly the critique of the modern atomized individual and the quests for a new community that would eliminate the atomization prevalent in modern society. I got acquainted with *The Malady of Death* via Maurice Blanchot's prominent book *The Unavowable Community* (1988). Blanchot reserves one chapter for discussing the potentials of community within Duras's piece, and this provided me a lens to qualify the piece as having a significant value for the questions of community. The depressing effect I felt during my reading experience could well be associated with its critique of the modern subject, who can be characterized by sinking into his[3] closed self, into the royalty of the *I*. That individual deriving his source, his origin solely from himself was to either deny the *other* or instrumentalize it. Still, the quest of the piece for a possible community to come could well be associated with a question concerning a future to come, a mysterious future, and a future that has not yet come.

This sort of criticism accords with my perspective now as it did then. However, when I reread the book after a while, I have come to discern that what passed to me from the text did not match that critique, even conflicted at several points. I was certain that the book hold a promise on the question of otherness when I thought about the book's strong emphasis on the theme of inability to love anyone else but

[3] I use *his* intentionally to emphasize that the modern subject has been imagined and produced as a male human being.

the same. Furthermore, relying on that no major information was given to the reader except the gender of the characters, a woman and a man; it could be hard not to think that there was an issue with sexual difference. Reading more from Duras's *oeuvre* and the commentaries on Duras, I learned that Duras wrote most of her books on the essential estrangement, insurmountable distance, and the gap between sexes and how that gap renders the love impossible between man and woman. Yet, for her, this impossibility and the effort to transcend the sexual gap themselves maintain the source of the sublime power of desire, even it is to happen in the universe of impossibility (Lucey, 2013, p. 344). The further readings of *The Malady of Death* left me with another question since there were obscure yet many implications that the man is sexually oriented towards men. In that case, I started to think whether the piece held concern about sexual orientation, too. Later, when I read Duras's *Blue Eyes, Black Hair*, which is a rewriting of *The Malady of Death*, I came across with overt contempt over male homosexuality and promotion of heterosexual teleology. It seemed absurd at first, as I knew that Duras had many gay fans. Then, I decided to focus on *The Malady of Death* as a piece that calls male homosexuality in question. It was positively surprising to find out scholarly studies that concentrated on *The Malady of Death* and *Blue Eyes, Black Hair* in terms of their homophobic discourse. Even *The Dictionary of Homophobia* (2018) published in France, which did not include many authors except the internationally known ones such as Jean Genet and Oscar Wilde, included Duras as an entry.

Therefore, my aim has turned into an effort to investigate the sources of such homonegative idea that is an understanding of homosexuality as a rejection of the otherness. When I resorted again to *The Dictionary of Homophobia*, I realized that there is an entry about this type of homonegativity I am interested in under the name of *otherness*, in which Zaoui searches for the historical sources of this homonegativity. Later, I learned that this homonegative rhetoric had several recent reflections in French reel politics too. One of the most substantial examples for the mobilization of this homonegative rhetoric displayed during the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s in France to stigmatize male homosexuality. Another significant one was

when PaCS[4] was under discussion in France during the period 1998-1999, similar rhetoric was raised in order to prevent the legislation that would give rights to same-sex partners to have a legal partnership. In PaCS debates, the opposition came from different groups of the society. While some were politicians from the right-wing parties, some were leftist feminists and the advocators of the woman's rights movement. The latter parts' opposition was, perhaps surprisingly, based on the contention that the lack of sexual difference in homosexual relationships made it unacceptable to recognize those relationships as legal and ethical partnership. Then I turned my face towards feminist theories that build their accounts on the basis of the concept of sexual difference, which is also called sexual difference feminism, and I found similar theoretical tendencies. I particularly focused my attention on Irigaray's theory because her account was the pioneer of the sexual difference feminism and that Duras and Irigaray both lived in France for most of their lives shaping in somewhat a similar culture, a similar political atmosphere, approximately in the same period; Duras was born in 1914 whereas Irigaray was born in 1930. That common setting is particularly important in terms of similar attitudes towards homosexuality they both endorse, concerning that this shared political atmosphere shapes certain political attitudes while opening spaces for certain discussions and delimiting others, determining the contours of a particular discourse. For instance, if we think locally about the homonegative attitudes prevalent in contemporary Turkey, an assertion that the unethicality of homosexuality sources from the lack of desire would be absurd since to talk about desire or to valorize desire would not be very appropriate concerning the silence about desire within the society. However, in France, we can come across the valorization of desire in the context of heterosexual relationships even by the priests. Another reason why I take Irigaray as a theoretical model that I put in dialogue with Duras's piece is the time wise proximity between Irigaray's works (1985a; 1985b), which refer to the latent homosexual desire between men as the

[4] "PaCS (Pacte civil de solidarité [Civil solidarity pact]), which would recognize civil unions between couples, whether gay or straight)" (Mangeot & Tin, 2008).

force founding the phallic order of the Western society and her later works designating and celebrating the concept of sexual difference as a generative internal between women and men (Irigaray, 1993a), with Duras's *The Malady of Death* in 1982. I do not deem Irigaray's theory completely and necessarily homonegative all along, but when she equates otherness with sexual difference and claims that it would be harmful to locate a difference between same-sex (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 357), it necessarily brings out a question about her project in terms of the same type of homonegativity that I am interested in this thesis. It can also be stated that to point homosexual desire as the latent force founding the phallic order brings out a question of whether she is as "guilty" as Freud to install homosexuality at the origin, and in that way legitimizing the heterosexual contract (Hope, 1994, p. 176). Moreover, especially after *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993) and onwards, we record that her theoretical account is loaded with presumptive heterosexuality. I will elaborate on these points when I discuss the Irigarayan account with its certain implications about male homosexuality (Cheah et al., 1998, p. 27).

Zaoui's (2008) search for the sources of this homophobic invention also remained as an important arch point for me. I want to demonstrate his discussion since later on those points will be useful for my arguments. He starts his investigation from the Old Testament and eliminates it as a source for this particular type of homonegativity, proposing that the female figure in the Old Testament does not appear as a figure of otherness since Eve has come out of Adam. He claims that in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, we also cannot find sources of figuring homosexuality as otherness since the reason that these two cities were attacked is due to the transgression of the common law (according to Genesis), not due to a disavowal of otherness. Moreover, the New Testament tradition does not appear as a source as well, because the condemnation of homosexuality in those traditions is again due to the transgression of the law not due to a discourse of otherness. When Zaoui concludes that the sacred books are then not possible sources for this type of homonegativity, he turns his face towards philosophy. Ancient Greek philosophy does not appear as a source because they seem to be indifferent to the concept of

otherness and, from Plato to Roman Stoicism, love or friendship between the similar and same appear to be more privileged. Then, he tackles modern philosophy, especially Hegelian and Levinasian, due to the given importance to sexual difference in their philosophy. He proposes that these accounts might first seem to signal a source for this rhetoric, yet a close look will make it clear that they do not present biological sexual difference as the necessary condition for otherness. On the other hand, they make it possible to conceptualize homosexuality as a privilege given to the gaze of the other or choosing oneself as the object for the other. Following that, he turns his attention towards the psychoanalytical tradition. Freudian account on homosexuality seems to present a source since Freud interpreted the male homosexual's love to be a narcissistic love of the self and theorized that homosexuals fail to overcome the Oedipal conflict, which marks their failure in the process of identification with the same sex. However, in Freudian and Lacanian accounts, there are other theoretical potentials to argue that the sexual difference is not a necessary precondition for otherness. Such proposition is also there when Kristeva, a Lacanian psychoanalyst, states that "heterosexual arousal is arousal by something through and through other than oneself, and other as flesh… In the homosexual act I remain locked within my body, narcissistically contemplating in the other an excitement that is the mirror of my own" (as cited in Merck, 1987, p. 5). On the other hand, Zaoui notes that neither Freud's nor Lacan's works necessarily arrive at these conclusive points. According to Lacan, all sexual relations are symbolically mediated and to conceive alterity in terms of the symbolic register reveals that homosexual relations are no different than heterosexual relations in terms of excluding otherness. It should be understood to claim that no subject is cursed or blessed with a pre-designated identification position within the symbolic; no one is born with a subjective destiny in this sense. In other words, the characterization of homosexuality as the flaw of otherness is arguably untenable in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Moreover, many theoreticians today work with the theoretical tools of psychoanalysis in different attitudes other than heterosexist accounts. To give some examples, the psychoanalytically oriented cultural and literary critic Leo Bersani develops his analysis of homophobia by

revisiting the concepts of psychoanalysis in an anti-homophobic manner, Teresa de Lauretis uses psychoanalytical concepts in a non-pathologizing way to describe how desire exists in lesbian sexuality without reference to masculinity, or Tim Dean builds on Lacanian and Laplanchean psychoanalytic theory to establish new ethics of alterity that is not heterosexist (Dean & Lane, 2001, pp. 23-25, pp. 120-143).

Furthermore, Zaoui looks at modern anthropology and it does not seem that the findings from various and multitude of research fields provide us with certain contention that homosexuality is a flaw of otherness. Nevertheless, similar to the situation in certain interpretations of psychoanalytic accounts, some anthropologists have interpreted these findings to suggest that homosexuality is a threat to the foundations of sociality.

The other source Zaoui is left with is indeed a semiotic one. When interpreted from this ground, the word *homo*-sexuality has been potentially and naively interpreted to signify sameness, by definition. The signified loses its value here, whereas the only important thing becomes the signifier itself. In this equation, the homonegativity derives from the concept itself as an analytical postulate.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In pursuit of such interrogation and problematization, *The Malady of Death* is an interesting case where Duras expounds on the multiple different ways that the sexually *in*different culture has bearings on a gay man and a presumably heterosexual woman. While the theme of sexual in/difference settles at the heart of the work, the themes of death, desire, sexuality, love, life, and sleep are handled in relation to it. By the brief account of the nights of sexual encounters between two strangers, Duras presents the insurmountable barrier between the two protagonists. Duras builds a gay protagonist, who wants to try to love a woman, but it is underlined by the text that he cannot love the woman because he does not take into account the otherness of the feminine difference. Duras's gay protagonist rather

tries to dominate and silence her by alluding to the patriarchal codes. In that sense, Duras criticizes the phallic order by exposing the epistemological violence of a gay character over a female character, and simultaneously produces homonegative and heterosexist fantasies.

I choose sexual difference as the major theme, discourse, and stance in this text and in Duras's universe in general, because it corresponds to the ground of her political position and underlying mechanisms of her homonegativity. Duras's post-1968 engagements with feminist thought are observable especially through her interviews at that time, yet her prevailing affiliation with the avant-gardist literary tradition is also effective in shaping her anti-identitarian and anti-political attitudes. To this regard, her homonegativity is interpreted with different foci relying on these two stands, such as Crowley's approach dwells upon sexual difference feminism to discuss Duras's homonegativity, whereas Lucey's and Creech's analyses link the characteristics of her avant-gardist affiliation with her homophobia. I think her former engagement with feminism is as influential as the latter, and thus her proximity with sexual difference feminism shadows her later works as much as the earlier ones. Although her affinities with the idea of sexual difference and the avant-gardist literary stance have a place in formation and demonstration of her homonegativity, none of them are necessarily homonegative by their own. Therefore, I aim to investigate how they are combined and gained tendencies towards constituting Duras's homonegativity. From this aspect, the idea of sexual difference as reflected in *The Malady of Death* and Duras's semantic universe has a central role in my analysis, and I put it in dialogue with particularly Irigaray's sexual difference feminism.

I aim to first analyze the text in terms of its critique of the phallic order and show that Duras's critique in and by the text derives from a certain idea of sexual in/difference. To put it in other words, Duras criticizes the phallic man for trying to create a world of sexual *in*difference through repudiating the feminine difference. After analyzing the text in terms of its critique of the phallic order figured in the

male character, I aim to analyze how male homosexuality is represented by the text. Throughout my analysis, I interrogate Duras's choice to symbolize the phallic man in the figure of a gay man. That choice, indeed, partly comes from her biography since she has been in a relationship with Yann Andrea at that period and until Duras dies, whom she sometimes refers to as "Y.A., who's a homosexual" (Duras, 1992, p. 69), and partly because a relationship between a gay man and a heterosexual woman would signify well her image of a desire spurring when there is no possible relation between the self and the other, and that radical incompatibility has always been one of her fascinations (Hill, 1993).

However, Duras's critique of a phallic man in the figure of a gay man displays more than the abovementioned. I choose to go through two lines of inquiry. I would like to interrogate this figuring first in terms of the type of homonegativity I illustrated above. I argue that Duras's choice to conflate male homosexual with phallic man is in relation to her celebration of sexual difference and the devalorization of male homosexuality for its supposed lack of difference and supposed imprisonment in the sameness framework, and designate male homosexuality not as a desire but as self-interest. Secondly, I propose that this conflation is also bound with Duras's understanding of the phallic order and how the relations between women and men are structuralized within this phallic order. In her book *La Vie matérielle* (1987; *Practicalities*) she proposes that the structural relations between women and men within phallic order are charged with homosexual self-interest that is the homosocial male bonding between men. In other words, for Duras, the phallic man's heterosexual attempts are, indeed, mediated by his bonds with other men, bounded with homosexual self-interest[5]. She further proposes that whereas the men that consider themselves heterosexual repress their homosexuality, the homosexual men do not repress them. In that way, for Duras, male homosexual excludes woman

[5] In Duras's understanding of homosexuality, either in latent or manifest form, no desire exists as it is happening in the sphere of sameness. That is why I chose the word *interest* instead of *desire*. However, I will continue with *desire* to present comparisons and multiple correspondences within various perspectives.

more than the heterosexual man, by excluding her also from his sexual sphere. Thus, in Duras's *The Malady of Death,* male homosexuality appears as the emblem of the phallic man and the representative of the phallic order, proceeding to the claim that not only latent homosexuality but more so the manifest male homosexuality is the repudiation of the feminine difference. Evidently, by conflating male homosexual with the phallic man, Duras's impulse is not to queer the universal, as Sedgwick (1985) does when she conceptualizes homosocial desire as a continuum, but to put a difference between a heterosexual man and a homosexual man, to the detriment of the latter.

In this analysis, I use the terms homosexuality and homosexual by demonstrating, not avoiding, Duras's conflation of the heterosexual phallic man and the male homosexual to exhibit and trace her essentialist view. Although I do not deem any of them to be either homogeneous categories in themselves nor ontologically and essentially separate in relation to each other, I pursuit to disclose and display how Duras's essentialist and heterosexist perspective necessarily give way to a sort of homonegativity, which is not unique to her stance but several discourses circulating through different contexts of time, space, structures, and movements. Besides, I am not interested in refuting homonegative claims that I will discuss, because the contradictions they bear happen to what solidify and strengthen them within their circulations and transformations (Halperin, 1995, pp. 33-34) Therefore, it would not be a meaningful political strategy to do so, and this is why I give priority to reveal the mechanisms within homonegative discourses and the ways they are sourced from and shape in return the associative contexts (pp. 33-34). After all, the attempts and mechanisms of constructing the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality remain to be the core, while their contents emerge as the effects that might be reformed and reshaped. So, I take homosexuality not as the essentially radical other of heterosexuality, but the denounced excess of heterosexist social and discursive constructions produced as an effect by their operations.

METHODOLOGY

At the first glance, it may seem inappropriate to associate someone like Duras with specific theoretical frameworks since she elaborates on a kind of writing with the main claim to leave out any kind of political and social concerns in their usual sense (Hill, 1993; Crowley, 1998; Lucey, 2013; Creech, 2000). Although I find it important to emphasize that her writing is political in its own sense[6], my core intention here is more to analyze the interweaving of discourses, the influence of one to another, and the conflicts in between. In other words, I aim to investigate the complex relations between discourses rather than determining Duras with specific positions. First and foremost, it is the impersonal character of discourses that makes such an analysis possible. The cultural discourses, as the name implies, do not belong to any person-specific, though a vague origin can be pointed out. They circulate not freely but dependent to particular power dynamics that are rather context-specific. Therefore, it is not my main concern to figure out why Duras personally took one and renounced another stance or changed her position from pro-homosexual to a homonegative one. While it would be easy and maybe valid to argue that the primary motivator is the personal intricacies of her affair with Yann Lemée (Andrea), it is not enough solely to rely on this explanation that falls short of instructing us about the influence of already existing cultural discourses that Duras appropriates and reproduces in her work concerning homosexuality. Thus, the main issues I am concerned about the literary representations of Duras are about its way in which sexual *in*difference, heterosexuality, homosociality, and homosexuality are reconstructed along with homonegative tendencies.

[6] During the literary period Duras wrote *The Malady of Death,* she identified her literary affiliation with *écriture*, which is the literary writing that Blanchot and Bataille were known for. The *écriture* writing endorses an avant-garde literary stance and its political affiliation can be briefly argued to be anti-identitarian (Lucey, 2013). I will give further information on this literary stance in the literature review. Despite her literary identification with this stance, I argue that her writing was moved by heteronormative feminism at that period, as well.

In order to address these issues arising in Duras's text *The Malady of Death*, I am implementing two different methods of textual analysis in combination. First is the thematic analysis of the text, which functions to identify the recurring themes, to determine conceptual subcategories, and the connections among these subcategories. This method provides a comprehensive framework regarding the content of the texts and it allows making sense of Duras's semantic universe. Secondly, I am conducting discourse analysis for the contextual exploration of the interplay of themes and motifs in-depth to arrive at constructions of coherent sets of meanings clinging together and/or contradictory ways of talking about the discursive objects, such as silence, sleep, death, male homosexuality, and sexual difference. It is also to engage a reciprocal dialogue between already prevalent dominant discourses in social circulation in the particular historical context and the discursive constructions within the texts.

My main focuses are the representations of sexual *in*difference and the relevant Western modern discourse regarding homosexuality. I introduce a relatively modern paradigm of homophobia that refers to the emergence of the category of heterosexuality as an emblem of celebration of difference and otherness and the consequential denunciation of homosexuality as the inability to love the Other. In other words, I intend to investigate the ways in which the idea of sexual difference in feminist theories, specifically Irigaray's texts, is possibly linked to a heterosexist position. For sure, the non-feminist perspectives of sexual distinction/difference function for the naturalization of sexual distinction/difference for the means to justify the supremacy of manhood over womanhood and the production of a heteronormative paradigm in which any sexual deviations from heterosexuality are outlawed and denaturalized. However, the discourses that are shaped against the oppression of patriarchy have not necessarily aligned with a rejection of heteronormativity. More interestingly, the feminist tendencies are noticeable such as Héritier's, Théry's, and Agacinski's objections against the legalization of homosexual partnerships, Irigaray's project for cultivating sexual difference while excluding same-sex relationships from ethical socialities, and Duras's

contemptuous representation of male homosexuality with sexually indifferent and dull violence of the patriarch, which will be discussed in detail. These tendencies suggest a critical reading of the assumptions of the formulation of sexual difference that demonstrates the problematic placement of difference within the heterosexual and heteronormative realm.

In brief, I would like to take *The Malady of Death* as a case to interrogate the link between the idea of sexual difference and the homonegative discourse it reproduces, by discussing sexual in/difference mainly with Irigaray's account. In the text, Duras criticizes the phallic order by exposing the epistemological violence of a male character over a female character. The critical issue is that, although it is not explicitly stated, the male character is gay. Therefore, my subsequent question deals with how to understand Duras's choice to make such a critique.

I argue that *The Malady of Death* is a multi-layered text that exemplifies the employment of the idea of sexual in/difference in alignment with homonegative discursive productions. Concerning the first part of my research question, that is the idea of sexual difference, I presented Duras's critique of phallic order relying on the centrality of sexual indifference, sexual difference, feminine difference, and radical otherness. Building upon that, in the third chapter, I moved to the second part of my question that binds the idea of sexual difference to the reproduction of homonegative discourse, which I analyzed both at textual and contextual levels.
In the next chapter, I present the literature review that covers the conceptual, contextual, discursive, and theoretical framework I handle in this thesis, in which I introduce the concepts, primary relevant receptions of *The Malady of Death*, and Irigaray's feminist theory based on sexual difference. In the second chapter, I deal with the first component of my research question that is the analysis of the idea of sexual in/difference by focusing on *The Malady of Death* and associative discourses and theoretical approaches. I also trace the major themes appearing in the text for that purpose and attempt to put them in dialogue with how the idea of sexual difference is centrally located in the story. In the third chapter, I pursue the

connections of the idea of sexual difference and its usage with the homonegative discourses reproduced by the text. My goal is also to contextualize that links regarding the discursive productions around homosexuality and especially how certain branches of sexual difference feminism treat male homosexual subjects while criticizing patriarchy. In that sense, throughout the chapters I discuss several perspectives on reading *The Malady of Death* in terms of the perception of the book's protagonists and their relationship.

The Malady of Death being the central focus and text for my thesis, the secondary texts I have benefited from throughout the processes of literature review, further research, and writing involve the original texts of certain theoreticians and scholars, commentaries and interviews, biographical sources, encyclopedia entries, and the texts presenting historical and contextual information. As I have mentioned, various connections between and among the texts I have gone through bear great significance in terms of grasping the circulation and reproduction of the discourses in question. However, I could only read English and Turkish texts, which can be indicated as a limitation for this study since the inclusion of French texts would have led to a more adequate analysis concerning the textual analysis and text-context relationship.

CHAPTER 1
LITERATURE REVIEW

I want to begin by demonstrating the main connections between *The Malady of Death* and the new form of homonegativity or homophobia in question. For that reason, I first give general information about the concepts of homophobia and homonegativity, the related concepts of heterosexism, heteronormativity, and compulsory heterosexuality, when and where they emerged as categories, and the significant semantic differences between them. Then, I introduce the receptions of the text and the interpretations of Duras's stance in terms of how it was or was not discussed in conjunction with homosexuality, homophobia, and homonegativity. Moreover, I give a brief account of hegemonic masculinity, homosociality, and male homosocial desire. Later, I demonstrate several significant readings of The Malady of Death. I first offer an overview of the analyses of Blanchot, Schwab, Cohen, and Moskos. Cohen and Moskos's analyses provide a feminist reading, in the influence of Irigaray's theoretical account. Then, I primarily focus on three significant authors' works that contributed extensively to the analysis of Duras's texts and her overall attitude regarding homosexuality and homophobia. The first critical work is Michael Lucey's (2013) article "The Context of Marguerite Duras's Homophobia". The second significant work is Martin Crowley's (1998) paper "'C'est Curieux Un Mort': Duras on Homosexuality"[7]. Then I study two crucial pieces by James S. Williams. The first is "All Her Sons: Marguerite Duras, Antiliterature, and the Outside" published in 1996 and the second one is "A Beast of a Closet: The Sexual Differences of Literary Collaboration in the Work of Marguerite Duras and Yann Andrea" published in 1992. Following those preliminary parts, I introduce Irigaray's theoretical framework with the related themes and concepts primarily dealing with the idea of sexual difference and male

[7] The first part of Crowley's (1998) article's title "C'est Curieux Un Mort" is a direct quotation from the original French edition of *The Malady of Death.* In the English version of Barbara Bray's translation, the phrase is translated as "A dead man's a strange thing" (Duras, 1986, p. 31).

hommosexuality, and the tight interrelation between the two, which plays a significant part in my analysis of *The Malady of Death* in the two central chapters ahead.

1.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPTS OF HOMOPHOBIA, HOMONEGATIVITY, MODERN HOMONEGATIVITY, HETEROSEXISM, HETERONORMATIVITY, COMPULSORY HETEROSEXUALITY, HOMOSOCIALITY, AND MALE HOMOSOCIAL DESIRE

During the last few decades, as the scholarly interest in homosexuality significantly increased mostly in the USA, Canada, and Europe, many new terms have been coined to describe the negative attitudes and/or hostility towards homosexuality (Lottes & Grollman, 2010). The terms homophobia, homonegativity, modern homonegativity, heterosexism, heteronormativity, and compulsory heterosexuality are some of the most important of those terms. They are relatively recent terms. This recentness is not surprising at all because homosexuality is also a recently invented category dating back to the German psychiatrist Westphal's article of 1870, as Foucault (1978) describes in the first volume of his groundbreaking work *The History of Sexuality*.

> We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized--- Westphal's famous article of 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" can stand as its date of birth--- less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. (Foucault, 1978, p. 43)

Annamarie Jagose, in her book *Introduction to Queer Theory*, summarizes Foucault's argument further:

> Foucault argues that although same-sex sex acts were condemned in both religious and civil law before 1870, they were regarded as temptations to which anyone might succumb. Sinful and illegal, those forbidden acts were not understood to constitute a certain kind of individual. After 1870 same-sex sex acts began to be read as evidence of a particular type of person about whom

> explanatory narratives began to be formed: "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (Jagose, 1996, p. 11)

Therefore, the conceptualization of the homosexual as a signifier of an individual is a recent discursive production starting from the late 19th century. Before, same-sex acts have not been understood as to constitute "a particular type of person" (p. 11). The term homophobia is even more recent than the term homosexual as an individual, and the semantic spectrum of the term homophobia has broadened as scholars from a wide range of disciplines conceptualized them differently and various faces of hostility toward homosexuality have been studied.

Homophobia combines *homo,* referring to *homosexual* in this context, and *phobia*, which refers to the psychiatric term used for irrational fears or anxieties. Thus, homophobia can reasonably be defined as the irrational fear or anxiety experienced towards gays and lesbians. The word homophobia was first used in 1961 (Tin, 2018). Yet, generally, Kenneth Smith's article "Homophobia: A Tentative Personality Profile" (1971) and the psychotherapist Weinberg's book *Society and the Healthy Homosexual* (1972) are taken as the term's primary introducers (Tin, 2018). Especially, Weinberg's argument that the problem is not homosexuality or same-sex orientation but the society's hostility towards homosexuality marks a crucial turning point in terms of understanding and investigating homophobia. Not only that Weinberg's arguments have greatly influenced the public, but also only one year after the book, in 1973, APA declared that new research showed that same-sex orientation had no inherent association with psychopathology. Consequently, in 1974, homosexuality was taken out of DSM[8] III (Herek, 2004). Despite its

[8] DSM, the abbreviated form of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, is the American Psychiatric Association's handbook of mental illnesses. "Homosexuality had been a diagnostic category in the DSM since the manual's first edition in 1952, and its classification as a disease was rooted in a nineteenth century medical model (Bayer, 1987; Chauncey, 1982-1983). The 1973 vote, its ratification by the Association's members in 1974, and its strong endorsement by other professional groups such as the American Psychological Association (Conger, 1975) signaled a dramatic shift in how medicine, the mental health profession, and the behavioral sciences regarded homosexuality" (Herek, 2004).

substantiality, Weinberg's definition of homophobia is very narrow: "dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals" (as cited in Lottes & Grollman, 2010). This called for a broader definition. The later definitions consider other dimensions of homophobia such as any negative attitude, prejudice, belief, action, or emotional response (fear, disgust, anger, discomfort, and aversion) that some experience manifested against homosexuals or people who were thought to be homosexuals (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Herek, 2004). Blumenfeld's multidimensional conceptualization of homophobia at four levels appears to be a more comprehensive and credited definition. The levels follow as such:

> [P]ersonal level; prejudiced beliefs of individuals; interpersonal level, prejudiced action and discrimination; institutional level, practices of government, religious, and business organizations and other formal groups; societal level, exclusion of homosexuals from cultural aspects of society and belief in homosexual myths. (as cited in Lottes & Grollman, 2010)

Nevertheless, no matter how encompassing definitions would be coined for homophobia, the concept of homonegativity has been preferred over the former by many scholars.

Although homophobia has been a widely used construct from Smith's and Weinberg's prominent works, the validity of the concept of homophobia has been a concern. Hudson and Ricketts (1980) argue that the word's meaning was precise originally; it solely referred to the affective and emotional responses towards homosexuality and homosexuals. However, as the word has been used widely, the same term has begun to be reused as an umbrella term to indicate a broader range of constructs so that it has lost much of its clarity and original precision (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980, p. 358). They assert that the term homophobia's best use would be by continuing solely to indicate the affective and emotional negative responses towards homosexuality and homosexuals, yet what we need is another umbrella term to indicate all the negative aspects of the hostility towards homosexuality. For that concern, Hudson and Ricketts propose, "the entire domain or catalogue of anti-

gay responses be regarded as *homonegativism*" (p. 358). Thus, in Hudson and Ricketts's work, homonegativism indicates a broader spectrum of anti-homosexual responses, involving homophobia only as one of its dimensions. Besides, homonegativism or homonegativity have also been coined by Negy and Eisenman to indicate only the cognitive aspects of the phenomenon with the result that they study homophobia (affective, emotional components such as fear, disgust, discomfort, and anxiety) and homonegativity (indicating cognitive components) as separate constructs because individuals may be homonegative but not homophobic, or vice versa (as cited in Lottes & Grollman, 2010). Moreover, they suggest that although homonegativity and homophobia are distinct constructs in theory, in practice they overlap to a high degree that it is hard to separate them (as cited in Lottes & Grollman, 2010). Furthermore, Herek's criticism has been related to the clarity and precision of the term, and the phobic emphasis in the term led to a quarrel about the term's validity. Some contend that the word *phobic* constituting the phenomenon as an illness and pathology fails to understand the phenomenon as a social construct but mistakenly psychologize it as a personal problem (Herek, 2004). Therefore, a new term "homonegativity" is proposed to emphasize the negative aspect of the phenomenon without resorting to a pathological representation.[9]

In the 1990s, research on homonegativity suggests contradictory findings, requiring a new solution to understand this disjunction (Morrison & Morrison, 2003). Whereas attitudinal measures such as the ATLG (Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gays) suggest that the prevalence of homonegativity is waning, "the prevalence of homonegative graffiti and students' fear of being openly gay or lesbian on campus suggest that colleges and universities possess, at least, moderate levels of homonegativity" (pp. 4-5). Addressing the paradoxical findings, Morrison and

[9] In this sense, I agree with Herek and, in my thesis, I give priority to the term homonegativity, as Hudson and Ricketts use it as an umbrella term, instead of homophobia. Still, sometimes I will choose to use homophobia to avoid confusion when referring to a theoretician that uses the term homophobia.

Morrison (2003) state that the problem lies in the fact that homonegativity has transformed from being "old-fashioned" (based on traditional and religious morals) to "modern" (p. 18). Whereas old-fashioned homonegativity has been based on traditional moral and religious beliefs, misconceptions, or prejudices against homosexuals, the modern homonegativity takes its source from negative views about gay men and lesbians based on the beliefs that

> (1) gay men and lesbians are making illegitimate (or unnecessary) demands for changes in the status quo (e.g., spousal benefits); (2) discrimination against homosexual men and women is a thing of the past; and (3) gay men and lesbians exaggerate the importance of their sexual preference and, in so doing, prevent themselves from assimilating into mainstream culture. (p. 18)

As observed, the issue in terms of both its macro context and the relevant micro experiences has demanded several different conceptualizations meeting its complexity. Just like the concept of homophobia is found inadequate, the concept of homonegativity is criticized from certain aspects too. Some suggest that either the term homophobia or homonegativity have been inadequate to clarify the political and ideological bearings of the social phenomena. For that purpose, the term "heterosexism" is proposed that constitutes the phenomenon directly as a political formation examining "structural, institutional, material and ideological aspects of opposition to nonheterosexual issues" (as cited in Lottes & Grollman, 2010, p. 220). Herek describes this ideology as one that regards heterosexuality superior to homosexuality and the "patterns of institutional oppression of nonheterosexuals" (Herek, 2000, p. 19). According to the sociologist Eric Fassin, it is important to distinguish heterosexism from homonegativity or homophobia, especially in terms of new manifestations of the phenomenon. Fassin explains that

> in these terms, regarding subjects such as same-sex marriage or adoption rights, those who do not believe themselves to be the slightest bit homophobic, while refusing equal rights to others in the name of some religious, moral, anthropological, or psychoanalytical privilege reserved for heterosexuals, will have to at least recognize that this is, technically speaking, a heterosexist attitude; such a recognition could constitute a first step. (as cited in Tin, 2018)

While the term heterosexism directly refers to an ideological formation, heteronormativity emphasizes the norm-constitutive dimension of heterosexism. “Grounded in literary theories,” the concept functions to destabilize and “to deconstruct hetero/homo-binary assumptions and categories (as cited in Lottes & Grollman, 2010, p. 220). I believe it can be said that the concepts of heterosexism and heteronormativity together demonstrate the societal and institutional dimension of the negative, discriminative, and hostile experiences of non-heterosexual people. However, more importantly, these concepts shift the focus from homosexuality as a form of nonheterosexuality to the problematic hegemony of heterosexist and heteronormative structures. This is crucial in terms of discerning and revealing the complexity and multiplicity of the issue as the systematic regulations and impositions of heterosexist and heteronormative structures result in not only homophobic and/or homonegative instances experienced by gays and lesbians but also any sort of problems continuously experienced by the people who do not conform to the hegemonic definition implied by heterosexual. In other words, moving the focus from ‘homo’ and spotting a light onto the abiding premises of being heterosexual enable the inclusion of all kinds of non-conforming people; be they heterosexuals, LGBTQI+ individuals, queers, and so on. Accordingly, the last concept I briefly explain here is “compulsory heterosexuality”, holding a similar perspective.

Writing from a feminist perspective, Adrienne Rich is known mostly for her concept of compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian continuum. Her groundbreaking article “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (1980) produced enormous effects in the feminist literature, especially in problematizing the heterosexist assumptions prevalent in the Western society, and also particularly within the feminist theories and political movements of its day. Rich (1980) suggests that heterosexuality needs to be recognized and studied as a political institution and should be treated with the same assertiveness with the way patriarchy has been taken into account and studied. Like patriarchy, compulsory heterosexuality is a “man-made institution” imposed on the culture and plays a

major role in placing the woman in a subordinate position. Women have endorsed the heterosexist assumptions that it is innate and natural to be sexually oriented towards men, but Rich asserts that those assumptions are nothing but by-products of the compulsory heterosexuality in work to restrict women to the service of men. Rich (1980) declared, for that reason, the feminist scholars should not focus on "lesbianism" as a matter of "toleration" but problematize the compulsory heterosexuality extensively as a political institution imposed on every woman. Furthermore, she expands the semantic field of the term lesbian and coins a new term "lesbian continuum" that provides a richer understanding of the experiences "between and among women" throughout history (p. 648). The new terminology does not solely refer to the "genital sexual experiences with another woman" but expands the term lesbian experience to "many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support; … such associations as marriage resistance" (pp. 648-649). Rich's theoretical-political intervention opens a ground to formulate lesbian experience outside of a clinical practice and also deconstructs the binary opposition between heterosexuality and homosexuality.

Inspired by the rich potential of the concept of lesbian continuum, Sedgwick (1985) in her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* develops a deconstructive reading of the experiences between and among men. By pointing out that the contemporary rigid distinctions between male homosexuality and heterosexuality were not there all along the patriarchal history (for instance in ancient Greece), she coins a new concept "male homosocial desire"[10] to expand and disturb the notion of male homosociality[11]. The notion of male homosociality refers

[10] For further reading, see Sedgwick, 1984; Van Leer, 1989; Nemesvari, 1995; Hogan, 1997; Adams, 2004; Geng, 2004; Kiesling, 2005; Heldt, 2007; Kheshti, 2008; Stoneman, 2009.

[11] The notion is first coined in 1976 by Jean-Lipman Blumen, in her article "Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles: An Explanation of the Sex Segregation of Social Institutions". She provided the term to explain the exclusion of women from institutions (sport, economy, politics, law, police force, military, social life) and argued that male

to a structural formation between and among men produced and perpetuated by intense bonds that resembles a universal brotherhood or fraternity identifying itself with the masculine, and the masculine with the male heterosexual. Thus, the male homosociality[12] is defined as one of a significant constitutive element of patriarchy founded on the exclusion of the feminine and women, and homosexuality and the male homosexual for the supposed femininity. Sedgwick (1985) argues that the intensity of the bonds between men within the male homosociality shows that they are founded on desire, either in the form of rivalry, or established brotherhood, or sexuality. Her intervention takes the desire among men back to the center of male homosociality and argues that there are no essential rigid distinctions between male homosexuality and male heterosexuality, they present a continuum. Sedgwick (1985) also appoints the close connection of misogynist attitudes and homophobia with the male homosocial and thus provides a new perspective for feminist studies that marks homophobia as an important conceptual tool for analyzing the anatomy of patriarchy.

I will investigate the understanding of homosexuality as the rejection of otherness appearing in Duras' piece *The Malady of Death* and Irigaray's work in relation to these terms.

homosociality has a central importance in that exclusion since it is a structure that founds on the inclusivity of male to male bonds (either in the form of rivalry, competition, violence or friendship and intimacy) and the exclusion of women and non-hegemonic males She explains that within this frame; men accumulate recourses and women are left in lack of them. She also highlights the double standard in this frame, whereas women are not wanted in the military due to the high risk, women working as nurses at the frontline in a war, is not problematized (Blumen, 1976). For further reading, see Willis, 1993, Bird, 1996; Keiser, 1997; Bennett, 2000; Greven, 2004; Flood, 2008; Oware, 2011; Gön, 2014; Lotz, 2014; Milam, 2015; Karioris, 2016, Verstraten, 2016; Oates, 2017.

[12] Sedgwick suggests that homosociality is mainly characterized by "intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality" (Sedgwick, 1985, p. 1).

1.2. RELEVANT RECEPTIONS OF *THE MALADY OF DEATH*

The Malady of Death has attracted critics from various disciplines with diverging emphases and perspectives, be it psychoanalytical, philosophical, stylistic, feminist, LGBTI, and queer (Blanchot, 1988; Makward, 1990; Moskos, 1991; Williams, 1992; Cohen, 1993; Hill, 1993; Schwab, 1996; Williams, 1996; Crowley, 1998; Lucey, 2013; Yazıcı, 2019). [13] Remarkably, most of the readings and the commentaries, except the LGBTI+ and queer accounts, have differently interpreted certain tacit implications in the text that can be interpreted as references for male homosexuality and thus did not recognize that the text was in some way or another about male homosexuality. In other cases, they have recognized this relation but have not understood it as a central issue relevant for the analysis of the text. Lucey (2013) brings the comments by Duras and Noguez together and presents the blindness of Handke, the director of a movie adaptation from the text, and Blanchot, a prominent philosopher who has written a detailed commentary on the text, in terms of their failure to recognize that *The Malady of Death* is a text Duras intended to write about homosexuality:

> Many people have read (and continue to read) this text without noticing that it is "about" homosexuality. Noguez says that Duras told him in September 1982 that she was writing "a text about homosexuality" and that it was called *The Malady of Death.* "Holy cow, what a title!" he notes in his journal. Yet Peter Handke will make a movie out of the text, apparently without noticing it is about homosexuality, and Blanchot will write an article about it, first published in the spring of 1983 in a journal called *Nouveau Commerce* and incorporated later that year into his book *The Unavowable Community*, in which Duras believes he too fails to notice the text is about homosexuality. (Lucey, 2013, p. 363)

The journal *Cahiers du cinema*'s interview with Duras in 1985 gives an opinion about how Duras conceives this unnoticing.

> –I was surprised when I met Handke at Cannes before his movie was shown. I told him that the text was talking about homosexuality. He was flabbergasted.
> Duras replies:
> –Like Blanchot. It just depends, or so it seems. (as cited in Lucey, 2013, p. 363)

[13] For further reading, see: Peraldi, 1990; Robinson, 1993; Hoem, 1996; Minkkinen, 1997; Pepper, 1997, Iyer, 2003; Chu, 2019; Sack, 2019.

Blanchot and Handke have not been the only interpreters of *The Malady of Death* who did not consider the text to be about homosexuality. As mentioned, many other later commentators of the book have not paid enough attention to this theme that Duras takes to be the text's core issue. Why is that? Can one read it as Duras's literary inefficacy to convey her intended message? And if we agree with Duras that the text is about homosexuality, then what are the intended meanings she wanted to communicate about homosexuality? Blanchot's case is significant in those terms; though Duras comments that Blanchot did not understand the text being about homosexuality and a close glance at Blanchot's commentary on *The Malady of Death* in his book *The Unavowable Community* conveys that he is not completely blind to the possibility that the male character could be homosexual and homosexuality may have particular importance for Duras's piece. He considers that possible interpretation and derives the conclusion that a positive affirmation of that possibility would necessitate an undesirable presumption that love cannot emerge between people of the same sex. Therefore, he deliberately states –in parenthesis– that it would then be invalid to think that the text employs a connection with homosexuality:

> (Homosexuality, to come to that name which is never pronounced, is not "the malady of death," it only makes it appear, in a slightly artificial way, as it is difficult to contest that all the nuances of sentiment, from desire to love, are possible between beings, be they alike or unalike.) (Blanchot, 1988, p. 51)

So, he disregards this option. It seems that Duras has been blind to Blanchot's deliberate rejection of a possible link that would be constituted between being homosexual and being unable to love. In other words, Duras does not seem to recognize Blanchot was taking an intentional move in asserting that if the intended message about homosexuality is the inability to love the other, then he is not on the page, and that is why he does not want to treat it as *about* homosexuality because for him there is nothing about homosexuality that can link it to that supposed inability. The above quotation is the only words Blanchot writes about any possible relation between homosexuality and the text. He does not move further to ask, even if the book is not about homosexuality, can it be that it becomes a reproduction site

for negative biases concerning homosexuality? Blanchot arrives at the conclusion that more than anything, *The Malady of Death* is a literary reflection of the community that is unavowable that is, briefly, a community taking place despite giving the impression that it has never existed. Hill's (1993) reception yet putting the emphasis more on the elaboration of the notion of desire, is also a reading close to Blanchot, in terms of its celebration of the community.

With a different perspective, Schwab (1996) incorporates feminist points in her analysis, but it cannot be understood only in those terms. She reads the nights of sexual encounters in its resemblance to a therapeutic intervention in which the female's presence operates as a therapist and the process between the protagonists is a transformational one. She further treats *The Malady of Death* as "a transformational literary object" (p. 181) on the reader's side. Schwab reads the malady of death as a "cultural disease," and considers that the two protagonists "form an ecological unit of survival and/or death", while both are victimized by the unit (p. 184). The woman and the man "battle unto death", and the readers witness the release of violent instincts within the struggle between two protagonists. The man wishes to murder her and the woman's "aggressive 'indifference'" (p. 184). Besides, Schwab refers to the homosexuality of the male protagonist. She underlines the triangulation of desire within the text that is the male narrator's mediation of the relationship between the male and the female protagonists and "man's use of woman as substitutes for a desired man" (p. 183). She concludes that "it does not make a great difference if the man is manifestly or latently homosexual" (p. 183).

Cohen (1993), on the other hand, reads the text from a feminist perspective and her feminist account builds on Irigaray's and Cixous' feminist theories. She considers the contract, as a reflection of the dominant patriarchal symbolic structures whereby the female subordinated by masculine power economically, politically, and psychologically is unable to express her desire and voice, thus her position within the contract is objectified. Cohen highlights that the text exposes and unveils these

operations of the patriarchal structure both in the traditional erotic fiction and in practical life. Highlighting the deconstructive elements within the text, Cohen underlines that the text “mim[es] the traditional erotic text – but with a major difference” that is the female “voice” (p. 107). Unlike Schwab, Cohen takes the narrator to be female; on the basis that although Duras first identified the narrator as a male in the appendix, she later changed her idea and expressed that “I believe that in *La Maladie de la mort* [*The Malady of Death*] I am the one speaking. I do not give up the floor to anyone" (p. 105).

In a similar fashion, Moskos (1991) employs a feminist reading of *The Malady of Death*, mainly by alluding to Irigaray’s sexual difference theory. Based on his record of the resemblance between the plotlines of *The Malady of Death* and Balzac’s *La Fille aux yeux d’or* (*The Girl with the Golden Eyes*), Moskos argues that *The Malady of Death* is “a rewriting” of Balzac’s novel (p. 521). In both stories, “the masculine desire” is “the original catalyst” of “the repeated encounters” between a man and a woman, during which “in a narcissistic fantasy”, the man needs “to see himself reflected” in the woman. He further highlights that in both stories, “the masculine desire is narcissistic and homosexual” in the sense of what Irigaray calls "‘hommo-sexual’ desire to eliminate feminine Difference” (pp. 524-525). The man fails to reflect himself by her mirror and, his gaze turns back on himself. Both stories end with “the erasure of the feminine, whether by death or disappearance” (pp. 521-524). However, Moskos underlines that Duras “mimes” the same plotline (“a plot for mastery”) with differences “in order to undo the same story – or more precisely the story of the masculine Same” (p. 521). In that sense, *The Malady of Death* employs the strategy of what Irigaray names mimicry.

On the other hand, Williams’, Crowley’s, and Lucey’s studies on Duras’s literary and ideological activities pay particular attention to the production of the frames and claims on homosexuality through her literary texts and interviews. I briefly introduce how each of them makes sense of Duras’s attitudes concerning homosexuality, as this thesis builds on their framework. Lucey’s (2013) article

mentioned above presents Duras's views about sexuality, relations between sexes, desire, homosexuality, and heterosexuality and illustrates that she has cliché homophobic claims when it comes to homosexuality. He offers a contextual analysis of Duras's homophobia, identifying two contexts that he considers prominently founding for the relation of Duras's texts concerning homophobia. The first context encompasses the literary and political ideologies, practices, and assertions that become preoccupations of Duras, as she builds her affiliation with the avant-gardist literary tradition (Lucey, 2013, p. 345). The second context is the relationship she had with the gay writer Yann Andrea starting from the 1980s and lasting until the end of her life for sixteen years.

To begin with the first context, it is crucial to consider the attitude of the avant-gardist literary tradition, which Duras shared with Blanchot and Bataille, concerning the social reality and the realm and practice of writing. Lucey discusses this attitude by introducing the oracular stance and, according to him, "the aura of oracularity came to surround both Duras' person and her texts was possible because of the state of the cultural field around her" (Lucey, 2013, p. 346). Within that context and the culturally discursive shared environment, the oracular literary stance corresponds to "the intrusion of the other" that is not a representation but an association with "the collectivity, human anonymity", coming to existence through the medium of *écriture* (writing, in this sense). The key point in this perspective is that writing opens a space in which and out of which the other can emerge, in a way evoking the possibility of a true yet impossible sociality as explained by Blanchot in *The Unavowable Community* too. And this open space does not refer to a realm of representation but neutrality, anonymity, collectivity, and de-personhood. Therefore, their avant-gardist literary tradition calls for these key aspects instead of identity politics, and Duras's affiliation with that tradition exhibits parallelism with how the discourse on sexuality appears in her texts, especially in relation to homosexuality. Reminding that homosexuality began to be an issue at that time as a sort of social movement and an area of struggle, Duras's anti-identitarian stance overlapped with the social and political discourses on homosexuality within that

same context and rendered her homonegative discourse readable through her texts, particularly *The Malady of Death*, despite her previous seemingly-pro stance. Criticizing identity politics and any kind of organizational political movement, Duras shows her pity towards gay movements of the time in an interview by *Gai pied*, one of the most prominent publications within that context after 1968. The contextual connection between her stance consolidated by the avant-gardist literary tradition and the discourses on homosexuality becomes more graspable by a response she gives during an interview with *Gai pied* in 1980 concerning sexuality: "There is no specifically masculine or feminine form of sexuality. There is only one sexuality in which all relations swim. Whatever is particular about homosexuality is not sealed in watertight" (p. 347). Apparently, her attitude implies that homosexuality is like an interruption and a disruption within the flow of sexuality, and its yearning to be represented and organized is a pathetic attempt rejecting the open space and the true nature of desire, because "each person's desire [is] to be interchangeable with everyone else" (p. 347).

To continue with the second context, it is essential to apprehend the relevance of the notion "misfit sexualities," coined by Lucey to render the socially unintelligible character of the relation between Duras, a heterosexual woman, and Andrea, a gay man. This notion in concern refers to the sexualities that "escape dominant, or even sometimes even residual or emergent, categories of apprehension" or, in other words, "the sexualities that do not conform to categories that normally enable the apprehension of sexuality" (Lucey, 2013, p. 343). A key point in the text is that this notion is valid in thinking about both Duras's and Andrea's sexuality within the frame of the sexuality they shared. Reminding that the evident emergence of homophobia in Duras's works and interviews takes place starting from the early 80s, right after her relationship with Yann began in 1980, a way of thinking can suggest that the incongruence she experienced as "misfit sexuality" has turned into a denial that her sexuality with Yann is nonconforming to the dominant social norms. Instead of accepting this position, she insisted on devaluing Yann's sexual orientation as a means of denying her sexuality. Further, Lucey suggests that *The*

Malady of Death and the texts Duras later writes on homosexuality can be read as a part of Duras's efforts to find a literary way in representing the uncommon sexuality she experiences with Yann Andrea. The hardness of finding the words to represent misfit sexuality becomes most graspable in Duras's words in the "The Book" section within *Practicalities*.

> What I'm saying now is something I didn't want to say in the book but which I mustn't forget to say now, even though it's hard to find the words to do so. The essence of this love is that it can't be written. … It's a love that writing hasn't yet reached. … Yes, the book is about an unavowed love between people prevented by an unknown force from saying they love one another. … Nothing but tears … and what I'm doing is telling of an impossible (just as I'd tell of a possible) affair between a woman and a homosexual, whereas what I really want to tell of is a love affair which is always possible even though it seems impossible to people unfamiliar with writing. (as cited in Lucey, 2013, p. 371)

Another critical study that has contributed significantly to the analysis of *The Malady of Death* in its relation to homosexuality is Crowley's (1998) article "'C'est Curieux un Mort': Duras on Homosexuality". The article provides a detailed reading of the textual aspects of *The Malady of Death* and asks whether the text reaches Duras's intended literary aim to keep her writing in a state of "uselessness" or "purposeless other than that of its own" and "untainted by polemic" (Crowley, 1998, p. 659). His answer to this question is negative, contending that *The Malady of Death* remains hooked into the criticism and polemic it had hoped to move beyond. Crowley suggests that the produced ambiguity around the sexual orientation of the man establishes "the possible area of confusion of the texts: do they represent a criticism of the death-dealing homosocial, or of male homosexuality, or is any dimension of criticism inevitably clouded by their ambiguity?" (p. 663). Is the man homosexual or heterosexual, and does this question have any importance to resolve this interpretative conflict? For it is that, according to Duras, the sole desire playing a role in this patriarchal culture founded on the deathly self-sufficiency of male homosociality is the desire between men, including the seemingly heterosexual men, all men are homosexual, despite their ignorance about it; women take place only as the circulating objects within this

game that are founded on homosexuality. However, the significant difference between heterosexual men and homosexual men is that heterosexual men strive to embrace the feminine otherness, although it is impossible to transcend the gulf between sexes. Homosexual men do not try it and maintain this deathly self-sufficiency, whereby homosexuality for Duras is "masturbatory narcissism", "love of the same", or "love of homosexuality" (p. 661). So, it goes; all men are homosexual, but male homosexual is the "synecdochic figure of the homosocial" (p. 663). Following this conflation, the text's ambiguity around man's sexuality seems like an intentional choice by Duras, as a way to demonstrate this common feature of men. Crowley suggests that using homosexuality as the most representative of homosociality is contradictory because if the homosociality is the repressed manifestation of homosexual culture, then homosexuality cannot merely inhabit the place and manifest itself without disrupting the homosocial realm. The turn of the repressed necessarily produces a disruptive effect. This contradiction necessarily calls for critical reading of the text and Duras's aim to maintain her writing in a state untainted by polemic dramatically fails.

"All Her Sons: Marguerite Duras, Antiliterature, and the Outside" by James S. Williams (1996) is an examination of Duras's rhetorical ways in which the works of Duras engage with gay themes and subjects, especially when it comes to her engagement with contemporary gay writers. Though this study of Williams does not directly study *The Malady of Death* as the object of analysis of my thesis, it provides with valuable insights for ways of thinking about Duras's literary treatments of gay themes and subtexts. As suggested by Williams, Duras's literary engagement with gay textuality appears on different levels, but none have positive influences. Not that she does not open spaces for new theoretical possibilities in terms of gay rhetoric, but, on the opposite, she closes the open images of contemporary gay writer's rhetorics that invoke gay themes. Although these two cases are merely some examples, her contacts with Belloc and Ceton, either in the literary reviews she writes for these young authors or in the interviews she had with them, demonstrate how Duras uses a strategic force to trope over their literature's

uniqueness while, simultaneously, she champions and idealizes them. Williams (1996) suggests that Duras over-simplifies Belloc's and Ceton's texts by erasing the genuine complexity of their writing and reducing them solely to their artistic creativity in a way that textually purifies their textual features (p. 55). As claimed by Williams, what is done by Duras is to turn these outsiders (marginal gay writers) into an inside, to a literature that has heterosexual configurations, such as the scene from Duras's first film *La musica* (1966) that allows shaping an exclusive male-female relationship between Ceton and Seyrig (the female actor of the film) when "Seyrig stares out of the frame to the right and faces head-on the text of 'Pour Jean Pierre Ceton'" (p. 54). Duras's usage of this kind of intertextual practice is not unusual such as marrying Racine and Madame de Lefayatte "in a ritual of heterosexual give-and-take (He withdraws, she receives)" (p. 54). Or, in *La vie materielle* (*Practicalities*), she mentions Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* together with Michelet's *La sorciere* as her only true library, binding them together in "structures of heterosexual fantasy" (p. 54), while always giving the upper hand to woman. Moreover, Williams's assertion that what is particular in Duras' works such as *La douleur* (1985; *The War: A Memoir*)*, La pluie d'ete* (1990; *Summer Rain*)*, L'amant de la Chine du Nord* (1991; *The North China Lover*), *and Yann Andrea Steiner* is "how gay themes and subtexts are invoked, often in subtle and oblique ways, only to become immediate sites of contestation and even denial" (pp. 47-48). He does not go further in explaining what he means specifically about the mentioned text, but his analysis in terms of Duras's contact with Belloc and Ceton gives crucial ideas about Duras's literary strategies and what his point is in this assertion, thus William's claims about Duras's strategies provide me a valuable discussion point in my analysis of *The Malady of Death* and how Duras treats gay themes in that text. In his previously mentioned article "A Beast of a Closet: The Sexual Differences of Literary Collaboration in the Work of Marguerite Duras and Yann Andrea", Williams (1992) also employs a literary focus, engaging with the concept of literary collaboration and literary practices of intertextuality. Primarily, he is interested in the ways in which, for Yann Andrea and Marguerite Duras, literary practices open intertextual spaces where they both enact textual events of

"aggression" and "attacks" (Williams, 1992, p. 578). These events can be understood as "eroticized revenge(s)", or "sadomasochistic ritual(s) of violent desire", or even "violent textual intercourses" (p. 578). From many instances that Williams takes into account, what is especially important for the thesis in concern is the intertextual dialogue between Duras's *The Malady of Death* and Yann Andrea's *M.D* published in 1983.

These two texts are written in a similar period when Duras was under detoxification treatment and also on the point of finishing her text, *The Malady of Death*, while her partner Yann Andrea (whom Duras prefers to call "Y.A., homosexuel") was writing the book *M.D.*[14] with "the scrupulous care of a faithful archivist" consisting of his records at the hospital (Williams, 1992, p. 576). This homage to Duras mimes Duras stylistically but imperfectly. Yann Andrea includes citations from Duras's film *La Navire Night* (1978), he practices a similar type of intertextual practice regularly found in Duras's works. However, the significant difference is that *M.D.* has none of the "figurative playfulness" of Duras's texts (p. 576). Williams asks, "Why does Andrea mime Duras-speak so imperfectly?" *M.D.*'s narrative "selfless" and "objective" voice appears to be peculiar considering that

> [f]or much of its length, *M.D.* is presented as near to death; yet the narrator continues to write and record, even under fierce assault from 'vous'[15] : 'Vous dites: Je ne comprends pas comment on peut vivre comme vous le faites, d'une maniere aussi veule. Mieux voudrait vous tuer. Je ne reponds pas, j'evite a peine les larmes.'[16] (as cited in Williams, 1992, p. 577)

The *vous* of *M.D.* echoes the *vous* in *The Malady of Death* that addresses the homosexual, "where the narrator aids and abets 'elle' in her attack on the homosexual 'vous'" (p. 578). Later in *La Pute de la côte normande* (1986; *The Slut of The Normandy Coast*), we see that Duras explains *The Malady of Death* as her

[14] Though this is not directly mentioned in the text, the title refers to (M)arguerite (D)uras (Williams, 1992, p. 576).
[15] *vous* refers to *you*, either plural informal, singular formal, or plural formal.
[16] "You say: I do not understand how one can live as you do, in a way that is too vicious. Better would you kill. I do not respond; I barely avoid tears." (Translated by me.)

failing attempt to write about Andrea. Does *The Malady of Death* represent textual violence directed towards Andrea? What about Andrea's *M.D.*; is the narrator identifying with the pain of a dying woman, or destructing himself to the point of osmosis, or killing Duras even more so that he can desire her? Williams (1992) reminds Duras's words in *Practicalities* that "how Andrea started to desire her only when she was reduced in the course of her treatment to the state of a mute vegetable" (p. 578). What about the narrator of *M.D.*'s explicit statement of leaving her, abandoned, in the room, in the middle of the night? Williams concludes,

> It seems highly probable then that we are witnessing a sadomasochistic ritual of violent desire, of eroticized revenge between the narrator of *M.D.* and the narrator and writer of *La Maladie de la mort*—a double textual event of aggression, attack, and tenderness. (p. 578)

Williams (1992) goes further to suggest that this cross-textual ritual of violence has fueled by Duras's fantasies about homosexuality, reminding a statement of Duras; "[i]n a 1980 interview for France's leading gay magazine, Duras declared: Je vois dans l'apparente douceur de l'homosexualite une provocation a la violence, et que cela confirme dans son recours constant, son rappel de l'interdit meme [I see in the apparent gentleness of homosexuality a provocation to violence, and that this confirms in its constant recourse, its reminder of the forbidden itself]" (p. 579). Williams (1992) argues that this "provocation of violence" Duras sees in the apparent "gentleness of homosexuality" can then provide her with safe and "dependable bedrock of violence necessary" to perform a violent ritual of textual sadomasochistic eroticized revenge, considering that homosexuality being nearly always desperate and close to death in its non-reproductivity for Duras. To illustrate, Williams (1992) quotes Duras's expressions such as "Ces hommes sans descendance qui ignorent etre desesperes[17]" and "L'homosexualite, c'est la mort"[18] (p. 579).

[17] From *Blue Eyes, Black Hair*: "men without descendants who don't even know they are desperate" (Duras, 1989, p. 20).

[18] Williams cites Costaz (1986): "Homosexuality is death." (As cited in Williams, 1992). (Translated by me)

My focus in terms of homonegativity in *The Malady of Death* is to explore the connections between the idea of sexual difference and homonegativity as they appear in the piece by putting the text in dialogue with Irigaray's conceptualizations of these concepts. In that case, regarding my main questions, this work considers the relevance of sexual difference feminism to make visible what is endeavored to present in *The Malady of Death* and other texts in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Duras. Duras has never called herself a feminist. However, from the perspectives that many other critics and I read her, her discourse and the discourses she somehow reproduces, especially after the late 1970s and early 1980s, resonates with the kind of sexual difference feminism Irigaray cultivates, although there are differences that I will point out later. Thus, my intention also involves carrying out an analysis of knowledge production within Irigaray's sexual difference feminism over gay sexuality.

1.3. LUCE IRIGARAY'S SEXUAL DIFFERENCE FEMINISM

Luce Irigaray, a prominent continental philosopher, was born in 1930 in Belgium and she lived most of her life in France and Italy (Stone, 2007, p. 113). Trained in philosophy, psychoanalysis, and linguistics, she wrote in and between various disciplines (Russell, 2013, p. 292). She has contributed intensively to feminist thinking by her critical rereadings of the foundational texts of the Western philosophical canon and psychoanalytic literature in a way that calls into question the phallocentric logos inscribed within Western traditional and contemporary thought. Irigaray has become an influential figure both in continental philosophy and feminist thinking for her criticism not only targeted the phallocentric ways of psychoanalytical tradition and most of the prominent Western philosophical tradition thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Marx but also presented a distinct way of criticizing that rendered her a pioneering scholar particularly within philosophical thought (p. 292). Her first book *Speculum of the Other Woman* has been published in 1974, and since then she has been primarily acknowledged for her dedicated elaboration on the idea of sexual difference. The

concept of sexual difference emerges out of Lacanian thought, which she has followed and criticized simultaneously (p. 294). Her project has been interpreted to be significant since she has not stayed solely in the theoretical ground but took action to realize her politics. The sexual difference feminism elaborated by Irigaray arose within the cultural and intellectual environment of the early 1970s in France, whereby the theoretical debates and practical concerns around *the question of otherness* manifesting itself as a central issue. She approaches this question in relation to the position of women by persuasively diagnosing the manner in which subjectivity has been denied to women for long centuries throughout Western civilization since any theory of the "subject" has always been appropriated by the "masculine" and that this phallic currency reduces the female body into an object by perpetually erasing the difference of what the female body entails (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 133). In envisaging this issue at stake as a question of otherness that marks the Western culture, she invites the readers to conceive *sexual difference* as the main issue of our age.

Irigaray's approach promoting *difference* carries a critical stance against *equality* feminisms that are based on a political project struggling for creating conditions that would set women and men equal within all domains of the society. In "The Question of the Other", the criticisms against Beauvoir's equality feminism reflect Irigaray's insistence on sexual difference feminism (Irigaray & Guynn, 1995, p. 8). Although Irigaray agrees with Beauvoir on the level that the Western history is founded on the subordination of the feminine, their core principles diverge from each other:

> The principal focus of my work on feminine subjectivity is, in a way, the inverse of de Beauvoir's as far as the question of the other is concerned. Instead of saying, "I do not want to be the other of the masculine subject and, in order to avoid being that other, I claim to be his equal," I say, "The question of the other has been poorly formulated in the Western tradition, for the other is always seen as the other of the same, the other of the subject itself, rather than an/other subject, irreducible to the masculine subject and sharing equivalent dignity. It all comes down to the same thing: in our tradition there has never really been an other of the philosophical subject, or, more generally, of the cultural and political subject. (p. 8)

For Irigaray, the Western tradition has formulated the question of otherness poorly by defining the category of other in terms of the other of the same that is reducible to the same within the discursive realm of sameness. The claim that there has never been an other in Western tradition does not reflect only her distance from Beauvoir but also some other difference feminists. Accordingly, the sexual difference feminism rises on the arguments and claims to promote difference for the women by the women without resorting to an equality politics. Whilst some of the Anglo-American difference feminists such as Ruddick and Gilligan have recognized difference as the already existing differences between men and women, Irigaray considers any differences produced in the existing phallic currency to be effects of the sameness paradigm (Stone, 2007, p. 135). On the other hand, she promotes creating the preconditions that would enable to invent genuine differences, which have never existed, rather than discovering them within the already existing knowledge produced by the masculine logic (p. 135).

Early in her works, she puts forth a theoretical and methodological framework pursuing the transformation of the symbolic order and the reclamation of the feminine as a subject, underlining that the change would take place at the cultural level, particularly at the linguistic level. Later, without dismissing her insistence on transformations at the linguistic level, she advocates political action and legal reform, too. "In the late 1980s she began to work with the ex-Communist Party in Italy (now the Socialist Party), in particular with the MEP Renzo Imbeni" (Martin, 2003, p. 8). She wrote a new code of civil rights that recognizes both sexes' needs and duties that would foster sexual difference culture of two (Irigaray, 1993a, pp. 81-92; Martin, 2003, p. 8). Up to today, Irigaray's key notion of sexual difference has maintained a central place all along her *oeuvre*, although she revised the content of the notion within her long endeavor (Cheah et al., 1998).

Through profound interrogations of a wide range of texts, Irigaray questions the status allocated to women and how women have been represented discursively. In

Irigaray's reading, the phallic currency reduces the female body to its potential reproductory functions. In other words, it does not recognize any meaning in the female body except the denotation and connotation of motherhood and the maternal body. Thereby, the meanings and symbolic associations attributed to being female-bodied have been produced solely according to the phallic currency. She has argued that the feminine is excluded from any means of symbolic recognition within Western culture and its very exclusion has precisely been what has enabled the Western phallocentric logos to hold and perpetuate itself as a monosubjective system for long centuries. That ordering has produced the excluded feminine as the constitutive outside, requiring it to represent, reflect, and reproduce the symbolic order as such. Irigaray demonstrates that women's position is a "sort of magma… from which men, humanity, draw nourishment, shelter, the resources to live or survive for free" (as cited in Whitford, 1991, p. 67). She emphasizes that what is so-called Western *his*tory has been dependent upon this epistemological violence and the phallic monopoly on what is intelligible and what is not, producing an economy of thought founded on the singular Subjectivity of the male subject's monopoly on value through the "operations of erasure, foreclosure, disavowal, metaphorization, specularization" (Hope, 1994, p. 169).

As mentioned, the theoretical framework of sexual difference feminism, in its apparent wide concerns and interests, marks the *phallocentric logic* at the heart of Western social formations (Hope, 1994, p. 169) as the major determinant structure. Intending "to dereify the workings of the profoundly phallocentric logic" (p. 169), Irigaray pursues a deconstructive methodology through a discursive work by displacing the phallic order as the prevalent so-called center of the Western civilization and society and reclaims the place of the feminine by highlighting sexual difference everywhere sexual undifferentiation prevails. She claims that "the social sphere is constituted through a founding subjection of the feminine and the commodified exogamous exchange of women justified by the regulatory authority of the Name of the Father" (p. 169). To put in other words, similar to the way Western civilization has been intervening with nature in an exploitative way, the

phallic culture treats the female body as a formless material that needs to be given form, repressed, controlled, exploited, utilized for efficiency, exchanged, or destroyed.

Women's position as the constitutive outside directed Irigaray to conceive women as the excess and the residue of the symbolic order, thus having the potential to disrupt the dominant logos and provide a change (Russell, 2013, p. 297). The feminine, claims Irigaray, inhabits radicalness for the symbolic order since it refers to a space that has not been fully captured by its operations. Hence, the radical feminine reveals the limits of the phallogocentrism and can be deployed to destabilize and disrupt the monolithic social order. In this category of radical otherness, the feminine does not indicate a substance that describes what already exists as an essence, but Irigaray employs the category in order to refer to a potentiality of subversion derivative of its impossibility and its radical otherness, or, in Cornell's words, "it always is this door to a radical future" (Cheah, et al., 1998, p. 23). Cavarero (2017) states

> that irreducible female the *feminine other*—which the patriarchal order itself, starting with Plato, recognizes as unsettling, unclassifiable, and therefore potentially subversive. The strategy is not only that of a thinking of sexual difference, but also to give rise to a different thinking in which the feminine other defines a camp of radical alterity that can extend to welcome all who are excluded from the system, that is, those subjects that the binary system casts into its constitutive outside: gays, lesbians, queers, or what has been called "the abject" (Butler, 1995). (p. 29)

Irigaray underlines that the change must occur in the symbolic order, which is a term she borrows from Lacan. By symbolic order, Lacan refers to a dynamic structure that organizes a society bounded by discourses, laws, and language regulated by the signifier The Big Other. The current symbolic order has its sexual economy within which the woman can only signify *no*thingness, always escaping from the grasp of symbolic laws. According to Lacan, the woman cannot be in any rate represented fully within a symbolic discourse. Being a former student of Lacan, Irigaray harshly criticizes his model for its attempt to reproduce a sexual truth that

denies the difference of the female, reestablishing the values of the patriarchal culture. Irigaray claims that Lacan does not take into account that this symbolic order under analysis is one that is produced only by male subjects for male subjects. Thus, Irigaray suggests that his model is circular in its phallocentrism; the model relies on an order that founded itself on the exclusion of women for centuries, then the search for a woman's status in that same order turns out to be absent, and thus she invites for a new symbolic order (Stone, 2007, pp. 121-123). She agrees with the Lacanian thinking in that a person can only become a conscious or a rational being by entering the culture/language and the person needs to be assigned either to a female or a male position when entering that culture. Yet she takes our attention to see that the current Western culture that has been produced and reproduced centuries reduced femaleness to motherhood, thus the entrance to language for the female refers to no other meaning than being a potential mother, or a mother. In other words, because one becomes conscious by entering the language, and the language carries a phallic currency, the woman cannot recognize herself other than in motherhood in this current Western phallic culture (pp. 121-124). The symbolic order holding the meanings, the horizon of ideas, and symbolisms associated with the female body represent it solely with a reference to a forced reproductive function and as a mirror reflecting the desires of man's discourse. She claims that it is the phallic symbolic order that shapes the institution of the female experience of her own body and that is the reason why she disagrees with the gender theory. For according to her interpretation the gender theory disregards the deep-rooted foundations of symbolism, imageries, and meanings attributed to being female-bodied.

The conceptualization of this radical otherness of the feminine difference in her early works has arguably allowed understanding this residual place not uniquely only to women but for all those subjects "that the binary system casts into its constitutive outside: gays, lesbians, queers" (Cavarero, 2017, p. 29). However, the idea of sexual difference as "the negative but constitutive substratum of phallogocentricism" drastically changes into "a generative interval that exists

between the two sexes" from *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* onward (Cheah et al., 1998, p. 27). There, in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, she revises the term less in referral to the radical otherness of the feminine difference but more to the generative interval between woman and man as a "sensible transcendental", embracing the difference now as a potential to assure a new foundation with new values. Although her call is "for a new ethics of the couple", new models of relations between "mother and daughter", "sister and brother", "father/son", and "mother/son", she primarily privileges the horizontal relation between an adult man and an adult woman. What she promotes is a new sexually different future to come, founded on this horizontal relationship between the two sexes, which would turn into "the fecundity of the couple" and the according "transfiguration of cultural and sociopolitical life" (Cheah et al., 1998, p. 27; Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 353). Within this formulation of *the new life* at all dimensions, she places sexual difference as "the horizon of worlds more fecund than any known to date-at least in the West-and without reducing fecundity to the reproduction", in which men and women appear to be "loving partners," "two loving subjects of different sexes" (Irigaray, 1993a). Thereby, Irigaray confined her exploration of the idea of sexual difference to the *fecund* realm between only women and men as the two sexes and thus to "how to make possible relation between man and woman" (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 353). Meaning that she sets the ethical social ground and the ethics of self-other relations in conjunction with heterosexual coupling in her "sexual and carnal ethics" (Irigaray, 1993a, p. 17).

> But the other who is forever unknowable is the one who differs from me sexually. This feeling of surprise, astonishment, and wonder in the face of the unknowable ought to be returned to its locus: that of sexual difference… This has never existed between the sexes since wonder maintains their autonomy within their statutory difference, keeping a space of freedom and attraction between them, a possibility of separation and alliance. (Irigaray, 1993a, pp. 13-14)

Irigaray, in an interview in 1996, invokes the notion of mystery as well, concerning the relationships between a woman and a man, and she says that "between us there is really a mystery" and points out to "the irreducible mystery between man and

woman" as a sublime figure (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 357). She proceeds by comparing this difference with the sameness of man-man and woman-woman relationships: "It's not at all the same kind of mystery that exists between woman and woman or between man and man. It's not similar. I don't know if this is easy to understand" (p. 357). Unlike Duras, Irigaray does not argue that same-sex relationships lack mystery, but she underlines that it is not the same kind of mystery that exists between man and woman.

She asserts that for the cultivation of the difference in all realms of the social sphere one needs to start with the fundamental difference: "difference between the sexes" (Irigaray, 2002, p. 79). Then, she appoints the heterosexual couple as the ground of the possibility for such a difference to spur in the process of the reconstitution of society towards a culture of difference. She explains her cultural project of cultivating the difference emphasizing that an irreducible difference resides between man and woman, not between same-sex couples. Rather, between the same sexes, there resides a difference that is more of an empirical sort that relies on the knowledge production based on our senses.

> Obviously, this two is always potentially a sexuate two. It's difficult to explain, but interesting, because between man and woman there's a negative, a type of irreducibility that doesn't exist between a woman and a woman. Let's say between a man and a woman the negativity [la negativite] is, dare I say it, of an ontological, irreducible type. Between a woman and another woman it's of a much more empirical type and, furthermore, can only be understood and can only live in the ontological difference between man and woman. It's complicated. (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 356)

What she proposes to be found between men and women as the sexual difference is, then, an ontological one, as opposed to that of between same sexes. She favors that ontological difference as the fecund ground for a new life, new ethics, and new sociality, yet she persists that the conception of that difference must cease to be shaped in the phallogocentric order. The way she describes the ontological character of sexual difference relies on her psychoanalytical account. She argues that men and women are first and foremost boys and girls who gain subjectivity in

different ways; the boy is born of a woman-mother, the different sex, and he ends up in difficulty as he finds out that he cannot give birth as her mother did. “The little boy, in order to situate himself vis-a-vis them other, must have a strategy, perhaps a strategy of mastery, … a strategy to keep himself from being submerged, engulfed” (as cited in Hirsh et al., 1996). On the other hand, the girl is “a little woman born of another woman. She is able to engender like her mother; thus, she has a sort of jubilation in being herself and in playing with herself” (as cited in Hirsh et al., 1996). According to Irigaray, this psychic course of development towards gaining subjectivity and identity results in men’s and women’s different subjectivities in relation with each other and becomes the ground of the sexual difference. “It’s not simply an anatomical question; it’s also a relational question. It’s essential not to forget that the anatomical is always entangled in the relational” (as cited in Hirsh et al., 1996). She further elaborates on this ontological-relational-sexual difference in ways of how it reflects on the linguistic level based on her studies, and declares that “boys accede to language more according to a subject-object relation –and this is verified by every linguistic inquiry– and the girl more by means of a subject-subject relation” (as cited in Hirsh et al., 1996). Moreover, as for her project of conceiving and applying the sexual difference in an altered manner in pursuit of a new sociality to come, she further emphasizes the relational aspect of difference. She interprets the phallogocentric understanding of and employing the difference to be a “genealogical” and “vertical” one that needs to be abolished and transformed into “a horizontal relation between adult man and adult woman with a horizontal transcendence – that is, an irreducibility between ‘I-woman’ [*le-femme*] and ‘You-man’ [*Tu-homme*]” (Hirsh et al., 1996, pp. 354-355).

Cornell and Butler have criticized this conceptualization of the sexual difference (Cheah et al., 1998, pp. 24-25). Cornell disapproves Irigaray by stating that the right feminist stance should prioritize the imaginary over the symbolic, yet Irigaray appears to do the otherwise by imposing femininity from the very beginning. Although Irigaray’s conceptualization of femininity is not an essentialist one (despite strategic essentialism), for her, the embracing of feminine subjectivity in

its positivity for the female is an exigency, for the cultivation of the sexually different future. To clarify, Cornell exemplifies her relationship with her daughter who has not yet been "femme'-ed." She admits that she formerly made attempts to impose an inversion of the phallogocentric position of femininity as "the repudiated feminine other" and claims that she has stepped back as she discerned that her daughter was yet in the imaginary realm. Cornell's realization constitutes the core of her critique of Irigaray's attempt to construct femininity-identification in the symbolic: "The suspicion I had had that the feminine could become conserving was actually becoming conserving in my own rhetoric with a daughter who, unlike me, had not yet internalized all the personas of wounded femininity" (Cheah et al., 1998). She further argues that such an imposition is far from reversing the phallogocentric order since what is imposed corresponds to the state's imposition of "civil identity" in the name of women and men as an ontological universal sexual identity (Cheah et al., 1998). Therefore, as opposed to and disagreeing with Irigaray, Cornell proposes that this division of human beings into two sexes must be rejected, regarding that "the state both expresses and reinforces the truth of how we should be actualized in our sexual identities, male/female. The law so conceived inevitably closes the domain of other sexual possibilities" (Cheah et al., 1998, pp. 24-25). In a similar vein, Butler pursuits a more genuine understanding of alterity beyond the binary that Irigaray's conceptualization of sexual difference represents (p. 28). Butler argues if the concept of difference is used to note "the salience of difference between women and men" (Barrett, 1987, p. 39) and primarily the difference between women and men is celebrated as a generative interval on the basis of its conceived potential to cultivate a difference economy, it leaves out the possibility to imagine an ethical homosexual relationship. To put in other words, if the ethical is celebrated on the basis of sexual difference as the generative interval, there is no way left to designate an ethical same-sex love in this frame. Butler claims that *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* is founded on the explicit presumption that women or men are heterosexual and "the sexuate right discourse" is reduced to "mom and motherhood", which is deficient for imposing heterosexuality both at the individual and the familial levels (Cheah et al., 1998, p. 28). This sort of

"presumptive heterosexuality" is problematic not only as praise of heterosexuality but also because it does so in a negative comparison to homosexuality and, indeed, to the extent all of non-heterosexist sexualities and social-familial engagements (p. 28). Hence, as Butler underlines, Irigaray happens to praise heterosexuality in its *fecund* ways of

> compelling men out of what she used to call their hom(m)osexualite into this encounter with alterity, where that alterity would in fact be the feminine, and what would emerge from that exchange would be a certain kind of heterosexual love which would come to capture the domain of the ethical. (p. 28)

As can be seen, both Cornell and Butler aim to call for a more encompassing notion of alterity that comes with diversity on the ontological, ethical, and sexual level.

As for the details of Irigaray's project of cultivating the sexual difference, she envisages a gradual recreation of the new culture, as the only effective possibility, since we have been living in a sexually undifferentiated culture for so long. The new "culture of two", requires the replacement of the culture of one and needs to recognize the difference of the feminine, instead of the blindness of indifference (Irigaray, 1993a; Irigaray, 1996; Hirsh et al., 1996; Irigaray, 2002). Then, certain questions follow: If we have been living in a sexually undifferentiated culture for so long, then where do we locate the difference of the feminine? How is it possible even to argue that there is a sexual difference? Irigaray responds that we cannot possibly find it in the current symbolic order, but we need to change it by rethinking through the critical position of the feminine in the masculine order as the constitutive outside. Considering that she observes the crucial ground for the change sought at the cultural and linguistic level through the discursive realm, she speaks of a change that gradually transforms the deep-rooted understandings of the hierarchical binary oppositions producing and reproducing the male as positivity and the female as negativity, lack, and deviance (Irigaray, 1985a, 1985b). From that viewpoint, Irigaray suggests a strategy that is *mimicry*; the method called "mimicry" refers to the deliberate affirmation of the given feminine roles within patriarchy by the women to expose the workings of patriarchal order and abolish it.

Irigaray tells that masquerading imposed on women within patriarchy can be re-appropriated by women for revolting against it (Irigaray, 1985b). Irigaray's method of mimicry combines with "strategic essentialism" aiming to mimic the deep-rooted understandings associated with the female body by revising them and replacing the negative attributes with new positive values (Irigaray, 1985b; Stone, 2007, p. 125, pp. 135-136). It is not to assume that there is an inherent essence to the female body, but it is a strategy to engage with the current culture and change it by attributing the female body to various non-fixed positivity. For instance, the strategy works in a way to revise the association of feminine desire with lack and refigures the feminine desire as a positivity that is distinct to her. Moreover, Irigaray suggests that the prominent negative representation of the vagina as a hole that should be replaced by a positive one, and her offer is describing it as two lips touching, caressing each other (Irigaray, 1985a). Similarly, the strategy offers a new way of imagining the female body's lifelong physical changes. The female body has been imagined as a formless body because of the physical changes she potentially might go through like menstruation cycles and pregnancy. It means that the male body has taken to be the origin that represents the form and the female body has been defined in reliance to the origin and as the body that lacks what the origin has. Irigaray suggests that this negativity must be replaced by positive imagery that can reflect the changes in the female body on its own terms with emphasis on its advancement through various forms over time as a dynamic body (Stone, 2007, p. 126). The strategy of mimicry has been repudiated by many feminist critics for its reproduction of the workings of the dominant patriarchal discourses. Some argued that Irigaray's strategy of essentialism in its effect is not any different from essentialism because in practice the new imageries even if they are positively valued can put women in disadvantaged positions (Stone, 2007). For example, even though the female body is represented as a dynamic body rather than a formless body, still the emphasis is on the menstruation cycle and the pregnancy can create a ground for not hiring a woman (p. 136). In addition, as I have mentioned, Irigaray designates a new civil rights code as a significant part of her project that would constitute the rights and duties of each sex: a new civil rights contract based on the

sexuate rights, aimed to realize the generative interval of sexual difference in political praxis by fostering sexual difference culture of the two (Irigaray, 1993a, pp. 81-92; Cheah et al., 1998).

Irigaray's theoretical framework has been and is still criticized for sharing a similar tendency with other psychoanalytical-oriented feminists of the 70s and 80s in locating the male homosexual at the heart of the phallic currency of Western civilization without noting that this origin-installation is the effect of the heterosexual contract. Irigaray, too, inherited the myth of the origin regarding the constitution of Western civilization from Freud, in which the renunciation of immediate male homosexuality is located as the founding lack in the origin of the civilization (Freud, 1962, p. 37; Hope, 1994, p. 164). In accordance to the myth, that absence becomes the motor of Western history, and that leads to a Western culture immersed in *male homoeroticism* not in immediate gratification but in social mediation, that tacitly lies deep under the ostensible heterosexual symbolic order on the surface (Hope, 1994, p. 164). Irigaray refers to this culture as "hom(m)osexuality" and gestures towards the archaic male solidarity that is organized among men and for men under a homosocial contract that gives no possibility for symbolic recognition of relations between women (Irigaray, 1985b). Women are counted insofar as they serve men's needs, exchanged between men as a commodity, protect the house, or in other ways that function as the mirror reflecting the male imagery. The circulation of women carries on only for the guarantee for the gratification of the desire between men for men. Thus, Irigaray concludes that Western civilization's history is charged with the homosexual desire that "violently seized and monopolized the symbolic at the site of its very origin" (Hope, 1994, p. 164). The repressed and prohibited immediate male homosexual desire at the heart of the Western sociality incessantly operates in its social mediation as to gratify exclusively the needs of men. Irigaray's conception of homosexual desire in this way provides a crucial critique for my discussion concerning the theoretical and discursive relations between the idea of sexual difference, as a central element in both Duras's semantic universe and Irigaray's

feminist theory, and homonegativity, which I will elaborate particularly in the second chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE ERASURE OF THE FEMININE DIFFERENCE AND THE MIRROR

The Malady of Death by Duras is a novella that relies on the conviction that phallic systems of thought with its repudiation of the ontological sexual difference between male and female sets males as the origin, of life, of the society by disavowing the female's part in the origin. Demonstrating how the repudiation of this ontological difference goes hand in hand with masculine hegemony, Duras deals with the questions of sexual difference and sexual domination all in the same breath. In this chapter, I interpret *The Malady of Death* as a story that undoes the long-established story of the masculine Sameness, exposing the dissymmetrical structural positions of masculine and feminine within the patriarchal regime whereby the seemingly sexually different culture is, indeed, elaborated by taking into account solely the masculine subjectivity to the detriment of the feminine difference. While I read the text closely by paying close attention to the particular features of the text itself, such as narration, setting, characterization, point of view, major themes, symbolism, style and the discussion of the storyline, I aim to understand how these features talk with the main questions of sexual *in*difference and sexual domination in concern.

The Malady of Death opens as a male[19] narrator begins to recite the restless man's search for a woman:

> You wouldn't have known her, you'd have seen her everywhere at once, in a hotel, in a street, in a train, in a bar, in a book, in a film, in yourself, your inmost self, when your sex grew erect in the night, seeking somewhere to put itself, somewhere to shed its load of tears (Duras, 1986, p. 1).

The narrator presents the man's hope that loving a woman would potentially ease his pain, take him outside of his solipsistic universe, and move him somewhere outside, the unknown (the feminine difference). We are informed that he has not

[19] I want to note that the identity of the narrator is abstract in the text, but it is identified as a male in the appendix solely.

loved a woman before, and he has always remained in a sexual sphere, which is depicted by the text as a realm where the feminine difference is excluded.

Although he wants to move outside of this sameness sphere, the fact that the narrator is a man reflects that he cannot get out of the sameness sphere completely, as suggested by the text. The male narrator addressing him by a second person pronoun (*Vous*)[20] and the female protagonist by a third person pronoun (*elle*) also signals the male protagonist's imminence with the male world. Schwab (1996) notes that the direct reference to the male character and the relatively distant reference to the female protagonist "extends an invitation to the male reader to partake in a 'fantasy' scripted by a woman author" and "places the female reader in a paradoxical space where she is at the same time 'inside' the narrative (through grammatical association and narrative perspective) and 'outside' (through gender affiliation)" (pp. 170-171). On the other hand, although the course of events starts as if the reader faces with a traditional erotic fiction whereby the masculine desire serves as "the original catalyst for the movement of a text" (Moskos, 1991, p. 522), and as if it is a writing of his-story, *The Malady of Death* is not a mere repetition of a masterplot[21]; rather, it repeats the masterplot "to undo the same story" (p. 521) and it is made possible because the female protagonist does occupy a place in the borders of the phallogocentric order. In a similar vein, the conditional past-perfect tense used by the narrator marks the way the events unfold does not entail a necessity and exposes the contingency of what is being dramatized[22] by evoking the artificiality of life and fiction and opens space for the possibility of *otherwise*.

[20] "This engagement is complicated … the narrating voice of *La Maladie de la mort* switches from 'vous' to 'toi', maintaining the familiar for a possessive pronoun, before switching back to 'vous' at the beginning of the second paragraph" (Crowley, 1998, p. 664).

[21] Peter Brooks describes Freud's masterplot as "[t]he movement of ... narrative from erotic arousal through a series of repetitions leading finally to death" (Moskos, 1991, p. 520).

[22] The use of conditional tense denotes a "dreamlike quality" (Schwab, 1996, p. 171). The story is built upon not what happened or happens but what *would* possibly happen. In Duras's interviews with della Torre, Duras mentions the contingency-attributing characteristic of the conditional tense use: "The conditional is better than any other mode at rendering the idea of artificiality that underlies both literature and cinema. Each event appears as the potential, hypothetical consequence of something else" (Duras, 2020, pp.

I think, similar to the traditional erotic fictions' narrations, the intimate sexual encounters are told to the reader from a male perspective in this text as well. However, unlike the traditional ones, here the reader is withheld from the position of direct witness in terms of the course of events, and thus "the imaginary voyeuristic spectatorship" does not prevail. Instead, the reader cannot keep a safe distance from the story due to being located into the narration by the pronoun "you" (Schwab, 1996, p. 182). By that narrative effect, Duras deconstructs the traditional erotic narrative (Cohen, 1993, p. 104). Moreover, the choice of a male narrator is indeed a significant element in what Duras wants to convey about the relations between men and women, and also between men and men. The male mediation in a male protagonist's story with a female protagonist is a literary reflection of a triangulation. However, I argue that the male narrator and the male protagonist are not two different people but parts of the same man. A man is imagining his own story of a sexual encounter with a woman by referring to himself as *you*. Let me explain how I arrived at this conclusion and what its significance is. First and foremost, my interpretation is based on Duras's statements about the two-sidedness of the man in her book *The Practicalities*. She proposes:

> If you're a man your favorite company – that of your heart, your flesh and your sex – is the company of men. And it's in this context that you approach women. It's the other man, man number two inside you, who lives with your wife and has sexual relations with her – ordinary sexual relations which may be utilitarian, gastronomical, vital, amorous, or even passionate, and which also produce children and families. But the chief man inside you, man number one, has real relationships with men, his brothers. (Duras, 1992, p. 39)

Stressing the male bonding and the male homosocial identification, Duras suggests an idea of man as two-sided, claiming that one side is differentiated from the other side in terms of gender relations. *The chief man* is primary for him and essentially forms relationships with his favorite company – the other men. Meanwhile, *the man number two* inside him establishes relationships with the female sex, has sexual

45-46). Therefore, the conditional tense defies all predetermined causations but opens space for fantasy, possible changes in the course of events.

intercourse with them, and/or forms a family with them. However, the self that is essential for the man is the chief man because only the relationships amongst fellow men are fundamental to him. According to Duras's idea in terms of gender relations, the essential male bonding consists in the exclusion of the difference of the female sex, but, at the same time, the male is bounded to establish relationships with the female sex. Duras further claims that even if the man number two establishes relationships with women, it is in this mood that he welcomes them, meaning that the chief man mediates the relationships with women. In accordance, men's relationships only with other men are immediate, whereas men's relationships with women are mediated.

I propose that this is the reason why the male narrator addresses the male protagonist directly by using the singular second-person pronoun "you", while he never addresses the woman directly but using the singular third "she". Compared to the directedness regarding the male protagonist, the use of the third-person pronoun "she" reflects a relative psychic distance from the narrator. She is situated at the outer space of the inner circle of homosocial male bonding, thus as a stranger, the unknown, the other. As Schwab (1996) suggests, "the man whose perspective she is compelled to assume casts the women in the text as the absolute Other, a stranger" (p. 171).

In accordance with Duras's semantic universe and the idea of sexual difference, this dividedness might be taking its source from the long-tradition of the erasure of the feminine difference. It appears as if the forces either coming from inside or the dictates coming from outside that pushes men to have relationships with women are so alienating for the chief man that there is a need for a specific part that would only serve to engage with women, while the fundamental part of the man has relationships with other men, the favorite company. Duras asserts, "they[23] are unaware of women. … Behind men, there is distortion of reality, there are lies"

[23] It stands for men.

(Husserl-Kapit & Duras, 1975, p. 428). Thus, Duras asserts that the male remains fundamentally within the sameness order of the masculine and cannot get away from the bodies of his fellow men. Even if he forms relationships with women, this paradigm does not easily change because his essential existence builds upon the elimination of the feminine difference. I suggest that the narrator of *The Malady of Death* occupies the chief man's position, and the male protagonist occupies the man number two. Therefore, the narrator and the narrated man are two parts of the same man. The man number two has sexual relations with the woman, but the chief man mediates these encounters and tells us about what would hypothetically happen between them. Here, in the story, we witness the first sexual encounter of the man number two with a woman, so this is the birth of man number two. However, they are not totally distinct from each other, since the man number two carries the chief man with him.

In the appendix, Duras proposes that both men are "suffering from a fundamental and fatal weakness."[24] This shared suffering derives from the inherent alienation of the man disintegrating him into two parts, and the suffering is engendered within their communications with women. The division within men underscores their distortion of reality, as proposed by Duras, because the distortion of reality would give rise to the impossibility of an experiencing-self to stay as a total entity, which leads the person to detach from own self. The alienation of the man intensifies in a relationship with the woman, and thus the threat and the agony become more evident. Since even the attempt to love this difference evokes alienating feelings, the male protagonist, that is the man number two, alone cannot narrate the story; yet a narrator, the chief man, mediates and envisions the encounters between the man number two and the woman. Therefore, second-person narration helps Duras illustrate this dividedness, this need for mediation, and the man's alienation and suffering.

[24] "The man reading the text seems to be suffering from a fundamental and fatal weakness –the same as that of the other– the man we don't see" (Duras, 1986, p. 59).

2.1. THE CONTRACT AND HIS MALADY OF DEATH

From the outset, the operations of the phallus are unveiled, disturbed, and complicated by the displacement of the imagery of the male sex organ. The emphasis on agony and despair experienced by the male protagonist signaled by the "load of tears" performs a critical effect for this concern. It would not be exaggerating to argue that the load of tears stands for the semen. Then, the ejaculation is framed not only as a sexual activity that may produce pleasure, but this frame also brings an emotional ring of vulnerability. Duras's impulse is to disturb the cultural presuppositions of the male sex organ as self-contained and potent by complicating the imagery of "hard phallus" or "ejaculatory potency" with "lachrymose vulnerability" (Crowley, 1998, p. 664). That is to say, this complication disturbs the privilege culturally associated with the male sexual organ as connoting the place of the active in the active/passive economy of representation (Irigaray, 1985a, pp. 14-21), and his later attempts for mastery is interpreted from the start in complication with vulnerability. Duras here plays with the long-established clichés of masculine/feminine difference – the alignment of emotional, vulnerable, and passive with the feminine and the rational, powerful, and active with masculine positions; for instance, according to Irigaray, "philosophers have constantly used male and female bodies as symbols of metaphysical principles, e.g. of reason and emotion" (Stone, 2007, p. 124). Later in the text, this association between ejaculation and weeping reappears when he describes what love holds:

> Try what? she asks. Loving, you answer. She asks: Yes, but why? You say as to sleep with your sex at rest, somewhere unknown. You say you want to try, to weep there, in that particular place (Duras, 1986, p. 3).

There, again, male sexual fluid is paired with tears, and sexual intercourse is pictured in the sphere of vulnerability. It, indeed, is a way for Duras to unveil the desperate pose of the masculine of assuming the master role, for which he reaches by designating the contract of the nights, and code his tears not "as phallic tears but melancholic tears" (Schwab, 1996, p. 174). In agony, being "inhabited by an

imaginary woman" (p. 183), he is being dragged along by an imaginary phantasm with an erotic appeal. His phantasm is embroidered by an imaginary figure; what he seeks in a woman appears not to be bound with any literal particularities of an actual woman. It is a certain agony that shatters him with its destabilizing force and moves him towards a female body in a sudden urge to alleviate his pain and to attempt to love. An anonymous woman he presumes to be a "prostitute" accepts to be his partner for the upcoming paid nights. The conditions of the contract revolve only around "what he wants". When she accepts the contract she first looks at him but then she turns her gaze away to look towards outside. From that moment, it is signaled that she will participate in the paid nights, but she will also "remain elsewhere" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 76).

This is his first sexual experience with a woman, and his knowledge about how it feels to penetrate a vagina is limited to dits. From his perspective, the vagina acquires an enigmatic meaning – the other's sexual secret, which he will try to comprehend, love, and find relief with/in. Besides, it becomes further clarified by the way the narrator addresses him that her sex is a site of the unknown as well: "You say as to sleep with your sex at rest, somewhere unknown" (Duras, 1986, p. 3). In the beginning, the mystification of her sex appears less as a motivation for an appropriation of an other's secret but more of a calling for movement beyond his epistemological confines. However, the preset terms of the sexual contract designated solely by the man and given consent by the woman, in return for more payment, metamorphoses the nights into a performance of the ancestral forms of masculine domination:

> She asks: What other conditions? You say she mustn't speak, like the women of her ancestors, must yield completely to you and to your will, be entirely submissive like peasant women in the barns after the harvest when they're exhausted and let the men come to them while they're asleep. So that you may gradually get used to that shape molding itself to yours, at your mercy as nuns are at God's. And also so that little by little, as day dawns, you may be less afraid of not knowing where to put your body or at what emptiness to aim your love. (Duras, 1986, pp. 4-5)

He utters his demand for adopting the already available ancient patriarchal codes of sex roles, setting up the course of events beforehand – she should be waiting passively in the service of man's sexual desires. In that sense, the contract renounces any possible agency on her side. His demand from her to *per-form*[25] as her ancestors did can be conceived as his demand to tie them both to a patriarchal history whereby the masculine desire is acknowledged as the original catalyst for sexual intercourse and no position except full submission and worshipping remains for the female counterpart. The script makes references to various forms of domination-submission relationships from history as well as recalling the God-like position of the man attained by himself and patriarchy. He assumes the master position, yet it is quite paradoxical because he seems to be a fearful God and his position is rather ambivalent. It is apparent here that he wants to assume a role of an absolute master because he is afraid of losing his control, especially in the dark, and he wants to protect himself from her subjectivity (Schwab, 1996, p. 172). The powerful masculine role he assumes to perform cannot hold, likewise, she will only perform the role to perfection, by remaining inside through mirroring him, while moving towards outside, through sleeping and keeping in silence. As we see later, the man continues to assume a master position as the masculine power when he identifies her cloth and hair with heliotrope and, in effect, he identifies himself with the Sun-God Helios, a powerful male figure, which I will discuss at another point. Then, through the contract, the man puts them in master-slave dichotomy in which

> every woman [is] a victim – reduced to the materiality of existence, incapable of surmounting that condition. (…) The prototype of a femininity subjugated by men, it being men who lay down the laws of the couple, of sex, and desire. There are women like her everywhere, incapable of expressing themselves and exhausted by the emptiness that surrounds them. (Duras, 2020, pp. 22-23)

The nights start as they follow the script and she comes every night. Lying unclad on the bed and sleeping, just as he necessitates. She is benign in compliance with

[25] *Per-* bearing the meaning of "through" from its Latin origin, the word *per-form* further expresses the man's demand from her to pass through a long-set form instead of acting by her own will and desire at that specific time and also indicates the contrast form framing his attitude, which altogether recur the patriarchal forms of gendered individualities.

his demands. The first two nights take place in the realm of the eye. He visually examines her for long hours, finding it hard to physically contact her or slumber by her. He will identify her cloth and hair with heliotrope and citron, which bear significant symbolism. She accepts it; she is ready to mirror him (Duras, 1986, p. 8). By mistake, one night he gives him pleasure but when she cries out, he wants her not to be silent. He reinforces her muteness by interdicting her from any right to give voice to her sexual pleasure: "Another evening, you inadvertently give her pleasure and she cries out. You tell her not to. She says she won't anymore" (Duras, 1986, p. 9). After another orgasm: She opens her eyes and says: What joy. You put your hand over her mouth to silence her. Tell her one doesn't say such things. She shuts her eyes. Says she won't say it again (Duras, 1986, p. 10). She finds this demand rather odd, but she obeys the demand, and the narrator tells, "no woman will ever cry out because of you now" (Duras, 1986, p. 9). These lines suggest that she stands for every woman and what he wants determines the operations of the masculine economy. Because he is caught up in the masculine economy, her pleasure does not make *sense* to him. Indeed, he is intolerable to her pleasure because it refers to the outside and what the masculine economy has repressed. Her pleasure arouses a feeling of uncanny since the masculine subject claimed to be disembodied to claim for the universal (Irigaray, 1996, p. 25). He tells that "they*"* [26] do not talk about that, but "talk about everything else". That will be the first time "she laughs" (Duras, 1986, pp. 10-11). She goes back to sleep again. When she sleeps, he gets lost. He cannot rest. He weeps. He wanders around the room and goes "out on the terrace" (p. 11). The feeling of uncanniness remains with him and she becomes the mirror to reflect his anguish and perturbation: "As her sleep goes on, sorrow grows in the room" (p. 12). As Schwab tells, his "gaze does not create an object of pleasure but one of grief" (Schwab, 1996, p. 174). When she sleeps, she sleeps "[s]o deeply", and she "smiles" (Duras, 1986, p. 12). Her smile suggests that she is somewhere outside. She sometimes wakes up when he touches her, when she hears sounds of nature (p. 12). Her sensitiveness to sensations is one of the

[26] Arguably, the word *they* refers to other men. I will argue that it specifically refers to gay men in the next chapter.

emblems that she is not assimilated to the masculine discourse and could remain in reach with her body and thus, nature. When “she wakes”, she brings the prophecy that “the malady’s getting more and more of a hold on” him (Duras, 1986, p. 13). He asks “what malady” she is talking about, but she “can’t say, yet” (p. 13). The name of the malady cannot be symbolized by language, yet because she has reached to that sense through outside, that is the darkness. Later, when she “translate[s]” “darkness” to the language, she will be able to tell the name but again the name: *the malady of death* resists the unity of the phallic discourse with its contradictory absurd composition (Husserl-Kapit & Duras, 1975). His appetite for sexual intercourse elevates after she tells him that he suffers from a malady, which suggests that his relationship with sex is paired with death (Duras, 1986, p. 13). As he feels emptier, he marks her vagina as a hole, and “fill[s]” it (Duras, 1986, p. 13). As he feels more threatened by the announcement of his suffering, he starts to fantasize that she is a mythical woman created by “God Himself, with the unalterable perfection of individuality”” (pp. 15-16). The capitalization of the first letter indeed implies that he is identifying himself to be God. When he identifies her with heliotrope, he identifies himself with Sun-God. Herein, after he learns that he is suffering from an illness, he identifies himself with the God of the monotheistic religions, arguably because now he needs to identify with a more powerful patriarchal figure. However, his fantasy shatters down and she mirrors his wish to kill her: “It invites strangulation, rape, ill usage, insults, shouts of hatred, the unleashing of deadly and unmitigated passions” (p. 16). He is blinded by his own specularization of the woman’s body and he cannot see her body when he looks at her. He is invisible to him (pp. 16-17). He is destined to remain ignorant about him insofar as he is caught up in the phallic discourse. It is also true that as she sleeps, he would not be able to know about her and would be left ignorant about her, and it is the effect of the maintained conditions of the contract and the mirroring position she has assigned to within the masculine economy of desire. Crowley (1998) suggests that,

> [t]here is no possibility of male understanding of the women who are exchanged; woman, in fact, constitutes (in Irigaray’s image) the blind spot of the ‘knowledge’ that is content simply to inhabit one side of the divide, this

> ignorance figured repeatedly here in the woman's apparently inexhaustible sleep. (p. 664)

Crowley refers to the Irigarayan account regarding the economy of representation that eliminates the difference of the feminine and the prescriptions written for the feminine, by taking the male as the origin and the female as its negated other. The feminine corresponds to the inverted negative of the male within this economy of representation of Sexuality and subjectivity is denied to the female through discursive operations of *knowledge* production about female sex in the absence of participation of female collaborators, and only by the men who are assumed to be the masters by eliminating the difference of the feminine. According to Irigaray, this can only amount to ignorance and multiplication of the same (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 21).

This ignorance is indeed represented by the double blindness of the male in regard to her sexuality. Crowley (1998) suggests, "this ignorance is at its most profound in that area in which woman's status as exchange-object is most profoundly inscribed, her sexuality" (p. 664). The male protagonist is not able to see what constitutes her body:

> You say: You must be very beautiful.
> She says: I'm here right in front of you. Look for yourself.
> You say: I can't see anything.
> She says: Try. It's all part of the bargain.
> You take hold of the body and look at its different areas. You turn it round, keep turning it round. Look at it, keep looking at it. Then you give up. Give up. Stop touching it. Until that night you hadn't realized how ignorant one might be of what the eyes see, the hands and the body touch. Now you find out. (Duras, 1986, pp. 16-17)

The man's relentless efforts to see the body of the woman end up in failure. Her body is invisible to him. In Schwab's words, "her body mirrors his blindness" (Schwab, 1996, p. 176). On the other hand, the ideal imaginary representation of the body of the woman, as in the sentence "You must be very beautiful," dominates his knowledge concerning her body. Crowley (1998) further argues, "the woman's

sexuality, embodied by Duras in her genitals, represents the point at which male 'knowledge' (as it extends itself over the field of vision) breaks down" (p. 664).

> Your hand is over the sex, between the open lips, it's there it strokes. You look at the opening and what surrounds it, the whole body. You don't see anything. You want to see all of a woman, as much as possible. You don't see that for you it's impossible. (Duras, 1986, pp. 35-36)

His knowledge of the female sexuality, as represented by the female genitals, is doubly blinded because while he fails to see that he also fails to know that it is impossible to see the female sexuality in the economy of representation of sexual difference framed in sameness. Likewise, his initial information he heard from *them* saying that the vagina was more resistant was mistaken: "One evening you do it, as arranged, you sleep with your face between her parted legs, up against her sex, already in the moistness of her body, where she opens. She offers no resistance" (Duras, 1986, pp. 8-9). Irigaray claims that if the mirror that reflects the vagina is flat, there is no other way to see it as a hole and rather as if nothing is there, and thus invisible (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 89). She says one needs a speculum not the flat mirror to see the female sex organ and that becomes one of the reasons why she names her first book as *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 238).

Irigaray, in *Speculum of The Other Woman* and *This Sex Which Is Not One*, argues that the female sex has been discursively produced to be a mystery[27], "that black box[28], strongbox[29]" (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 20) within the Western philosophical tradition and also Freud's psychoanalytic discourse. In her critique of Freud's psychoanalytic discourse, she demonstrates that Freud tried to *solve this mystery*, what he called "the riddle of the nature of femininity" (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 13). Irigaray presents that after Freud struggled for a long time to describe femininity, at some point he concluded that it was not clear-cut or rather impossible to discern

[27] "You look at the shape suspected through the ages" (Duras, 1986, p. 32).
[28] "Night after night, you enter the dark of her sex" (Duras, 1986, p. 13). "She parts her legs, and in the hollow between you see the dark night at last. You say: It was there, the dark night" (Duras, 1986, p. 50).
[29] "They say it offers more resistance, it's smooth but it offers more resistance than emptiness does" (Duras, 1986, p. 4).

what femininity was. However, he did not stop there since uncertainty was a problem, and thus he needed rigorous scientific categories. Irigaray claims that when Freud was producing an economy of representation that he thought to be scientific, he was pretending to have a new answer to the question of sexual difference. Irigaray argues that what he was actually doing was repeating the social affairs of the day. He produced a schema of binary oppositions by installing the male sexuality as the origin, constituting the feminine as the inverted negative image of what male sexuality stood for in the equation (pp. 13-27). The female, then, has been interpreted, rather fictively, in a way that would reflect men's understanding of what masculinity and femininity were at the time being. This economy of representation organized hierarchically in the privilege of the male constitutes hierarchical structures of power represented with a serious of binary oppositions within Freud's psychoanalytic discourse, whereby the former terms refer to the male and the latter to the female: "be/*become,* have/*not have* sex (organ), phallic/*non-phallic*, penis/*clitoris* or else penis/*vagina*, plus/*minus*, clearly representable/*dark continent*, logos/*silence* or idle chatter, desire for the mother/*desire to be the mother*, etc." (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 22). All these come to the discursive production of Sexuality by the yardstick of male sexuality and, as Irigaray argues, "in this proliferating desire of the same, death will be the only representative of an outside, of a heterogeneity, of: woman will assume the function of representing death (of sex/organ), castration" (p. 27). However, as Irigaray notes, these categories are not merely the inventions of Freud himself, but rather they correspond to and reveal the wider phallic discourse in the Western tradition of thought:

> [I]n the process of elaborating a theory of sexuality, Freud brought to light something that had been operative all along though it remained implicit, hidden, unknown: the sexual indifference that underlies the truth of any science, the logic of every discourse. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 69)

Therefore, the core problem is criticized to be the categorization of the feminine sex connoting a mystery, something unknown, and negative has been deeply rooted within Western history. That category has an ambivalent nature; while it functions

to claim a lack in the sense that it cannot be representable in opposed to the penis's clear representability, it also functions to reflect the uncanny felt towards the vagina based on the castration anxiety that it reminds to men. It can be thus argued that it is figured as lack by its excess; the assumed role of mastery keeps the master in a paradox.

Is it this being "caught in the solipsism of his univocity" (Cohen, 1993, p. 108) that Marguerite Duras has called "the malady of death"? That is to ask whether the title of the book signals the male protagonist's attempt for mastery and the erasure of the feminine difference by the masculine same. The contracted conditions suppress the feminine desire and mute the woman's expression to the point that she becomes supposedly knowable only in the ideal representation of imagination in the field of the same. He attempts to subdue her, cut her voice, repress her emotions, reject to see her as a particular woman but assimilating her into long-term fantasies, and depersonalize her in order to protect himself from the uncanny that she represents in the phallic economy. His attempt to love fails because to love cannot take place in the sameness frame. In considering this failure with an inspiration from Levinasian idea of infinite separation and asymmetry between the self and the other, against the totalitarian attempts o seeing the other as a whole, it is also possible to say that "to love is surely to have in sight the other as the unique, the stranger on the bed with her invisibility in spite of her naked body" (Yazıcı, 2019, pp. 67-68).

It is probable that, when the woman of the paid nights finds the man guilty of trying to impose death on her, she uses the word death in congruence with how Irigaray points out that death becomes the only metaphysical representation for women within the sexual *in*difference paradigm [30] . As a way to talk about his epistemological, symbolic, and physical violence towards her, when he is denying her sexual pleasure, naming her, silencing her, and trying to master sleep and her.

[30] "In this proliferating desire of the same, death will be the only representative of an outside, of a heterogeneity, of an other: woman will assume the function of representing death (of sex/organ), castration" (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 27).

He reduces her body to a "fleshly machine" while he watches her having an orgasm, so that he would have the illusion to be able to control her body like a machine (Duras, 1986, p. 35). Schwab (1996) notes that his illusion is one aspect of his malady of death and the death drive, which regresses the alive to the inanimate. He watches her body during sex "as one would watch the precise functioning of a bodily machine, he can 'animate' her yet keep her dead at the same time" (p. 175). He wishes to murder her because he cannot tolerate the uncanny she represents for him. His multiple experiences of not being sure of whether she is alive or dead demonstrate his aroused feelings of "uncanny" (Schweigert, 2010). She turns into a threat like an "object of aggression" (Vasquez et al., 2017). However, he cannot kill her since if he kills his double, he has to die, too (Schweigert, 2010) and, he cannot kill her because to maintain the assumed master role, her recognition is essential. His need for recognition and her role as the mirror is most clearly illustrated when he tells her that he needs her to ask for him to speak and that he cannot speak without her (Duras, 1986, p. 44). He is caught up in a paradox of both needing her but simultaneously being threatened by her presence.

As I have said earlier, she is the double, harbinger of death. Indeed, seeing that he was suffering from the malady of death motivated her in accepting the contract. First, she cannot name the illness. But when she experiences a symbolic death by being "verbally and physically silenced" by him (Cohen, 1993, p. 109), she is expelled more towards the outside. She "translate[s]" it from "darkness" and gives it a name (Husserl-Kapit & Duras, 1975). The malady of death refers to his caught-up position in the deathly phallic order. His exploitation and appropriation of her by using her as a mirror to reflect himself mean that when he is under threat, she seems as if she is inviting murder and, he wishes to murder her. She suggests that his malady is fatal and incurable in the sense that the carrier is likely to un-live and die, because "whoever has it doesn't know he's a carrier, of death", "without any life to die to"[31] (Duras, 1986, p. 19). He is stuck "between living and non-living;

[31] The figuring of a male character with an inability to live, in agony, is less than exclusive to the male protagonist in *The Malady of Death*, but it is a recurrent representation in

absence and presence" (Shildrick, 2020, p. 170). It is a death that is experienced while alive, rendering impossible any open relations with the present, past, and future. What remains is a "life form" (Schwab, 1996, p. 176) of death ("She smiles, says this is the first time, that until she met you she didn't know how death could be lived" (Duras, 1986, p. 45)) in the mode of the overwhelming replicative operations of the same building schema because he tries to assimilate everything to his image. Later on, she announces his death and calls him "a dead man," and when she learns that he has never loved a woman, she judges him further by telling him that "a dead man's a strange thing" (Duras, 1986, p. 31). She is inaccessible by her sleep and silence, which "unleashes the murderous aggressivity" (Schwab, 1996, p. 176): "The body's completely defenseless, smooth from face to feet. It invites strangulation, rape, ill usage, insult, shouts of hatred, the unleashing of deadly and unmitigated passions" (Duras, 1986, p. 16). He wishes to murder her and sees the malady of death "fomenting" (Duras, 1986, p. 34) in her by projecting his malady on to her (pp. 177-178). She further announces that he does not love, and he accepts. It is speculated by the text, then, that he is sexually involved with other men but neither he loves them, nor he is loved back. He asks whether he can be loved; she tells him that he will not ever be loved by anyone because of his feelings, "so dull and sluggish", and because he "lied and said the sea [was] black" (Duras, 1986, pp. 43-44).

The sea, which has been a space that many of Duras's characters live by or speak about, takes a significant meaning in this text too. The movements of the sea are the cyclic acts of everlasting fusion and separation (Hill, 1993, p. 81). Duras describes what the sea means to her as follows: "The sea's an unlimited force that engulfs the 'self' and the gaze, each first losing themselves before they recover their own identity" (Duras, 2020, p. 118). The sea in *The Malady of Death* moves instead

Duras's *oeuvre*. Duras comments: "In the Vice Consul, (…) and, indeed, in many of the other men in my books, from the Chinese lover to the man in *The Malady of Death*—there was such great pain and weakness, an inability to live, based precisely on the total rejection of self and society" (Duras, 2020, p. 71).

of the male protagonist and the woman, thereby, one can say that it moves for the possibility of love and losing oneself in the other before the separation occurs. However, as suggested by the text, since he is "caught in the solipsism" (Cohen, 1993, p. 108), the self's movement of engulfment in the other feels overwhelming and smothering, and thus he sees the sea black and heavy as he sees the female protagonist as "a dark shape on the bed" and her sex organ is similarly aligned with the sea as the dark night (Duras, 1986, p. 28). For the female protagonist, saying that the sea is black is correspondent with the way he knows things and his fear of love and losing himself. The following sentences of the woman further illustrate how she sees that his incapability of engulfment and love is associated with the malady of death he suffers from: "She says: I don't want to know anything the way you do, with that death-derived certainty, that hopeless monotony, the same every day of your life, every night, and that deadly routine of lovelessness" (Duras, 1986, p. 48). Therefore, one of the aspects of the malady of death is associated with lovelessness within the homogeneous affirmation of the same and not being able to lose oneself in the other. In other words, not being able to attempt to try to transcend the difference that separates men and women. As the female protagonist puts it, the man is dying "without any life to die to" (p. 19). He is under arrest within the same-replicative mechanisms of the phallogocentric logic. The urge to achieve mastery to leave out the ambiguous and the incalculable takes his life away and leaves an empty life with empty tears. Even though the absence of love moves him to search for a remedy, both the absence and presence of love and intimacy threaten him. So, in his case, he fears to lose himself in love, because to lose himself would represent death for him with negative connotations. As he fears death, he fears love too. Love and death, both with negative connotations, seem to be paired for the male protagonist (Schwab, 1996, p. 174).

Love appears to be a major theme in Duras's works including this text. The final emphasis on *losing love before it happens* evokes the feeling that it was somehow a story about love, merging the impossibility of love and the already lost possibility of searching for its possibility. "When you wept it was just over yourself and not

because of the marvelous impossibility of reaching her through the difference that separates you" (Duras, 1986, p. 54); "you have managed to live that love in the only way possible for you. Losing it before it happened" (p. 55). These lines from the ending of the text evoke that the man's recognition of the feminine difference is an exigency to make love possible between women and men. In other words, even though to transcend this difference is claimed not to be possible, at least attempting to transcend this sexual difference is proposed as a necessary condition for love. For Duras, the question of whether the feminine difference is recognized by man is a question of (heterosexual) love, and thus any glimpse of the im/possibility of love is linked to heterosexuality. Love seems to be presented as the starting point for the recognition of the feminine difference by the man. Not only the content but also the style contributes a lot to the manifestation and enhancement of love as one of the major themes. What can be recognized in *The Malady of Death*, is already a story world that is from the beginning impoverished, stripped away, with less and fewer details about the characters, the setting, and the context. It creates an emptiness that is very powerful in its effect. The text gives very little detail about when and where the story takes place and constructs the characters as merely sketches, devoid of a whole shape (Duras, 2020, p. 67). Their shape forms slowly through dialogues that are fragmented by empty spaces (p. 42). Considering that nothing else exists in the story world except the man and the woman, and few details such as the white sheets on the bed, the walls surrounding the room, and the sea outside, it leads to "tremendously valorize" (Foucault et al., 2018, p. 124) what would possibly exist: love as "the marvelous impossibility of reaching her through the difference that separates [man]" (Duras, 1986, p. 54).

2.2. SILENCE: WHERE WOMEN EXIST

Duras, writing through the viewpoint that every communicable/utterable thing is merely the visible, superficial, and redundant part of our experiences, uses writing as a force creating silences, for getting into the densities that cannot be reached through speech. Her writing in *The Malady of Death*, witnesses the intense realm

within the hidden depths of experience, is intertwined with silences, discontinuities, and blanks. Reducing the speech as much as possible and purifying it from the excess, she transforms it into a "naked force", as Foucault describes, with its intensity (Foucault et al., 2018, p. 123). She lets possibilities emerge out of the blanks formed by the holes between semantic chains, instead of establishing connections between the incidents, because she considers the organization of the meaning to be totalitarian. These blanks constitute the spaces that the readers can pass through by means of imagination (Duras, 2020, pp. 42-49). Departing from the overweight of concepts and rationality can also be considered as a way of writing through and with the body, which corresponds to parallelism with feminism, particularly *l'ecriture feminine*. This mode of writing is based on transgression, writing with the body, and releasing the unconscious. Otherwise, relying on the established notions and concepts and acting upon thoughts in an attempt to write something rational, there remains no possible exit from the constructed masculine language. However, what remains outside that logic as a residue and the veiled can be found by contacting the body, and, according to Duras, there exists the truth to be reached: "Men have been completely dethroned. Their rhetoric is stale, used up. We must move on to the rhetoric of women, one that is anchored in the organism, in the body" (Husserl-Kapit & Duras, 1975, p. 434). This process also means a transition to the imaginary language, the production of a new language, the grasp of music and rhythm, and the discovery of poetry. This experiment that is *l'ecriture feminine* has urged to create a space for new openings within language. Helene Cixous, as among the well-known pioneers of this movement, considers Duras to be a rare representative of *l'ecriture feminine* (Cixous, 1976, p. 879). For Duras wrote with her body and let her woman characters go mad, praising them for surrendering themselves to the sublimity of the very madness that strayed them from rationality. Although Duras considers herself neither a feminist nor her writing as part of *l'ecriture feminine*, her inclination to write with the body and voicing silences in order to disrupt the phallogocentric logic echoes with this literary affiliation. Hill reminds us that for Duras

the body is not a mode of self identity but a metaphor for whatever is excluded

> from identity: the body is a figure of madness, not self-possession. It is not an essence or nature, but the reverse of an essence or nature; it is a name for that which provokes crisis in the realm of representation by producing irreducible difference. And what it denotes most of all, in Duras … is desire. (Hill, 1993, p. 30)

According to her statements in an interview with Husserl-Kapit in 1975, Duras thinks that it is probable that there are specific masculine and feminine natures and she adds that since we have been all along living in a sexual *in*difference economy, we do not have a way to know what this nature holds (Husserl-Kapit & Duras, 1975, p. 426). Duras addresses that the imposition of silence on the feminine nature has put down her voice: "Because men have established the principle of virile force. And everything that emerged from this virile force-including words, unilateral words-reinforced the silence of women. In my opinion, women have never expressed themselves" (Husserl-Kapit & Duras, 1975, p. 430).

Duras presses hard that women need to stand against the masculine imposition on her to exist merely for him and to be silent so that only he can talk and mold her giving her form so that she provides what he needs. What is on women's part is that she has to rediscover her feminine nature and "translate" her nature from "darkness", rejecting the depersonalizing silence men have imposed on her (Husserl-Kapit & Duras, 1975). Duras claims that women exist in silence, but not the imposed depersonalizing silence. This silence is the non-codified speech, and Duras alludes to the thesis of Michelet about witches to expound on what she means in terms of the silence that women exist in:

> In *La Sorcière*, Michelet states that it was women's solitude that lay the origin of their language. Left to their own devices by men who'd gone off to the Crusades, the contention is that, once alone, they began to speak a primal ancestral, language with nature. Consequently, it's argued, to prevent the spread of non-codified speech, they were punished. Women –and children–have always been closest to transgression and madness. (Duras, 2020, p. 113)

Duras claims that "whereas in men, this silence no longer exists" (Husserl-Kapit & Duras, 1975, p. 430). In another interview with della Torre, she distinguishes

feminine writing from masculine writing based on this relation of women with silence and the lack of it in men.

> There's a close, natural relation that has always linked women with silence and, hence, with knowledge of themselves, with self-awareness. That leads their writing towards that authenticity which male writing lacks, its structure relating too greatly to bodies of ideological or theoretical knowledge. (Duras, 2020, p. 54)

Duras approves when della Torre says, "Men can be said to be more connected to knowledge, understood as cultural baggage" and she adds, "and to power, to authority, which are not in themselves related to *genuine* writing" (Duras, 2020, p. 54). She gives Roland Barthes' writings on love as an example of the cold, extremely controlled masculine writing, "too weighed down with ideas" (p. 54). She claims:

> Look at what Roland Barthes has written on love. Fascinating fragments—meticulous, intelligent and literary, but cold. The words of someone who knows love only by reading about it or seeing it from afar, without knowing its transports, its impulses, its pain. There's nothing in what he writes that isn't extremely controlled. (p. 54)

Duras seems to be using a similar tactic of strategic essentialism with Irigaray whereby she provocatively offers features for women's essences in order to subvert the phallogocentric system. Hill observes her strategy:

> The reference to the body, then, is a reference to all that is transgressive in human behaviour. The seemingly dogmatic assertion in Duras that there are constitutive differences between men and women is not so much an essentialism, therefore, as a provocative tactical move. (Hill, 1993, p. 30)

It is not only that Duras's *writing* is in silence, but also silence and speech appear as significant themes pertaining to the gendered nature of the relations of the characters with themselves, others, and the world. Considering the protagonists' relation to silence and speech in *The Malady of Death*, she is almost never awake, sleeping in silence. Moreover, when she speaks and breaches the contract, her speech is to break his attempt to codify and name the ambiguous, and her speech can be understood to voice the silence. Both her silence when she is not speaking and giving voice to silence when speaking are ways of resistance to his attempts to

impose silence and death on her. In comparison, the man is restless; he cannot stay still in the silence, the ambiguous, and the non-codified realm. His initial urge to sleep at rest in the unknown place is suppressed by his recourse to the already established codes, and thus, from the beginning, he interrupts the unpredictability of the course of events and attempts to close the openings to any ambiguity. Indeed, she is with her sleep, murmurs, crying out noise, breathing, and the correspondence between her and the sea, which keep her close to silence and to the outside (Rapaport, 1994, pp. 253-254).

2.3. SLEEP: THE PROTECTIVE SHIELD

The text contains many references to sleep and wakefulness and, building upon those, designates a contrast between him and her. She is nearly always asleep; even when she talks with him, she is drowsy and hardly audible. On the first night, sleeping is the first thing she does after stripping. When she is asleep, he watches her; her sleep becomes a spectacle, in a sense, and another indicator of the enigma and a difference that separates them. He gets curious; he would like to know what there is in her sleep. Sleep becomes one of the defining categories of her body as the narrator calls her “a sleeping body” and “a sleeping form” a couple of times. She answers his questions while she is nearly asleep. On the other hand, he is like in insomnia. He cannot sleep for the first two nights, and we are informed that he sleeps “between her parted legs” once, and also “once, on the floor at the foot of her bed” (Duras, 1986, pp. 8, 12). As sleep becomes something that he cannot master and makes her more inaccessible, it becomes excessive and painful for him and as she continues to sleep, the room fills with “sorrow” (p. 12).

While she lends her body thoroughly to his majesty, she may be physically defenseless, but she is psychologically veiled and protected by the shield of sleep and withdrawn to an outside to somewhere out of his reach. She occupies a border zone. Her sleep and detached silent presence do not only render her submissive to his requests as contracted but, more than that, it renders her inaccessibly absent as

merely a mute naked body left to his majesty precluding any possible interactions (Blanchot, 1988, p. 37). Her sleep is simultaneously a refusal to be there and a way to mirror death. Smith expounds on the relationship between death and sleep in the 17th century relying on different yet interconnected considerations of sleep as "a spiritual state as much as a physical one," including sleep's associations with "a kind of separation of the soul from the body", "a rest of the five outward senses together", "a resting of the Animal faculty, and a pawsing from the actions and business of the day", "the receding of one's consciousness for a period of time in a way that mimicked death", "a form of death performed daily", and "a superstitious fervor, because many believed that any bed had the potential to become one's deathbed through the slightest error or lapse in vigilance" (Smith, 2016, pp. 17-18, p. 22). Her sleep that resembles death, then, functions resting of the body in the physical world (the animal faculty), and to seclude solely within her soul and spirit. She will later tell that she has been sleeping in order to rest from him, "from death":

> She goes back to sleep. You ask her why she sleeps, what weariness she has to rest from, what monumental weariness. She lifts her hand and strokes your face again, the mouth perhaps. She smiles ironically again in her sleep. She says: The fact that you ask the question proves that you can't understand. She says it's a way of resting from you too. From death. (Duras, 1986, pp. 48-49)

So, the moment she wants to distance herself from living is not the life in general, but his diseased life that takes the shape of a death in his malady. She moves somewhere between sleep and wakefulness, and she symbolizes the liminal space between life and death. While she escapes from his malady, she also finds herself in a liminal space. Sleep is also where the dreams "compensate" (Brée et al., 1972, p. 421), yet the narrator and the reader are out of reach to her dreams because it takes place in the outside.

However, her sleep also protects him to a certain extent, because when she is inaccessible, her mute body can function as an empty mirror for him to reflect his image. But, after she tells him that he is suffering from a malady, the mirror is no longer empty. The feelings of uncanny grow and the man sometimes fears that she might not be alive, which is once again a mirroring of the uncanny feelings she

arouses in her: “She doesn’t answer, and you cry out again. And it’s then she smiles. And it’s then you know she’s alive” (Duras, 1986, p. 21).

Sleep resembles worklessness[32] as well. Whilst she is the emblem of worklessness, his sleeplessness marks the relentless work for mastering over her, life, death, and himself. Like her silence and his incessant urge to speak and name contrast, her sleeping body and his sleeplessness strikingly contrast and underline her worklessness and his work but simultaneously put them both somewhere between life and death.

However, although he symbolizes sleeplessness, like dreams in sleep are compensations for her, he is anyhow in dreams while he is awake. It is a dream of a replication of the same. He fantasizes that she is the mythical woman: “Young. She’d be young.” (Duras, 1986, p. 8) “She’d have been tall. With a long body made in a single sweep, at a single stroke, as if by God Himself, with the unalterable perfection of individuality” (Duras, 1986, pp. 15-16). He identifies the smell of her clothes and hair and names it: heliotrope and citron:

> In her clothes and hair there’d be a clinging smell, you’d try to identify it, and in the end your experience would enable you to do so. You’d say: A smell of heliotrope and citron. She answers: Whatever you say. (Duras, 1986, p. 8)

Heliotrope, a type of plant, and citron, a kind of fruit, bear consequential symbolic connotations and provides insights about the themes of sleep, death, love, and vision, too. Heliotrope takes its name from *Helios*, the Sun-God in Greek mythology (Hard, 2003, p. 32). In a myth that expounds the heliotrope’s origin, Helios’s lover is killed by his father but transforms into a heliotrope in a form that she can eternally show her love towards him, as the heliotrope plant follows the sun

[32] “The origin of the work of art lies, for Blanchot, in worklessness…the absence of work that ruins any work and gives it the appearance not of unity but of dispersion. Worklessness is not a foundation; it takes more the form of a flickering otherness that is articulated by Blanchot as if it were both an absence of being and the indeterminate generality of being” (Hill, 1990, p. 902).

and maintains its flowers perpetually turns towards the sun[33] (Hard, 2003, p. 45). Moreover, in the *Ancient Floral Dictionary*, heliotrope is associated with eternal love (Folkard, 1892, pp. 185) and, in resemblance, in the *Modern English Dictionary of Flowers* it is connected with devoted attachment (pp. 185-186). Here in the text, heliotrope is taken as a symbolic representation to present the man's imaginary identification with Helios, as the ideal male as the life and light provider eternally devoured and his search for romantic love figured in an ideal female forever adhered to her lover. Helios symbolizes all-seeing vision. But one has to ponder on that due to what Greek poet Hesiod claims, "the sun's rays never fall upon the Netherworld home of Sleep and Death", [34] which recalls that the man cannot see her body despite how much he strives and cannot master over death and sleep due to their radical otherness.

The citron, on the other hand, is symbolism for forbidden fruit (Folkard, 1892, p. 16). In Abrahamic religions, the forbidden fruit represents the prohibition

[33] "When a myth was devised to explain the origin of the heliotrope, a plant that keeps its flowers constantly turned toward the sun, Helios was bound to play a central part in it. Ovid's account runs as follows. On beholding Leukothoe, daughter of Orchamos, king of Persia, the most beautiful girl in the land of spices, Helios conceived a desperate passion for her, forgetting all his previous loves. So he made his way into her room in the guise of her mother and dismissed her attendants, and then resumed his proper form in order to seduce her. One of his former mistresses, a certain Klytie (who is described elsewhere as a sister of Leukothoe) was so jealous of Leukothoe that she caused it to become generally known that she had a lover. On hearing the rumour, her cruel father buried her alive, and she died before Helios could rescue her. Overcome by sorrow, he sprinkled nectar over her body and the surrounding soil, causing an incense-tree to grow up in place of her. As for Klytie, he would have nothing to do with her, and she pined away for love of him, refusing all food and drink, until she finally turned into a heliotrope; and she retains her love for Helios even in this new form, as is witnessed in the movement of the flowers of the heliotrope" (Hard, 2003, p. 45).

[34] "In his description (*Theogony* 758–66) of the children of Nyx 'Night' – Hypnos 'Sleep' and Thanatos 'Death' and their goings forth – Hesiod says that Helios, the sun, never looks on Sleep (gentle and kind) and pitiless Death (iron-hearted and bronze-hearted) as he arches from horizon to horizon (lines 759–61). It would seem a curious statement – do Sleep and Death only come upon mortals at night? (cf. the remarks of Caldwell (1987) 70, n. 756–66) –and more curious still in that Helios is frequently said to see all things. One must compare Odyssey 11:17– 18, where Homer tells that the city of the Cimmerians, by the entrance to the Netherworld, blanketed in clouds and mist, is never seen by Helios, and allow that what Hesiod is claiming is, somewhat similarly, that the sun's rays never fall upon the Netherworld home of Sleep and Death" (Woodard, 2009, pp. 154-155).

commanded by God and, consequently, the act of transgression. Thus, by many, the forbidden fruit was taken to be the original sin. Paradoxically, the citron has come to signify health and safety as well; it is considered as an antidote to poisons, for which purpose Virgil recommended them in his poem *Georgics* and citron is also recommended as a remedy for heart affections (p. 285). Taking all these meanings associated with the citron fruit into consideration, one can argue that the man identifies the woman with the forbidden fruit and a relationship with her carries the risk/potential of transgression, original sin. Like Eve is for Adam, the woman is the first woman for the man. For a man that is mediated by his innermost self whose decisive relations are merely with other males (a sign for male culture and male homosexuality?) as stated in *The Malady of Death*, a sexual encounter with a woman can be considered from Duras's perspective a radical transgression. And the identification of the smell of citron with her clothes and hair also recalls the malady he carries, and thus his search for a remedy.

Any attempt to master death would immediately bring the attempt to master life, and the self, and others as well. To think that one has the light to illuminate everything in totality would be to deny the radical otherness of things such as death. Besides, it would come to maintain a self that is immortal and indivisible, (not in the theological but in the ontological sense), which remains closed to the otherness like that of the death. Considering the Helios from Greek mythology, who claims to illuminate everything but actually cannot illuminate sleep and death, the point is not that he is powerless but rather those realms resist being lighted. In that sense, like Helios, the male protagonist is in rejection of himself when he is trying to master life, death, himself, and sleep. It is as if by not sleeping, he assumes he can master sleep, life, and death, but it is a rejection of the radical otherness of such things. When it comes to feminine difference, I think, its imprint, as the radical other is the effect of the phallic order. The paradox is that his subjection to the dominance of the phallic order makes it impossible to see that his blindness is the effect of the phallic order he has been subjected to. He is trapped in a smothering imprisonment that the sole way to get off from this hook seems to murder her. The

female body that he attempted to love metamorphoses into an image of a female body that is totally alien and totally threatening by her inaccessibility.

One aspect of the malady of death is, then, a metaphor to describe the phallogocentric discourse's deathly workings – the epistemological violence, the attempt to give well-structured forms and supposing that one has a coherent rational unity, by way of founding itself on the matter that it excluded, exploited- which is the erasure of the feminine difference. As Irigaray suggests, the supposed coherency of the phallic order is founded on the exclusion of the feminine difference, while using the feminine as the infrastructure, the matter material that could be given form, but by devaluing the matter. Overall, there is an assertion held within the text and by Duras that the rejection of the feminine difference for centuries by the phallic discourse produced results that hinder a woman from a feminine subjective position. The attention is called to the masculine domination, asserting the need to recognize and proliferate a feminine difference. Husserl-Kapit's remarks on Duras appears true also for *The Malady of Death*:

> Destruction of the old order is what Duras intends to accomplish in her literature as well as in her politics. The impact of the women's movement has led her to broaden her conception of the oppressor, to confront issues that she had formerly been able to transcend or ignore. The powers to be overthrown now include male supremacy, as pernicious in its domination of thinking, feeling, judging, and creating as in its economic and political suppression of women. It is the destruction of the male ethic that Duras attempts in her literature. (Husserl-Kapit & Duras, 1975, p. 423)

2.4. CATASTROPHIC DESIRE

Desire pairs with death in the female protagonist's illustration of desire: "The wish to be about to kill a lover, to keep him for yourself, yourself alone, to take him, steal him in defiance of every law, every moral authority – you don't know what that is, you've never experienced it?" (Duras, 1986, p. 42). It is the desire to wish to the point of devouring the loved one. It is one of the characteristic forms of desire that

we come across within Duras's *oeuvre*[35], which is the desire in its full gamuts in close relation with the figure of death, without acknowledging any prohibition, in fact, stimulated by the prohibition itself and marked with its intense apocalyptic closures translated in a sadomasochistic violent culmination of desire to the extent of destruction oneself or the partner as an expression of the intensity of the desire and an attest to the transgressive inner logic of the desire itself.

He tells that he has never experienced an overwhelming intensity of desire filled with jealousy. However, I interpret that she is actually mirroring his desire, which he is unaware of, through her description of desire: "Strangely, her breasts are brown, the areolas almost black. You eat them, drink them, and nothing in her body flinches, she offers no resistance, none" (Duras, 1986, p. 21). Similarly, when he wishes to murder him: "You tell yourself that if now, at this hour of the night, she died, it would be easier for you to make her disappear off the face of the earth, to throw her into the black water" (p. 28). He insists her to give answers on how loving can happen. The woman presents sagacious insights that sound more like silence than speech with logical well-structured form – it is indeed embroidered with paradoxes (Schwab, 1996, p. 178). Can her advice be understood as a gift that she presents to him? At least, it may work to tremble and shake him from his deadly place and open him to the catastrophic force of the unknown, the outside. Her advice is as follows:

> Perhaps a sudden lapse in the logic of the universe. She says: Through a mistake, for instance. She says: Never through an act of will. You ask: Could the emotion of loving come from other things too? You beg her to say. She says: It can come

[35] In Duras's play *Savannah Bay* (1993), we hear the story of one man and woman committing suicide as a manifestation of the overpowering intensity of their desire for one another (Hill, 1993, p. 137). In *Moderato cantabile* (1958), Duras stages "desire as a violently transgressive experience", a man killing his lover again due to his intense passion for her (Hill, 1993, p. 50). In *L'Homme assis dans le couloir* (1980; *The Man Sitting in the Corridor*), a man has just killed his lover, due to the overwhelming passion of desire, she had also given consent. We read "the man's brutality as he the woman's body over the stony ground, or … the women's expressed desire to have her face pummelled and beaten by him" (Hill, 1993, p. 58). Duras rejects to moralize these issues and writes these scenes without adopting moral perspectives (Hill, 1993, p. 58).

> from anything, from the flight of a night bird, from a sleep, from a dream of sleep, from the approach of death, from a word, from a crime, of itself, from oneself, often without knowing how. (Duras, 1986, p. 50)

The advice resonates with the passivity endorsed in the word passion.[36] Unlike certain kinds of freedom that emphasize *can* and certain kinds of rational understanding that highlights *will*, passion is distinguished starkly from *can* and *will* by its disjoint with the voluntarism of the act and by its unpredictability. Love in resemblance with passion, here, is interpreted as an experience that happens to the self, without oneself knowing how it happens. Therefore, love exceeds the epistemological confines of the rational mind and the active will. "[R]ather it is the radical experience, perhaps to the outermost point, of the existence of the Other" (Badiou, 2017, p. vii). Although the advice does not indicate the sexual difference as the precondition for love to come, the emphasis on sexual difference all along the text directs us to an interpretation that the outside where "the logic of the universe cracks" down is the encounter with the radical otherness that can only be found in the feminine difference, since that difference could not be appropriated in absolute terms, and it is the remainder or the excess of the sameness order. Thereby it has the potential to challenge and unsettle the solidified sense of reality. Besides, the female protagonist's description of love exhibits the operation of mirroring again because her emphases on suddenness, accidentalism, and contingency reflect his sexual acts and his attitude in his sexual intercourse with her, and her remarks on death correspond to his increasing arousal to penetrate after she diagnoses him with the malady of death. At this point, I observe that this reflection demonstrates that the once broken mirror recovers while starting to operate on the level of what Duras describes as the desire that belongs to the "feminine worlds"[37].

---

[36] According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, passion referred to "being acted upon, powerful affection of the mind" in the 13th century (Hoad, 1996, p. 339).
[37] In the interview with della Torre, Duras describes desire by the following statement: "Chaos is in desire. Jouissance is just that tiny part of what we've managed to attain. The rest – the enormity of what we desire – stays there, lost for ever "(Duras, 2020, p. 102). When della Torre asks her if she whether "believe this image of desire belongs to typically

2.5. THE MIRROR

By enacting the sexual contract's codes, she accepts the mythic identifications, though she does not seem to identify with them in the actual sense. She does not seem to be sharing the experience he is going through, but she, in sleep, seems to occupy a space between life and death just as he is somewhere between living and non-living. Both are in dreams; while he dreams awake, she dreams in sleep. As he is indifferent to her subjectivity, she is also indifferent to him and his malady. Her indifference can be argued to be aggressive, too. Is she mirroring him, as if she is an empty mirror that functions to reflect him? She plays her role to its perfection, sleeps, and stays in silence. She accepts his demand to mute herself. His aggression is mirrored by her sleep and cold indifference to his malady of death. His state of being, "dying without a life to", is reflected by the liminal space she enters in sleep. His dream-compensation in wakefulness is mirrored by her dreams in her sleep. Identifying her with heliotrope readily suggests that by way of identifying her with heliotrope, he can identify himself with Helios through her image. However, when her sole role is to reflect him, he is overwhelmed by the feelings of uncanny aroused by her, his double. When she fails to reflect him by crying out, he mutes her. After, she announces his death, he does not know whether he is alive or not, and also he doubts whether she is alive or dead. The mirror falls into pieces and his self gets fragmented, too. He wishes to murder her, but he cannot since to kill a double would mean to kill himself. He starts to see her body in fragments (Duras, 1986, p. 22). Dispossessing him from the ownership of the gaze, she starts to look at him. The discourse has changed; he encounters her gaze and can no longer assume the master role from that point on. He begs her to tell his name and wants her to maintain her mirror function, but she does not accept. What he wants is to be the sole subject of the equation. In fact, when she looks at him, he is astonished as if she can threaten

---

feminine worlds?" She answers: Perhaps. Male sexuality revolves around very precise models of behavior – excitation, orgasm. Then you start again. There's nothing that remains in suspense and unsaid" (Duras, 2020, p. 103).

him only by her look, recalling Medusa: "The look. You realize she's looking at you. You cry out. She turns to the wall. She says: It's going to end, don't worry" (Duras, 1986, p.20). The narrator tells that the look will remain as "an insurmountable barrier" between her and him forever:

> Then you realize it's not the color of her eyes that will always be an insurmountable barrier between you and her. No, not the color – you know that would somewhere between green and gray. Not the color, no. The look. (Duras, 1986, p. 20)

She rejects to be subdued to the ancestral patriarchal codes. Firstly, she renounced her desire by participating into "the *masquerade of femininity*"[38] (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 134), but because she was not totally caught up in the masquerade, she could "*remain elsewhere*" (p. 76) that is also when she could start to revolt against the phallic order and embrace her desire. She exposes the deathly workings of the patriarchal order: his blindness towards her body, his wish to murder him, his inability to love, his urge to impose death, his dependence on her existence to maintain the master role, his vulnerability even though he tries to assume a godly position. Deciphering the phallic code, she starts to threaten the phallic order.

In the end, she leaves one night without notice. Attempting to tell the story in a bar, he cannot find a narrative to tell the story. Because now she is not there, no mirror could reflect himself. It is suggested that he never begins, reflecting that his imprisonment in the phallic logic makes it impossible for him to open up to new beginnings and he has to repeat something that does not have a life: "She says: It's day, everything is about to begin, except you, you never begin" (Duras, 1986, p. 48). What remains with him are the words that have given the title of the book: the

[38] Irigaray explains that within the phallic order, in order to "become normal woman", the female renounces her desire by participating into "the *masquerade of femininity*" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 134). Women become part of the masquerade by mimicking the given feminine role in man's desires and yet they are not completely caught up by the power of the discourse. Irigaray claims, "if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 76). "They *also remain elsewhere*: another case of the persistence of "matter," but also of "sexual pleasure" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 76).

malady of death. Like the story of the nights resist representation, these words resist, as well. Yet, after she leaves, at night in the dark "he *finds* her in the aura of her absence" (Schwab, 1996, p. 179) when he hears "the crazy din of the ravenous gulls" (Duras, 1986, p. 52). "The lost object has cast a shadow" (Schwab, 1996, p. 179).

The Malady of Death exposes what has been veiled by the patriarchal impositions on the feminine difference and gives voice to Duras's interpretation of the radical otherness of the feminine difference. It is an exploration of how the masculine subject attempts to repudiate the feminine difference, and she has to be the one to make her difference visible and conceivable to a certain extent by staying on the border of the phallic order. At the same time, it is an exploration of how mirroring works within the phallic order. Because she is open to the outside, she does not solely mirror him. By making use of her radical otherness position, she manages to challenge his attempted mastery. Due to their different existences within the phallic order, we are given at least double meanings for death, sleep, and silence. Duras releases them from the established negative meanings and reinterprets and revalues them from a feminine perspective. While light, representability, speech, knowledge, reason, wakefulness, power, activeness are judged to be valuable and superior to dark, non-representability, silence, ignorance, desire, sleep, fragility, and passivity, Duras reverses the equation and invites the masculine subject to look from her perspective that has been perpetuated to be inferior for long centuries in the Western thought. By this precise sense, Duras is, in a way, using the Irigarayan strategy of mimicry. Indeed, it can be argued that what we are witnessing in the text is the enthronement of the feminine difference and the rejection of the ways the phallic man approaches the question of knowledge, love, life, and death.

I argued that Duras's feminist strategy is in general close to Irigaray's approach in her earlier texts: *Speculum of the Other Woman* and *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Duras dramatizes the deathly workings of the phallic order by exposing the mirror

function of the females. The female protagonist is on the border, and she is open to the outside. As she mirrors, she manages to abolish his mastery position.

However, I suppose, Duras would not totally favor Irigaray's cultivation project of difference in terms of a better-civilized world, since Duras's position is close to sublimation of destructive and apocalyptic fantasies that she hopes to bring new "innocent" beginnings, I argue in the upcoming chapter that the common sublimation of heterosexuality and emphasis on the recognition of the feminine difference bring them close to each other even considering Irigaray's later reconstructive project.

CHAPTER 3

HOMONEGATIVE FANTASIES OF *THE MALADY OF DEATH*: MALE HOMOSEXUALITY AS THE FLAW OF OTHERNESS AND THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MALE HOMOSOCIALITY

I have argued and elucidated that *The Malady of Death* delivers Duras's trouble with sexual indifference. While doing that, Duras reproduces the homonegative discourse that pins male homosexuality as the sheer absence of difference and desire. Therefore, even the attempt for love, that would bear a destructive yet animate desire, becomes jeopardized in the hands of the homosexual male protagonist. In that sense, like I have discussed before, there is an affinity between Duras and Irigaray in terms of the vision they share about sexual difference and fecund heterosexuality. While Irigaray puts forth it as a future to come, Duras nostalgically shapes her vision and desire as an already-lost origin, even though she tells the stories of trying and seeking. So, Duras as well embraces the desire for a cultural change that would promote and amplify the feminine sexual difference with all that it marks, with all that has been subordinated and rendered to be negative under the dominance of a phallocentric discourse of the masculine One. In that regard, I have pursued that it echoes the Irigaray's strategy of deconstructing the phallic order from within and the strategy of mimicry. Within such direction, the text builds a female character that is open to the radical otherness and indeed, signifying the lost origin that the man is in search of.

Besides, from the very beginning till the end of the text, what is at stake can also be conceived as the writing of the impossible –a sexual relationship between a gay man and a heterosexual woman– that is a way of writing disrupting the logic pertinent to the phallic order and its deathly workings that produces an inescapable trap. Not building on the conviction that desire can overcome all the determinant

conditions, desire calls for a radical difference and a "radical incompatibility" in Duras's texts (Hill, 1993, pp. 139, 153). Hill (1993) demonstrates what is of concern within Duras's texts "writing sexual relations" commenting on what desire holds for Duras in general and in *The Malady of the Death*:

> It is only ever when there is no possibility of relation between self and other that the other may be grasped as radically different, and thus genuinely desirable. Desire here is no longer regulated by received notions of sex or gender identity or by criteria of crude orgasmic efficiency; instead, in Duras, it often turns out, as *L'Amant* most clearly shows, that the most sexually desirable of other bodies is that very body with which, for reasons of cultural custom, social or personal circumstances, or even sexual orientation, no relationship is possible. (p. 139)

Writing, for Duras, is a way of transgression (p. 36). Duras spoke for writing as a space that the author's constant reality of sense dissolves, and the author becomes "a kind of space of total availability to what is out there" (cited by Lucey, 2013, p. 345). The space of literature, then, for Duras is "the intrusion of the other" (Blanchot, 1993, p. 385). As Duras's commitment to writing has always been a writing that would unloose the writer and the reader from "the burden of self-identity", it is an affiliation with writing that is transgressive of all the established symbolic forms, writing that "escapes totalization", writing as a desire that opens to radical otherness, to the excluded from Western rationality (Hill, 1993, p.23; Creech, 2000, p. 176). Refiguring throughout her *oeuvre* "in the figures of madness", "the Jew", "women", beggar, and love-death pairing, what she tackles in *The Malady of Death* through the display of radical difference, can be in one way understood as "a complex restatement" of what she has already committed herself in writing (Hill, 1993, pp. 23-26, p. 137). The themes of death, desire, and destruction, which she had always been in fascination with, reappear in this text as transgressive motifs subverting and unsettling the sovereignty of the individual royalty of the Western rational mind and the deathly workings of the phallic order as well as the blurring of the literary genres. Like many other Duras's texts, *The Malady of Death* exceeds a specific categorization under a single genre. It is neither possible to classify it as a novel, nor story, nor poetry, nor theatre script, but one can argue that the text's style blurs the distinctions between those while incorporating some aspects from each and exceeding each, too (pp. 152-154). From

that point of view, this blurring of the genres is clearly connected with Duras's attitude towards literature and her literary ideology.

However, although this characteristic form of desire can be reported all along Duras's *oeuvre*, a dramatization of this form of desire with a radical incompatibility between people with nonsymmetrical sexual orientations is a new event and here, in the guise of Duras's emphasis on the radical potentiality of desire, we witness an announcement of a death sentence, with all its symbolic violence, over male homosexuality. Indeed, it bears a specific connotation to her relationship with her gay partner Yann Andréa at that time. Duras commented that this story had been one way of writing her real-life engagements with Yann Andréa, and it can be argued to be her way of trying to make sense of this relationship[39] that "escape both easy representation and easy conceptualization" (Lucey, 2013, pp. 342, 363-371) In other instances, she commented that the text was about homosexuality (p. 363). In *Les Cahiers du cinéma* in 1985, Duras this time "told that *The Malady of Death* was born of a moment of doubt in her enthusiastic promotion of heterosexuality as the sole locus of desire" (Crowley, 1998, p. 663). According to Creech, "Duras nevertheless acknowledged later, as she contrasted the text with [Blue Eyes, Black Hair], that [The Malady of Death] was something of a 'trial' of homosexuality itself" (Creech, 2000, pp. 176-177). However, she also commented in her interview with della Torre that she agreed completely with Blanchot's interpretation in *The Unavowable Community* (1988) of *The Malady of Death*, which considers the male protagonist to be heterosexual:

> (…) 'And this is exactly one of the traits of the community, when that community dissolves itself, giving the impression of never having been able to exist, even when it did exist.' We would like to take, to steal in contravention

[39] Lucey calls it "misfit sexuality" and further argues that "the violence of Duras's writing is perhaps an index of this particular cultural limitation as much as it might be a sign of how she became trapped in ways of speaking" (Lucey, 2013, pp. 366-367). It can also be argued that a gay man and a presumably heterosexual woman's relationship is queer in itself but the notion queer has usually connoted a radical potentiality, and for the same reasons as Lucey, I do not want to assume that each misfit sexuality in and of itself is full with radical potentials.

> of all laws. And to steal something to which will, in reality, always be beyond our grasp. The accomplishment of all love is achieved only through the loss of what, in reality, we never had: it is precisely the alterity between man and woman that creates this 'eternally provisional and always already deserted community'. It is indeed 'unavowable': like all communities, that of lovers will never be able to speak itself or give itself; and, in dissipating itself, it will leave the trace of something which, while already having taken place, has never existed. (Duras, 2020, pp. 35- 36)

Like Blanchot (1998), even if we may think that the paid nights of sexual encounters amount to a revolutionary community of the lovers in a way resembling the events of May 1968, taking place without ever trying to organize itself and or ever constituting a foundational ground (pp. 29-56), we have to ask whether for Duras this revolutionary community can only be possible in its impossibility only between a man and a woman and whether a revolutionary community would require the man to orient himself towards heterosexuality (Lucey, 2013, p. 364).

The text keeps it a secret for itself why a male homosexual would want to pay a woman to try to love her through sexual intercourse. There is only one sentence that evokes ambiguous sets of meanings, which I think is suspicious with heterosexist assumptions of a *heterosexual teleology*: "You'd like to start from that body and get back to the bodies of others, to your own, to get back to yourself. And yet it's because you must do this that you weep" (Duras, 1986, pp. 11-12). How to read these lines? It echoes the self-other dialectic in which the self can only gain the sense of itself by being mirrored by an other. To acknowledge an other can be frustrating for that it is to realize the possibility of one's own negation. These lines become another way of saying that it is hard for the gay man to get out of the masculine self, who only knows men. It is frustrating for him to try to see the female as a true other, and he cannot tolerate the lack he sees in her sexual organ (Creech, 2000). To say it differently, he is depicted as not knowing any other but himself and the other men's bodies. In Moskos's words, "desire rebounds from its supposed object back to the masculine subject … Masculine desire is ultimately narcissistic and homosexual" (Moskos, 1991, p. 525). Moreover, it is suggested by the text that the only possible negation can be realized by the sexually different that is the

woman. In that case, it is that the male character would like to return to the realm of male homosexuality, but it is implied that he has to remain in the heterosexual zone so that he can try to realize himself by her negation. Does the text claim that an ethical self-other relationship can only take place between a man and a woman and compulsory heterosexuality, based on Duras's contention that desire can only spur in the realm of difference, which is suggested to be the heterosexual love, man/woman couple, the essential condition for the possibility of desire? I would like to resort to her interview with Suzanne Lamy in 1981, one that Duras states her opinions on love by comparing heterosexuality with homosexuality:

> Men and women. We are irreconcilable, yet still we try, as we have for centuries, to reconcile ourselves to each other. With each love we do this. This is what I call the fabulous richness of heterosexuality. And, on the other hand, the incommensurable poverty of homosexuality. They love themselves in loving the other. Whereas we love our inverted image. We love our opposite, our antidote, our own hell. That is where the immensity of this richness is to be found. (As cited in Lucey, 2013, p. 344)

According to Duras, whereas impoverishing self-love reigns within the sameness sphere of the homosexuality (*they*), heterosexual love (*we*) is enriching with its transgressive motif, endorsing an opening to the other sex, the opposite. Even though Duras records the mirror imaging taking place between man and woman in the heterosexual frame, she somehow sublimates this repetition, perhaps by hoping that the speculative mirror (*speculum mundi*[40]) will break down one day. Anyhow, it can be argued that Duras pejoratively delineates homosexuality with narcissism and refigures the heterosexual love as the sublime in its unattainability. In other words, the sexual gap turns into a sign of the sublime. In another interview, Duras reconfigures the supposed difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality yet in another fashion by resorting to the account of mystery: "Love between members of one's own sex lacks that mythic, universal dimension that belongs only

[40] Irigaray in an interview comments about the title of her first book *Speculum of the Other Women*: "But the title evokes much more than this: it's an allusion to those European works (I'm no longer sure of exactly what era) that speak of the 'speculum mundi'? – that is the 'mirror of the world.' It's not simply a question of a mirror in which one sees oneself, but of the way in which it's possible to give an account of the world within a discourse: a mirror of the world" (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 346).

to opposite sexes: even more than their lovers, homosexuals love homosexuality" (Duras, 2020, p. 105). Duras's remarks on the universal, mythical, lost yet being sought, indeed, fantasized to be retrieved and repeated within the impossibility between the man and the woman assumes to be connected with the notion of origin. The heterosexual love with its association with origin here indicates and implies a genesis, an archetypal birth, a coming-into-existence, and attaining liveliness that connotes the realm of heterosexual love in Duras's semantic universe. In that sense, the true desire for Duras is stirred by that myth of the origin and always gravitates towards the origin resorting back to the heterosexual paradigm. Thereby, does this radical difference that produces the true desire come with a certain heterosexual teleology considering that he had to be the one to re-orientate his desire towards the woman, already-lost-origin, the already-lost womb, since the love between same sexes lack that mythic dimension?

From this aspect, *The Malady of Death* is an interesting case, endorsing a heterosexual imperative and telling a story between a gay man and a presumably heterosexual woman. Duras's male protagonist has never loved a woman before, and he is to try. However, he cannot love the woman, because he does not take into account the otherness of the feminine difference, which is equated with him being gay by Duras's suggestion that being gay is already an emblem for the elimination of the feminine difference and being already part of the phallic masculine world of sameness. Duras's choice to symbolize a phallic man in a gay figure is, indeed, partly comes from her biography as I've mentioned earlier, she had been in a relationship with Yann Andréa at that period and until she died, whom she sometimes refers to as "Y.A., the homosexuel"[41] (Duras, 1992, p. 69) and partly because a relationship between a gay man and a heterosexual woman would well

[41] This violent imprint itself exemplifies Duras's symbolic violence towards Andréa. Not only that she reduces him to being homosexual but also forces him out of the closet. I am using the term "closet" in a manner that refers to the experience of people who kept their sexual orientation a secret by not coming out. Although I don't have space here to discuss the "epistemology of the closet", it is important to note that being out of the closet or in the closet are not necessarily binary oppositions (Sedgwick, 1990).

signify her image of a desire, spurring when there is no possible relation between the self and the other. That "radical incompatibility" had always been one of her fascinations (Hill, 1993).

Nevertheless, Duras's critique of a phallic man in the figure of a gay man displays more than the abovementioned. I will first demonstrate how male homosexuality is represented within *The Malady of Death*. As I have suggested earlier, the text does not overtly manifest that the male character is gay. However, discerning the cues gathered throughout the text, together with Duras's declaration that the text is about homosexuality and her overt homonegative attitudes towards gay-ness in her interviews beginning with the early 80s, it is inevitable to overlook such interpretation. Throughout my discussion on how male homosexuality is represented in the text, I analyze the implications of Duras's choice to critique the phallic man in the figure of a gay man by going through two lines of inquiry. First I argue that Duras's choice to conflate male homosexuality with phallic man is very much in line with the idea of sexual difference that locates an irreducible difference between man and woman, and homosexuality is supposed to be a realm that lacks difference and referred to as the imprisonment within a sameness order. I will explicate how Irigarayan conceptualization and imagination of sexual difference has become a political arena, so to speak, announcing that homosexuals have "the flaw of otherness" (Mangeot & Tin, 2008). Moreover, this conflation proposes another significant understanding about the link between male homosexuality and the phallic order that can be recorded in Irigaray's account, relying on the assumption that the structured relations between women and men within phallic order are loaded with homosexual desire and the seemingly heterosexual social contract is the mediation of male homosexual desire (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 171). I argue that, based on Hope's analysis, Irigaray is as faulted as Freud for installing male homosexuality as the origin of the Western (phallocentric) civilization as a constitutive but renounced origin and for discursively legitimizing the heterosexual social order. I will discuss this critical point in detail later on.

First of all, not overtly stating his orientation has a significant literary effect, especially on the readers' side. Leaving the male protagonist's sexual orientation as "a whispered enigma" (as cited in Creech, 2000, p. 176) left him locked up in the closet for the readers that have not noticed the text's link with homosexuality. Moreover, the same strategy had another effect on the readers who noticed the relevance. These readers like me found themselves in a position to out him from the closet, by saying that he is homosexual. This "elegant innuendo" by Duras "waited" the readers to "out" him (as cited in Creech, 2000, p. 177). Here, what Duras is expecting from the readers can be compared to her attitudes toward Barthes. Yet Barthes stayed in the closet, Duras wrote many times about Barthes's orientation and outed him. By *The Malady of Death*, she is playing a similar drama by keeping the male protagonist in the closet and killing him by announcing his death sentence and, simultaneously, waiting for the readers to out him. Indeed, Barthes's reluctance to get out of the closet can be argued, by Creech as well, that when one comes out, there is always a danger to be threatened by the "vengeful Other", and, in Barthes' situation, that other was not a *philosophical other* but Duras's writings themselves (Creech, 2000, p. 176).

Now that we are talking about a fictional character here, I do not hesitate to out him. Taking a close look at the text, the implicit allusions to homosexual desire and homosexual orientation appear since the very beginning of the plot. The man's description of the woman's body based on a negative comparison with what is conventionally understood as properties of a male body, depicting her as "hairless unmuscular body" (Duras, 1986, p. 2) reveals the distance from what he usually considers familiar and desirable. The comparison persists, once again, more overtly, when he compares how it feels to penetrate the vagina with how it feels with the anus (p. 4): "You say: … I would like to penetrate there too, and with my usual force. They say that it offers more resistance, it's smooth but offers more resistance than emptiness does" (pp. 3-4). "Too" becomes a sign that his "usual" sexual experience is to penetrate the anus (Creech, 2000, p. 177). At this point, it is illuminating and striking to discern that Duras gives the gay protagonist *a chance*

to open himself to the enrichment of *true desire* and love by turning away from "the void of gay sex" back to the origin, "to fill [the emptiness] at last by penetrating the real thing" (p. 177). However, Duras is there to watch him fail too, inviting the reader to witness as well, as the homosexual has been predestined to fail before "the resistance of sexual difference itself" (p. 177). Later in the story, one night, after he silences her expressions of sexual joy,

> She asks if *they* talk about it. You say no.
> She asks what they do talk about. You say they talk about everything else. Everything except that. (Duras, 1986, pp.10-11)

There is no doubt that *they* do not refer to a group of women since it later becomes apparent that the man has never loved a woman, or even looked at women. Arguably then, the italicized *they* either refer to the men whom he has sexually involved with or gays in general. Because the question comes after her expressions of sexual pleasure have been silenced, "it" that *they* do not talk about is presumably appertains to heightened affections and bodily joy in sexual desire. Herein, I think Duras refers to the longstanding duality in the metaphysical distinction between the body and soul. Such distinction can be found in the philosophical canon whereby the body and bodily signs in their materiality are excluded as abject out of the masculine Same and only recaptured in the sameness order as metaphysical abstract notions (Yazıcı, 2015, p. 32). Duras, Irigaray, and many other feminist thinkers who criticize the phallogocentric logic of the Western metaphysical thought refer to the paternal genealogy for the consolidation of this dualism and the act of omitting the materiality of the body. Nevertheless, according to Duras, the heterosexual male at least tries to "reconcile" himself towards the woman, and vice versa, but the feminine difference is discarded completely in the male homosexual sphere. In that sense, the male protagonist's suppression of her sexual pleasure corresponds to a disavowal and an erasure of the feminine desire, which he cannot contain, and overwhelmed by. This representation of homosexual relations is in line with Duras's representation of homosexuality as "incommensurable poverty" (as cited by Lucey, 2013, p. 344), which I mentioned earlier. Likewise, Duras points out Barthes's orientation as the reason for the coldness in his writings and not only

forces him out of the closet but also plays the "vengeful Other" (Creech, 2000) role after she, by her hands, takes him out of the closet:

> Love between members of one's own sex lacks that mythic, universal dimension that belongs only to opposite sexes: even more than their lovers, homosexuals love homosexuality. (…) As I've said before, this is why I can't regard Roland Barthes as a great writer: something always limited him, as though the most ancient experience of life had passed him by, the sexual knowledge of a woman (Duras, 2020, p. 105)

In the previous chapter, I quoted Duras's another statement about Barthes where she marked Barthes's writings on love as an example of the cold and extremely controlled masculine writing weighed with ideas. Here, she repeats the same claim but this time by suggesting a tight connection between his homosexuality and the elimination of feminine difference. She also suggests that Proust also had to convert homosexual passion into heterosexual to make sure that his love stories incorporate the "universal" "mythic" dimension of a heterosexual love (Duras, 2020, p. 105). A limit is there in Barthes' writings, persists Duras, an enclosed system of the masculine same that leaves out "the sexual knowledge of a woman", which is "the most ancient experience of life" (p. 105), referring to "the maternal-feminine" or "the earth-mother, the first living dwelling place…which primevally and necessarily has conceived, given birth, nourished, warmed" and made life possible in the world (Irigaray, 1993a, pp. 97-98). This is the reason why she cannot think of Barthes as a great writer because she thinks that his homosexuality became the condition for the elimination of the feminine difference. Within Duras's *oeuvre*, the radical otherness of the female protagonist, which I elaborated in the previous chapter, can be argued to be aligned with the chaotic primordial of the formless that resists representation, which is "the maternal-feminine" in Irigaray's terminology. It can be understood as the maternal earth that is the source of life, the origin, and the chaotic because no distinctions are preserved. Irigaray argues that the paternal genealogy is founded on forgetting and erasing the maternal feminine, and the subject of the metaphysical tradition has marked himself as the disembodied subject so that he would establish his role as the universal. Indeed, for Irigaray, that disembodied subject is already dead since the body is abstracted and extorted from

its materiality (Irigaray, 1996, p. 25). In Irigaray's conceptualization, the maternal earth is symbolized as the feminine that is excluded but always incorporated through its exploitation and appropriation. For Duras, I suppose, the mythic dimension is related with this maternal-feminine origin and its chaotic force and when she states that "[l]ove between members of one's own sex lacks that mythic, universal dimension" (Duras, 2020, p. 105).

Irigaray invokes the notion of mystery as well, concerning the relationships between a woman and a man, and she says that "between us there is really a mystery" and points out to "the irreducible mystery between man and woman" as a sublime figure (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 357). She proceeds by comparing this difference with the sameness of man-man and woman-woman relationships: "It's not at all the same kind of mystery that exists between woman and woman or between man and man. It's not similar. I don't know if this is easy to understand" (p. 357). Unlike Duras, Irigaray does not argue that same-sex relationships lack mystery, but she points out that it is not the same kind of mystery that exists between man and woman.

However, she asserts that for the cultivation of the difference in all realms of the social sphere one needs to start with the fundamental difference: "difference between the sexes" (Irigaray, 2002, p. 79). Then, she appoints the heterosexual couple as the basis of the possibility for such a difference to spur in the process of the reconstitution of society towards a culture of difference. She explains her cultural project of cultivation of the difference emphasizing that an irreducible difference resides between man and woman, not between same-sex couples. Rather, between the same sexes, there resides a difference that is more of an empirical type.

> Obviously, this two is always potentially a sexuate two. It's difficult to explain, but interesting, because between man and woman there's a negative, a type of irreducibility that doesn't exist between a woman and a woman. Let's say between a man and a woman the negativity [la negativite] is, dare I say it, of an ontological, irreducible type. Between a woman and another woman it's of a much more empirical type and, furthermore, can only be understood and can

> only live in the ontological difference between man and woman. It's complicated. (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 356)

She further asserts that locating difference between man and man or woman and woman can only be threatening to each part of the equation because the same sexes are not at "the crossroads of nature and culture", and, performing the ministrant psychoanalyst, she emphasizes that if the difference is put among people with same sexes, it would only harm to the parts of the equation.

> I'm not able to place it in the same way with another woman, where it's much less real, because we [she and I] are not at the crossroads of nature and culture. This is factitious. If I put the limit there, I risk doing harm either to her/it [elle] or to myself. If I put it between us [Gaetan Brulotte as a man and Luce Irigaray as a woman], I think that you won't feel yourself to be injured when I say, "You who will never be me or mine." That doesn't harm you at all, unless if already at an imaginary level you've wanted to create your culture to the detriment of my own subjectivity. Then that can perhaps hurt you, but in fact it doesn't hurt you at all. It's a cultural error, I'd say. While if I put the limit there I risk harming the other. (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 357)

Then, does the celebration of difference in such a conceptualization mark the same-sex relationship and love to be an unethical or less ethical one; and does any attempt to imagine the sexual difference in this framework leads to a homonegative one? Her general argument is that, for her, the relationship between man and woman has no privileged relation to the difference than the relationship between either man and man, or the woman and woman, and all relationships are structurally established in a sameness paradigm within the sexually *in*different culture that has been established for centuries. Irigaray's project gets tricky when she fundamentally locates an irreducible difference between man and woman and takes the heterosexual couple to signify fecundity as a starting point for the sexually different future. In the abovementioned interview, she states that she has not theorized the ethical relationship within the domain of a homosexual couple because the main issue is the fundamental difference between a man and a woman, which is also important for the homosexual couple since each of us are structurally affected by the sexual *in*difference culture. She adds that the question of sexual "choice" has secondary importance for our age, but the sexual difference is the fundamental and

the universal one (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 359). In that sense, she builds her project concerning how to create an ethical bridge between man and woman. She presses it hard that to expect from her to theorize the homosexual ethical couple is to assume that everyone can talk about everything despite "one's own experience" (p. 359). Her point could have been argued to be fair, if she did not go further from her remark about having the experience or not, yet she goes further and do talk about homosexual relationships and claim a hierarchy of importance or progressive sequences. Thereby, the issue gets risky, reproducing a sort of homonegative discourse, and when it comes to practical politics, the scene is more dramatic. Since sexual *choice* is secondary for her, giving homosexuals legal rights is nothing to be celebrated and it just reflects that they have the share of men's rights (p. 359). It is not that she considers the legal system in general necessarily as an assimilative force, but she proposes that any given rights within a world that does not recognize the sexuate rights of the woman differently from man will necessarily amount to the assimilation of everybody to nothing but the others of the same. As I have suggested before, she promotes the legislation of sexuate rights civil code, but her legislative project is not yet realized for the time being. There is indeed a difference between deeming, for instance, the rights that would legislate the same sex partnerships not prior and being opposed to it. I do not know her position in PaCS discussions, but her statement in an interview from 1996 that "in France since 1980 homosexuals have rights and women no longer have them" sounds, if not hostile, neglectful towards the AIDS episode, during which male homosexuals were stigmatized for contaminating the disease, and the homonegative rhetoric of the flaw of otherness that was raised against male homosexuality and male homosexuals. Indeed, throughout the PaCS debates, advocators of the idea of sexual difference (alike with that of Irigaray), such as Héritier and Agacisnki, stood against it, which demonstrates that the idea of sexual difference and its visions are inclined to be or become homonegative, especially in the case of practical politics as I have urged.

Returning to Duras, I want to further record how she employs this homonegative rhetoric of the flaw of otherness. Duras "often stated that 'men are all homosexuals'" (Duras, 2020, p. 104). Besides the part on this issue within her work *Practicalities* (1992), she also expresses what she particularly means by that statement in her interview with della Torre: "Incapable of living the potency of passion to the full, I would add. Only prepared to understand those who are like them" (Duras, 2020, pp. 104-105). Here, in this statement, she appoints the sameness paradigm of the male world by alluding to the figure of homosexual, whom for Duras has the inability to love and understand the other. In other words, according to Duras, heterosexual men and gay men have "the flaw of otherness" (Mangeot & Tin, 2008) and gay men are even more flawed. It is also striking to see that her strict binaries painted with heteronormative violence leave no space for bisexuality.

Duras also employs the homonegative discourse of the flaw of otherness stigmatizing male homosexuality throughout *The Malady of Death,* and it is observed in Duras's comments about homosexuality in her interviews and other books too. As for *The Malady of Death,* Duras builds a tight connection between two notions: Male homosexuality and the repudiation of the feminine sexual difference. Duras lays the question of sexual orientation very much intermingled with the question of sexual difference. Throughout the book, Duras suggests a tight connection between the man's only knowing the bodies of other men with his inability to love and his malady of death. In that manner, she excludes desire from homosexuality. Duras claims, referring to homosexuality: "They love themselves in loving the [same] other", claiming that such love is only self-love (narcissistic) "lacking in the presumed absence of 'difference'" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 96).

So, I argue that the title *The Malady of Death* amounts to the critique of the masculine Sameness, yet with a specific emphasis on male homosexuality. Does the title of the book *The Malady of Death* have a metaphorical connection with what Duras wants to convey about homosexuality? In other words, is there any relation

suggested between the notions of death and homosexuality? I have elaborated on the possible connections in the previous chapter where I discussed what death would come to mean within a feminist discourse of sexual difference, by taking into consideration the critique of sexual *in*difference in relation to the masculinist patriarchal order. I played the devil's advocate in the previous chapter in order to expose the affinity between Duras's understanding of the sexual indifference culture and Irigaray's theoretical account. What I actually think is that while critiquing sexual indifference culture, Duras and Irigaray both reproduces homonegative discourses. I argue that the malady of death is a critic of the patriarch homosocial figure, but the text fails because Duras takes male homosexuality as the representative of the male homosocial structure. This argument becomes more palpable considering that Duras herself tells that the text was about homosexuality, yet, surprisingly, many readers and the literary critics did not recognize this (Lucey, 2013, p. 363). On the other hand, the "commentators in the French gay press generally understood *The Malady of Death* to be about gay sexuality" and "it was well known that she was a favorite author for many gay men, and the practice among them of memorizing certain of her texts was not unheard of" (Lucey, 2013, p. 364). Lucey (2013) cites Rene de Ceccatty's review in 1983 on Yann Andréa's *M.D.* in *Masques*, an important gay press at the time, where Ceccatty presents his views on *The Malady of Death:* "*The Malady of Death*, the cruelest and most sincere book a woman could write about male homosexuality to a man she loves" (p. 364). Ceccatty considers it to be written to Andréa (as cited in Lucey, 2013) and I agree with Ceccatty's argument, based on what Duras herself told in the interview with della Torre that *The Malady of Death* was based on a real-life story (Duras, 2020, p. 33). Lucey calls attention to the homophobic writings in *The Malady of Death*:

> Homophobic stereotypes abound here. Gay men are in some way dead; they have a murderous intention toward women, who represent for them an abject space of inhuman vitality. Gay men, in their relations with women, exemplify a mistaken experience of sovereignty. Gay men lack the humanizing desire to experiment with difference (which means trying to have sexual relations with a woman) in an effort to correct something that is inherently impolitic in their way of being. (Lucey, 2013, p. 365)

The trope of the malady of death, in terms of its allusions to male homosexuality, takes on a multitude of meanings: gay men are dead, because, at the individual level, they do not experiment with sexual difference; they live in a narcissistic world, which is already a place for the gauge of the individual royalty; everything but the same is excluded, no life, no otherness; they have the flaw of otherness. The gay is dead, and he also has the urge to murder the different (which is the sexual feminine difference in this case), because the gay is unable to confront the feminine difference. Here, the sexual difference discourse is appropriated in a bind with the homonegative discourse: "You don't love anything or anyone, you don't even love the difference you think you embody. All you know is the grace of the bodies of the dead, the grace of those like yourself" (Duras, 1986, pp. 33-34).

Moreover, after a couple of times the female protagonist announces the man's malady, the first time she calls him "dead" is when she learns that he has not sexually involved with women ever:

> She asks: Haven't you ever loved a woman? You say no, never.
> She asks: Haven't you ever desired a woman? You say no, never.
> She asks: Not once, not for a single moment? You say no, never.
> She says: Never? Ever? You repeat: Never.
> She smiles, says: A dead man's a strange thing.
> She goes on: What about looking, haven't you ever looked at a woman? You say no, never.
> She asks: What do you look at? You say: Everything else. (Duras, 1986, pp. 30-31)

First configuring the male homosexuality as "a strange thing", a deviance from the heteronormativity, then declaring that he is dead, these lines interconnect the meanings attributed to male homosocial realm with the male homosexual. The claim is that male homosexuality is the place where difference is denied to the absolute. Once again, when it is declared that he is incapable of loving, his body and the male bodies he is sexually involved are signified "dead", while, at the same time, the sexual realm of male homosexuality is reduced to sole cerebral knowledge, devoid of love's and life's embodied transports.

There is another level at which the text associates male homosexuality with death. The text suggests that male homosexuality is close to death since homosexuals do not have the potential to procreate, and the premise is followed by other homonegative contentions especially significant at the societal level: Homosexuals lack the potential to create new generations and lack the potential to maintain a society. *The Dictionary of Homophobia: A Global History of Gay & Lesbian Experience* (2008) published in France dwells upon Duras's homophobia in the entry "Duras, Marguerite" where Louis-Georges Tin elaborates on Duras's homophobia within *The Malady of Death* and states, "beginning with its title, The Malady of Death combines two themes common to homophobic rhetoric: to the individual, homosexuality is an illness, and to society, it represents the peril of death." He adds:

> For those (and they were many) who had missed the lessons contained in the novel, she set out a laborious explanation in another book, 1987's *La Vie matérielle* (published in English as *Practicalities*). Describing, as it were, the advent of homosexuality, she stated: "It will be the greatest catastrophe of all time," and that it would lead to population decreases until no one is left: "We will be asleep. … The death of the last man will pass unnoticed." (Tin, 2008)

Duras's apocalyptic imagination concerning what would happen if there were more homosexuals in the world relies deeply on the "metaphysical" belief that homosexuals are sterile (Chauvin & Tin, 2008) and that an incident or a revelation is enough to make a man aware that he is homosexual, as suggested by her statement: "The men are homosexuals. All men are potentially homosexuals – all that's missing is awareness of the fact, an incident or revelation that will bring it home to them" (Duras, 1992, p. 33). The apocalyptic scenario follows: The advent of homosexuality, which is the rise of the homosexual movement starting from the 1970s in France, and all around the Western countries, can trigger all men to come out of their closets and reinforce them to stop acting like heterosexuals, which would bring death to all humankind and the population would decrease until no *man* remains alive. Duras heralds the end of the world, the catastrophic apocalypse, a horror movie, so to speak, founded on her reconsolidation of "anti-homosexual

paranoia" (Hocquenghem, 1993, p. 55) that revived in France since the AIDS epidemic took place, which I will tackle soon.

Binding homosexuality to death, another one of Duras's statements uttered, after the publishing of her "most ardently homophobic text" (Lucey, 2013, p. 368) *Blue Eyes, Black Hair* (1986), dwells upon that homosexuality cannot procreate and that is the reason behind the relationship between homosexuality and death. Although in this statement, she aligns *homosexuality* with death but not the homosexual person, it is possible to suggest based on the abovementioned apocalyptic scenario that she implies the homosexual person, too. She states in an interview with Gilles Costaz on *Blue Eyes, Black Hair*:

> I can also say that there is death in homosexuality, because, in general, homosexuality can't be spread through the children[42] it has, since it doesn't have any. As if it were trying to hasten death. Just the way death exists in the brains of animals like antelopes or lemmings who go off together to die in groups without in any way realizing what orders they are following. (as cited in Lucey, 2013, p. 368)

This link between homosexuality and the incapacity to procreate connects with a line from *The Malady of Death.* During the first encounter of the man and the woman, Duras wrote through the narrator that the man has seen in the woman "the risk of having children implicit in that body" (Duras, 1986, p. 2). Together with this line and Duras's ideas about homosexuality and the incapacity to procreate, there appears a possible interpretation that Duras puts forth that the male homosexual is not only sterile but also envisages having a child as a risk, as something he does want to avoid. Duras's imagination goes so far as to impose sterilization on him. To put it differently, she constitutes a male character, a homosexual, and she designates that character to be afraid of the possibility that he might have a child with a woman. So, Duras also acknowledges that a homosexual man can procreate physically with a woman and adds a psychological barrier to that possibility. That

[42] Considering the depiction of homosexuality as a malady, and its association with AIDS as another deathly malady, it can imply that it can only spread like a disease through male homosexual sameness.

reminds of what Tin (2008) stresses about the homophobic discourse in *The Malady of Death* that "[t]hrough the gauze of the novel's beautiful language, Duras, by her own admission, tried to impose her negative views of homosexuality on readers." It seems as if the apocalyptic future-lessness would be caused by the deliberate anti-actions of homosexuals.

The risk of having children perceived by the male protagonist is also an allusion to the paternal genealogy that founded itself by forgetting the maternal origin. The paternal genealogy designates an origin of itself by eliminating the maternal genealogy, and Duras may well be indicating this erasure of the feminine difference by the paternal genealogy whereby the maternal body turns into something alien if not incorporated into the role of the mother. In that sense, Duras's emphasis on the homosexual's incapability to procreate is once again conflated with the male subject's erasure of the feminine difference.

Furthermore, as I have signaled above, it is important to contextualize her statements within the larger context of sociopolitical dynamics in France during the 1980s and 1990s. Lucey (2013) points out that the period around 1986, when Duras wrote *Blue Eyes and Black Hair* – her "most ardently homophobic text", was also the years "in which the seriousness of the AIDS crisis was coming to people's awareness, [and] Duras's language seems, at least in retrospect, especially unseemly here, increasingly out of joint with its time" (pp. 368-369). Crucially, it was when the "AIDS crisis set the stage for a revival of homophobic rhetoric, and in turn, the homophobic rhetoric exacerbated the AIDS crisis" (Mangeot & Tin, 2008). In France during the 1980s, although "according to epidemiological statistics (reported in the papers since the summer of 1982), homosexuals were not the only persons affected" (Herzlich & Pierret, 1989, p. 1237), by late 1983, drug users and "homosexual community or the homosexual lifestyle, as though these referred to a homogenous reality" (p. 1238) were marked as the risk groups. In the case of homosexuality, the term *the risk group* was used not only to refer to a category of persons who ran the most risk of catching the disease but also to stigmatize a certain

homosexual lifestyle and purportedly multi-sexual practices as the cause of the prevailing epidemic. Through the media's prevailing association of AIDS with male homosexuality, several names were invented for AIDS, such as "gay cancer", "homosexual syndrome", "homosexual pneumonia", and so on (p. 1237). This moralizing discourse continued for some time even though it became publicly apparent that the disease spread beyond the specific groups throughout the whole population (p. 1240). This time, the journalists condemned the homosexual community as responsible for the spread of the epidemic within France. Even though there is no direct reference to AIDS either in Duras's apocalyptic scenario or within *The Malady of Death,* the phrase's usage to diagnose his suffering indirectly recalls AIDS and the stigmatization of male homosexuality during that period.

Moreover, the homonegative rhetoric of the flaw of otherness that Duras employs throughout *The Malady of Death* has also been put in circulation during the AIDS epidemic in France. This rhetoric asserts that homosexual psychology cannot confront sex differences and cannot understand the needs of others. In line with the abovementioned psychological barrier Duras claimed referring to homosexuals' incapacity to procreate, this trait of homosexual psychology reinforces the underlying belief that they threaten society. During the epidemic, that rhetoric was appropriated to claim that because homosexuals were incapable of and refrain from understanding others, they were more inclined to cheat in relationships and not to care about contaminating the virus to another person. The flaw of otherness rhetoric has "become credible outside of ultra-orthodox circles" (Mangeot & Tin, 2008). Mangeot points to the book *Catechism for adults* released by The Conference of French Bishops held in 1991 that put forth this claim regarding the assumed connections among homosexuality, the flaw of otherness, and AIDS, appropriating the thought of Tony Anatrella who was a priest and psychoanalyst. Regarding the book's declarations on the connection between homosexuality and AIDS:

> In it, the prevalence of AIDS among the gay male population was directly linked to a definition of homosexuality, presented as a "refusal"—or according to the texts, an "incapacity"—to confront gender differences. The result, under these

> conditions, was an example of "bad faith" exclusive to a "homosexual psychology" that "favors a tendency to cheat in relationships" (Anatrella, Non à la société dépressive, 1993). When one is incapable of understanding the other, then one is also incapable of the respect the other is due, and one becomes less scrupulous about possibly contaminating him. (Mangeot & Tin, 2008)

Thereby, that sort of homonegative discourse was utilized, depicting AIDS as inseparable from homosexual psychology and a shameful result affecting the entire nation caused by the group of homosexuals as the offenders. Anatrella's homophobic rhetoric attributes the supposed prevalence of AIDS among the gay male population to presumed homosexual psychology. Categorization under the guise of a refined scientific discourse reproduces an identity of homosexuality that belongs to a gay population and marginalizes the identity, followed by bringing it back as a problem that needs to be resolved into the heart of the discussion while arguing that the psyche of the homosexual is incapable of confronting sex differences. This rhetoric is attentive to distinguish itself from the old rhetorics of homosexuality as a perversion or against nature. Instead, it inclines towards the supposedly more refined rhetoric of psychology, while binding the theological "bad faith" and the scientific inquiry of psychology together. Whereas the emphasis on the rhetoric of incapacity lays itself as more of a psychological discourse that depicts homosexuals as failures, fixated in sexual developmental stages, the focus on "bad faith" connotes a theological argument. Anatrella brings both together and produces a discourse that allows configuring the incapacity and bad faith interchangeable and asserts that homosexuals' flaw of otherness gives them a tendency to favor to cheat in relationships, incapable of respecting others, finally making them less scrupulous to contaminate the AIDS to the partner(s).

Similarly, intellectuals from different disciplines have utilized the idea of the fundamentality of sexual difference and the idea of the flaw of otherness against acknowledging the same sex partnership during the PaCS debates in the late 1990s in France. As I mentioned Butler's critique of Irigaray's conceptualization of sexual difference stating that it operates on the familial level too, those who disfavored the legitimization of the same sex partnerships came up with correlative claims.

Accordingly, it was claimed that same-sex partnerships could not be treated as families due to "inheritance and other legal questions" and "the question of children," emphasizing that it would be "either unnatural, culturally deviant, and/or psychologically damaging about children being born to or raised by two parents of the same sex" (Scott, 1999). Sociologist Irène Théry makes such a remark concerning the child's position in a same-sex family and the so-called problem of genealogy claiming that "No one is the child of two men or two women" (as cited in Scott, 1999). She pities children adopted by same-sex parents, and she explains her disagreement by stating that "humanity is gendered; this is how it reproduces" (cited by Scott, 1999). The feminist philosopher Agacisnki expresses her objection of the *truths* of genealogy as well: "I do not think it would be good for future children to have an asexual or homosexual filiation which would erase the fact that human being is descended from a man and a woman"[43] (as cited in Scott, 1999, p. 20). Such an absurd claim firstly misses the point that not only contemporary developments on "reproductive and cloning technologies" have eliminated "biological determinism" of the man-woman couple, demonstrating that reproduction only necessitates a sperm-egg duo, but also there *are* families transcending the predominant constraints and the imposed identification of "the heterosexual nuclear family" (Scott, 1999). Meaning that Agacinski's insistence, unfortunately, emerges from the homonegative character of this idea of sexual difference, which is also problematic in terms of her alleged feminist stance. Because her point exhibits continuity with the long-settled subjugation of women and the reductionist discourse that "links childbearing to childrearing, taking it for granted that the two tasks are necessarily (and ideally) performed by the same people" (Scott, 1999). Agacinski's homonegative discourse, as well as the former example, employs the idea of sexual difference also from the aspect of praising heterosexuality in correspondence with true desire and degrading same-sex relationships with the flaw of otherness. Her objection is based on the assumed interlink between desire and difference. She asks, "What to think of the difference

[43] Translated by me.

between genders when they cease to depend on one another, when they separate, and instead of the desire for the opposite sex, the desire for the same is encountered, which today is called homosexuality?" (as cited in de Queiroz & Tin, 2008) A French anthropologist and women's rights advocate Françoise Héritier [44] naturalizes heterosexism relying on sexual difference in a similar manner. She refuses the legislation of civil union pact based on that "it is the observation of the difference between genders that is at the basis of all thought, traditional as well as scientific. … It is the ultimate endpoint of thought, on which a fundamental conceptual opposition is based, that which contrasts the identical with the different" (as cited in de Queiroz & Tin, 2008). Such argumentations and alike inevitably leads us to ask whether the sexual difference paradigm is built on heterosexist foundations and demonstrates how the centrality of sexual difference (when located in an essentialist manner) is likely to bring about a homophobic discourse, which, in their case, also exemplifies the tension between feminist politics and gay movement.

Turning back to *The Malady of Death*, considering the convergent simultaneous workings of meanings established by the trope of *the malady of death*, one is the deadliness of the mastery attempt of a patriarchal figure through the revival of the ancient codes, which alludes the heterosexual domination-subordination dynamics that have existed for long centuries, and the other is the deadliness of a homosexual man whom the feminine difference has passed him by, who is afraid and repugnant by the female body and sees the risk of having children in a female body, and akin to death because homosexuals do not have children. Both figures, the homosocial and the homosexual, are converged and confounded together in one trope that is meant to represent in common the rejection or disavowal of feminine difference. But, the male homosexual, asserts Duras, "*dans un exil plus profound que les autres*

[44] The fundamentality of the idea of sexual difference in her approach can be further read in her article. Héritier, F. (2005). *Masculine/feminine: The thought of the difference* (pp. 56-74). In K. Oliver & L. Walsh (Eds.), *Contemporary French feminism.*

homes" [45] (as cited in Crowley, 1998, p. 662), since differentiating from heterosexual homosocial man, the homosexual male is in no sexual involvement with women, and his exile from the feminine difference is the ultimate. Duras conflates homosexual man and phallic man or in Crowley's words, she figures "homosexuality to represent the self-sufficient sterility of the homosocial, of men without women" (Crowley, 1998, p. 662). However, distinct from Sedgwick (1985) who draws the desire back into the homosocial order hypothesizing a continuum between homosociality and homosexuality, in Duras's configuration, there is only self-desire and self-interest between men in any circumstances: Neither in the male homosocial realm nor the homosexual realm. Since desire, for Duras, can only spur in the difference between a man and a woman, even if their sexual orientations are asymmetrical. In these terms, even if Duras's intend is to disturb phallic logic and the supposed self-sufficiency of male homosociality (as I have suggested in the previous chapter), which is in Duras's words: "*la classe phallique*"[46] (as cited in Crowley, 1998, p. 660), by establishing a privileged position to heterosexual man and heterosexuality, she is reiterating the phallic logic.

Crowley (1998) argues that this conflation, using male homosexual "as a synecdochic figure of the homosocial" (p. 663), is paradoxical in the sense that in the Western modern society male homosociality is not where male homosexuality prevails, but, in opposition, male homosociality is founded on the repression of male homosexuality. He argues, then, male homosexuality would not be a representative of the homosociality since it can only disturb it "as one might expect of a repressed term", "both within and without it, disrupting its margins rather than confirming its identity" (p. 667). Crowley argues that this conflation is made possible by Duras "by excluding the desire from homosexuality" (p. 668), since, according to Duras, the basic condition of possibility for desire is always reliant upon the difference between man and woman. I agree with Crowley's interpretation in general. However, it is important to note that it is not universally true that male

[45] "in a deeper exile than other men" (translated by me).
[46] "the phallic class" (translated by me).

homosexuality is the repressed form of homosociality because as suggested by Sedgwick, manifest male homosexuality can go hand in hand with heterosexual social contract and patriarchy, as seen in ancient Greece, and thus, Crowley's argument is true when we are speaking about the time Duras has lived wherein rigid distinctions between male homosexuality and male heterosexuality were established and produced (Sedgwick, 1985).

Schwab (1996) also recognizes that the man in the text is a man bearing the homosexual desire. She asks the same question as mine "Why did Duras choose a homosexual man for her aesthetic reflection on the structural relationship between men and women?" at the end of her literary critique of *The Malady of Death* (p. 183). Schwab argues that there exists a triangular relationship between the male narrator, the female character, and the male character and highlights that the man reaches the woman only by the mediation of another man. On that ground, she claims it would not matter if the man were manifestly homosexual or latently homosexual. However, her interpretation distinguishes from mine, not only because I take the male narrator and the male protagonist as two parts of the same person, but also the crucial point that Duras does not contemplate desire in male homosexuality at all. In Duras's perspective, homosexuality is only a form of narcissistic self-interest. Schwab's argumentation resembles Irigaray's thought in terms of the formulation of women's status as a supplement, and the emphasis that the phallic economy is charged with homosexual desire echoes the Irigarayan framework. In parallel with Irigaray, Schwab claims that the seemingly heterosexual social order veils the homosexual desire that deeply lies beneath, and thus there is no difference between the male homosexual (manifest) and the phallic heterosexual man (latent) since in such a triangular relationship only desire exists between men.

Hope's analysis in his essay *The Sexual Indifference and The Homosexual Male Imaginary* (1994) is particularly significant for this matter, and for my analysis in general. Hope critically discusses the narrative production of male homosexuality

in feminist psychoanalytic accounts and illustrates that these accounts have often interpreted the heterosexual contract to be loaded with homosexual desire (p. 169). In other words, in these accounts, the contention is that a close look at the phallogocentric order that is founded on the sameness of the masculine subject by rendering women as the constitutive outside reveals that the "heterosexual social contract" is no more than a veil for the desire among and only for men. According to Hope (1994), in the Irigarayan account of the phallic economy "male homosexuality had a strangely privileged (if occluded and undertheorized) role in the hermeneutic decoding of the patriarchal symbolic" within psychoanalytically oriented feminist accounts (p. 170). Hope (1994) mainly argues that although Irigaray's critique of the phallic order has powerfully deconstructed the mechanisms of the phallogocentric logic, Irigaray is as faulted as Freud for the "hermeneutic gesture" of installing male homosexuality retrospectively or, "retro-jectively" at the origin of Western heterosexual social order. In other words, Irigaray, by inheriting from the Freudian account, repeats the Enlightenment model of historiography, installing an *origin*al point in the *past* to produce a sense of historical continuity and legitimization for the *present* established hegemonic heterosexist and patriarchal symbolic (Roberts, 2017, p. 11). Thus, Hope's main concern is "to move towards an understanding of the manner in which it [origin] is installed retrospectively – or 'retro-jectively,' as it were – as an effect of a hegemonic heterosexist and patriarchal symbolic" (Hope, 1994, p. 171). By illustrating that in these accounts, homosexuality is not tackled as a positive term, not even a true other but installed as only recurrently shown and repressed negativity, he claims that if we take this point in the past as origin, we can only understand it through the Derridean notions of trace, spacing, and *différance.*

Hope begins the illustration of his argument by critically engaging with a footnote that comes in the third section of the *Civilization and its Discontents* followed after Freud's statement: "If we go back far enough, we find that the first acts of civilization were the use of tools, the gaining of control over fire and the construction of dwellings. Among these, the control over fire stands out as a quite

extraordinary and unexampled achievement" (as cited in Hope, 1994, p. 171). We read in this footnote[47] that the most crucial discovery that paved the way to the civilization, the control over fire, became possible due to a game that was mobilized by male homosexual instincts. Freud writes that primal men seemed to have an urge for putting out the fire by urinating as a way of homosexual competition between them, and between them and fire (phallus). The first man to renounce his homosexual excitation would have control over fire and carry the fire home with him. The discovery of control over fire then required first the sexual play of homosexual competition but later the "renunciation" of the homosexual instincts (Hope, 1994, p. 172). He emphasizes that if we take Freud's story as an allusion or "reworking of Prometheus myth", what is significantly changed here is that it is not a divine power that instantiates "the performative act that institutes the civilization", but rather a discovery that has been possible by the mobilization of male homosexual instincts and their renunciation followed after (p. 171). Thus, here in Freud's allusion to the myth, we read "the displacement" of a heroic act of divine power with a male "agent" that is marked by his passivity and "disciplinary asceticism directed at the self: a renunciation" (p. 172). In that sense, at the moment that the social agent of the civilization instantiates the sociality by "self-renunciation", the subject and the origin of sociality are concomitantly constructed as a site of passivity, submission, loss, alienation and masochism, "which, we might say, simultaneously constitutes and de-stitutes the masculine subject" (p. 172).

[47] "Psychoanalytic material, incomplete as it is and not susceptible to clear interpretation, nevertheless admits of a conjecture-a fantastic-sounding one- about the origin of this human feat. It is as though a primal man had the habit, when he came into contact with fire, of satisfying an infantile desire connected with it, by putting it out with a stream of urine. The legends that we possess leave no doubt about the originally phallic view taken of tongues of flame as they shoot upwards. Putting out fire by micturating ... was therefore a kind of sexual act with a male, an enjoyment of sexual potency in a homosexual competition. The first person to renounce this desire and spare the fire was able to carry it off with him and subdue it to his own use. By damping down the fire of his sexual excitation, he had tamed the natural force of fire. This great cultural quest was thus the reward for his renunciation of instinct. Further, it is as though woman had been appointed guardian of the fire which was held captive in the domestic hearth, because her anatomy made it impossible for her to yield to the temptation of this desire" (as cited in Hope, 1994, p. 171).

However, by this operation, as Freud theorizes in *On Narcissism* and summarizes in *Mourning and Melancholia*, the object is not completely lost but incorporated or introjected within the person: "shadow [here, blaze] of the object falls across the ego" (as cited in Hope, 1994, p. 172). The introjection of the "lost" object then becomes a site of identification. On this ground, Hope argues that it would not be logical to assume that male homosexuality lies as an overcome origin of heterosexual social-symbolic because any attempt to overcome the origin (give up the same-sex object) incorporates the object by identification processes of the ego and "reinscribes it through the evocation of an erotics of submission and branding at the mercy of a phallic and punitive law" (Hope, 1994, p. 172). In that sense, Hope argues that if one follows Freud's logic, the law that operates the "the heterosexual social contract" is imbued with homosexual instincts that have not been overcome. Irigaray's critique of Freud can be understood in these terms when she deconstructed the seemingly "the heterosexual social contract" and discerned the underlying homoerotics.

Irigaray (1985b) bears particular importance for Hope's line of inquiry since she explains that the foundation of the Western society is built on the exchange and the circulation of women among men or groups of men. In this society, men have the producer-subject role, whereas women have been enveloped as a commodity-object through the imposed use and exchange value and abstracted into standardization that would reduce women to a common feature that of the specularization of the Phallic. Irigaray names this society as "hom(m)osexual" since men's needs and desires are exclusively valorized, and exchanges among them are valorized and the woman as a subject does not participate in this transaction. Although she notes, like Freud, that the immediate practice of male homosexuality is prohibited in Western culture, she does not question the origin myth of homosexuality; in effect, she happens to naturalize Freud's discursive production of male homosexuality. Hope argues that Irigaray "neglects what [Freud has] tried to reveal as a political narrative in which the supposed 'origin' is always belatedly produced, is always inscribed

from within the supplementarity of (hetero-)sociality, from within the disciplinary epistemological operations of a postoriginary social field" (Hope, 1994, p. 176).

Hope argues that yet Irigaray powerfully deconstructed the mechanisms of patriarchy, she nevertheless misdiagnosed the relations between imaginary and symbolic registers and "maintained ... a particular logical and chronological priority of the imaginary over the symbolic" (Hope, 1994, p. 177). Hope claims that Irigaray, like Freud, has also resorted to the same gesture of installing male homosexuality at the origin, without discerning that this myth is a production of the symbolic which operates in the name of the Phallus. Hope (1994) underlines

> If Irigaray may be right to suggest that the symbolic coheres around a delimiting imaginary core, ensuring the danger that all significations have already been appropriated by the phallus, that all subjects have already been homologated according to the masculine economy, I would argue that that imaginary must nonetheless be understood as itself, in turn, as an effect of the symbolic economy of which it is the apparent cause. (p. 177)

Hope criticizes Irigaray's "target[ing] of male homosexuality as the ultimate instance of a deathly symbolic"[48] as if the manifestation of male homosexuality would bring an end to the symbolic since it "openly interpret[s] the law according to which society operates" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 193). Hope, on the other hand, argues that the bond between the law and the disavowal of homosexuality appears too tight in the symbolic that unmediated manifestation of male homosexuality within the fraternity and the locker room can only enjoy itself in guilt. Hope underlines that if we take "the enjoyment of male homosexuality as sexual indifference" and "its avatars in the contemporary locker room and fraternity", this cannot be "understood as the final consummation of an imaginarily sustained wish",

[48] "The 'other' homosexual relations, masculine ones, are just as subversive, so they too are forbidden. Because they openly interpret the law according to which society operates, they threaten in fact to shift the horizon of that law. Besides, they challenge the nature, status, and 'exogamic' necessity of the product of exchange. By short-circuiting the mechanisms of commerce, might they also expose what is really at stake? Furthermore, they might lower the sublime value of the standard, the yardstick. Once the penis itself becomes merely a means to pleasure, pleasure among men, the phallus loses its power." (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 193)

"for homosexuality is both more intimately related to the law and more radically disavowed by it than the Irigarayan account would suggest" (Hope, 1994, p. 182). In that sense, Hope does not necessarily refute that male homosociality is imbued with homosexual desire but asserts that homosexuality in the heterosexual social contract "can never manifest itself except through that "significatory stigma" (p. 182).

Irigaray's limitations in her deconstructive work from the start signal that her later projects will be the reconstruction of heterosexuality. By going one step further than Freud, Irigaray deconstructs the patriarchy by saying that "heterosexuality is nothing but the assignment of economic roles" in a system based on the exploitative relations between the producer-subject and the exchanged-object that is organized extensively by homosexual desire (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 192). She equates the mediated male homosexuality with patriarchy, in which the exchange economy is central, and phallocentrism, in which the symbolic standard of exchange is the phallus. In the same sense, she aims to unveil male homosexual desire as the core principle, the system itself, and discloses heterosexuality as the fabrication of the patriarchal-homosexual-phallocentric order for the maintenance of veiling. Her feminist approach may be perceived to be deconstructivist, yet she simultaneously fixates and locates homosexuality, which later on serves for her reconstruction of heterosexuality as a fecund future built upon sexual difference. Therefore, her project tends to be a myth-making and the production of history, as Hope problematizes too, in which she rejects homosexuality instead of repressing it. Considering that her deconstructivist work does not take homosexuality as the other of heterosexuality, because exchanged-female is explained to be the negative other of producer-male, her re-constructivist project locates homosexuality as the negative other of ethical heterosexuality to come.

Hope's argumentation can possibly be argued to be in a close theoretical link with what Sedgwick argues in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). In *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick's considerations of "the complex and punitive

relationships that persist between the law and male homoerotics" (Hope, 1994, p. 182) provide a richer understanding concerning the conditions of articulation of a supposedly deviant and stigmatized desire. While Irigaray defines the symbolic law with the mediatory role of heterosexuality and the correspondence of indirect maintenance of male homosexuality to patriarchy, Sedgwick (1985) criticizes Irigaray's conceptualization of male homosexuality for its "sacrifice of sex itself", highlighting that Irigaray's conceptualization of male homosexuality "turns out to represent anything but actual sex between men" (p. 26). In other words, Sedgwick does not neglect sexual orientation, desire, and love taking place between gay subjects. More importantly, Sedgwick's association between homophobia and misogyny provides an understanding that not homosexuality but homophobia is central in patriarchy. In that sense, Sedgwick's *male homosocial desire* differs from Irigaray's *hom(m)osexuality*.

On this ground, I want to argue that Duras's conflation of phallic man with a male homosexual is a choice that resembles Irigaray's account. In correspondence with Irigaray, Duras claims that the unmediated homosexual desire is the constitutive element of patriarchy. Although, as explained by Hope too, Irigaray (1985b) asserts that when homosexuality is manifested, it would "shift the horizon of that law" (p. 193), she is nevertheless irresponsible towards her repeated slippage to use the term homosexuality itself instead of the term hom(m)osexuality. That slippage does not seem so much accidental when we think about her later reconstructive project of the cultivation of the difference founded on the fundamentality of woman/male couple, and that slippage signals that in her project the manifest male homosexuality is in conflation with the phallic man. The promoted homonegative rhetoric of the flaw of otherness by Héritier, Agacinski, and Théry during the debates of PaCS, is indeed in relation with this conflation. The claim that male homosexuality is a flaw of otherness since there is no place for difference in the homosexual sphere leads to understand the male homosexual as the phallic man who fails to appreciate the sexual difference of the feminine.

Overall, the contention within *The Malady of Death* that desire can only spur within the sexual difference between men and women readily designates heterosexuality as the sole location of desire, while rendering homosexuality as the homogenous place of sameness that makes no love towards the other possible except self-love. For heterosexual love is perceived by Duras as the ultimate realm for the recognition of the difference and the high ethical purpose for transgressing the difference in the pursuit of love. Therefore, heterosexuality is assumed to be the social correspondence of the ethical relationship between the self and the other in terms of two sexes, that is shared by certain ideas of sexual difference feminism too, which otherwise turns into the reproduction of sameness as in male homosexuality.

Homonegativity emerging from the text, the statements of Duras, and certain claims of the idea of sexual difference appear to be associated with the interpretation of genuine love. That is to say, desire is restricted to the domain of heterosexuality solely. The text suggests that heterosexuality is compulsory for desire to be possible. At the same time, it designates the male same-sex desire as the realm of sameness and the male homosexual as the narcissistic self who is inherently incapable of loving anyone but himself. Therefore, the male homosexual is taken as the site of the reproduction of the masculine Same. The text offers a comparison of heterosexual love and homosexuality. By representing the male homosexual as a "synecdochic figure of the homosocial" (Crowley, 1998, p. 663) Duras identifies homosexuality with the inability to love the Other, whereas heterosexuality is what the text sublimates – the genuine heterosexuality that would possibly happen in its marvelous impossibility. This denunciation of male homosexuality in reference to homosociality is problematic since if the male homosexuality enters into the homosocial fraternity, it "can never manifest itself except through that "significatory stigma" (Hope, 1994, p. 182).

CONCLUSION

Throughout my thesis, I analyzed *The Malady of Death* as a multi-layered text that exemplifies the employment of the idea of sexual in/difference in alignment with homonegative discursive productions. I argued and demonstrated that the text builds a critique of the phallic order by positioning the male homosexual figure as the synecdoche of it. Meaning that the text is a critique of the male homosocial order by referring to the male homosexual as its most representative agent. I arrived at the conclusion that the text reproduces the heterosexist epistemological and ethical discourses embedded within patriarchy and also certain feminist approaches, such as Irigaray's feminist account on sexual difference. To begin with, I demonstrated that Duras employs the idea of sexual in/difference within and by her literary work in order to criticize the masculine economy of desire, which resonates with Irigaray's theoretical approach. I discussed how the homonegative rhetoric is already implicated within the theoretical underpinnings of the idea of the sexual in/difference that Duras used as a tool for the criticism of patriarchy.

Concerning the first part of my research question, that is the idea of sexual difference, I presented Duras's critique of phallic order relying on the centrality of sexual indifference, sexual difference, feminine difference, and radical otherness. In that sense, I provided this reading reflecting upon Duras's idea of sexual difference and its feminist dimension that is tackled in parallel to Irigaray's sexual difference feminism. Duras criticizes the phallic order by exposing the epistemological and symbolic violence of a male character over a female character. The text is a dramatization of the patriarchal context, exhibiting correspondences with Irigaray's approach as well, where a masculine subject attempts to reduce the feminine into his mirror but, at the same time, the woman exists in the threshold, aware of the oppressive attempts of the masculine subject and gradually realizing her radical potential to unsettle his phallic order. Duras depicts the sexually indifferent operations of the phallic order through the question of love and death in this story. Unlike Irigaray, who claims that love would be possible only within the

culture of sexual difference, Duras does not argue that love is possible between men and women at any rate, but it is only possible in its impossibility. Still, they share the ideas that the radical otherness belongs to the feminine difference, women have the potential to disturb the order, and the primary difference is found in between women and men. Irigaray aims to create a culture of two by showing that men and women are not opposites, but they are different, and the embracing of that difference can cultivate a future of difference. In her interviews, Duras emphasized this difference as opposition and an insurmountable one and she thinks that trying to transcend this opposition is the richness of heterosexuality (as cited in Lucey, 2013, p. 344; Duras, 2020, p. 105). Therefore, the characterization of sexual difference in Duras's and Irigaray's perspectives connect to their conceptualization of love, desire, and the self-other relationship as well. Likewise, I aimed to grasp how Duras places sexual difference in her critique of patriarchy and the questions of love, desire, and self/other dynamics, by analyzing the prominent associative themes in the text that are silence, sleep, and death.

Moreover, I underlined that the antagonism between the man and the woman was from the start built by the uncanny feelings the woman aroused in him, which designated her role as the double. I argued that these uncanny feelings that woman stood for were the effect of his projection. Her mirroring of his projections was one of the significant literary motors that drove the story. Furthermore, I emphasized the significance of radical otherness emerging out of women's position within the phallic system, which is commonly crucial in Duras's and Irigaray's accounts on sexual in/difference, to convey the interrelatedness of Duras's critique of the masculinist subject with Irigaray's political intervention in the same matter. I concluded that in a similar vein with Irigaray's account on the radical other status of feminine subjectivity within the masculine economy of desire and exchange, Duras seemed to highlight the border position of the female protagonist, moving in and out of the phallic order. Whereas Irigaray reflected on and exposed the status of the feminine subject to be mirroring for the masculinist subject, Duras employed this mirroring function of the feminine subject as one of the literary motors of the

storyline in order to expose its deathly mechanisms and also its limits. I argued that although the mirroring function of the protagonist maintained in general, she was not totally appropriated within the sameness order due to her radical position, and her constant movement in and out of the phallic order brought about another dynamic force into the story that destabilized the workings of the mirror. It is because the symbolic order that multiplies in its sameness, like every other system, has a residue, a remainder, and a limit to itself. The others that have been tried to be appropriated in the sameness order produce a supplement that cannot be reduced in absolute terms. They can be argued to carry the potential to unsettle the system on the very basis of their radical otherness. The unstable dynamics between the man and the woman here in the text seem to symbolize such a potential that has been mobilized by the woman as she has already occupied the constitutive outside. Her position as the constitutive outside turns into a force that shatters man's sense of reality. His attempted sovereignty will break into pieces as the mirror gets broken and reformed towards the gradual realization of the female protagonist's potential of radical otherness. In this regard, Duras's text seems like a deconstruction of the masculinist subject and his deathly urge to universalize his position to the detriment of the feminine subjectivity. I proposed that this choice was not strictly personal, but it was already implicated within the sexual difference feminist discourse circulating in France from the 1970s and onwards.

Building upon that, in the third chapter, I moved to the second part of my question that binds the idea of sexual difference to the reproduction of homonegative discourse, which I analyzed both at textual and contextual levels. As I provided the reading of *The Malady of Death* in terms of the critique of phallic order by employing the discussion of sexual in/difference, many receptions of the book have overlooked or not discerned the implicit condemnations of male homosexuality. However, the critical issue has been that although it is not explicitly stated in the text, the male character is gay. Therefore, my subsequent question dealt with how to interpret Duras's choice to make such a critique by using male homosexuality as the synecdoche of the patriarchy and condemning male homosexuality for its

supposed fundamental complicity with patriarchy. For that purpose, I determined and followed two interrelated lines of inquiry to analyze Duras's choice, the first being the rhetoric of the flaw of otherness and secondly the conflation of the male homosexual with the phallic man. My discussion has been not only based on the textual analysis of *The Malady of Death* but also the contextual analysis of the time the piece was written, Duras's literary and personal engagements, and the influential discourses regarding the gay and lesbian individuals in France. I first demonstrated that *The Malady of Death* reproduces the homonegative rhetoric of the flaw of otherness. This supposedly ethical understanding equates alterity with sexual difference and marks the homosexual as incapable to embrace otherness. It is grounded on the assumptions of a faulty distinction between heterosexual and homosexual love. In this binary schema, heterosexual love is interpreted and sublimated as the opening gate to the outside of the self-same mechanisms due to the supposed sexual difference between the sexes. The same argument interprets and condemns homosexual love as the blindness to otherness and as nothing but self-love in a solipsistic narcissistic world. I showed that this faulty distinction and assumption have been displayed by Duras all along *The Malady of Death* and also in her other books and interviews. What is at stake here is Duras's particular choice to figure the phallic order with a gay male character. I pursued that while the text designates male homosociality as the deadly site of a homogenous sameness and/or the disavowal of the feminine difference, it complicates the notion of male homosociality by rendering the male protagonist homosexual. The heterosexual patriarch and the homosexual man, then, become conflated in that they both reject the difference of the feminine, but, strangely enough, she suggests that at least there is desire in the sexual realm of heterosexuality, even though it is hell.

A similar theoretical tendency can be recognized in Irigaray's assertions on the foundations of the phallic currency, suggesting that the seemingly heterosexual contract on the surface is essentially a "hommosexual" one. Irigaray further claims that the phallic symbolic order is based mainly on male homosexual desire that leaves the sexual difference of female outside. First, in *This Sex Which is Not One*,

Irigaray deconstructs the phallic order by suggesting that the heterosexual organization is an alibi for homosexual desires and situates manifest homosexuality as a subversive force that can shift the horizon of the phallic order. In this book, she interprets manifest homosexuality as a negated Other, but she dismisses that the mythical homosexual origin that is renounced is the effect of the heterosexist epistemology of the present. This leads her first of all to simplify the complex relations between the phallic order and manifest male homosexuality. In her reconstructive project for a future that cultivates sexual difference, she formulates an ethical understanding based on the difference between sexes. Particularly starting from *An Ethics of the Sexual Difference*, the critique of the phallic order and the masculinist subject goes hand in hand with the privileging of sexual difference between different sexes and thus, heterosexual couples. Although she does not overtly claim that ethical relation is impossible between same-sexes, her hierarchical construction that designates the difference between sexes as an irreducible difference and the difference between same-sexes as an empirical difference is not very much different than saying that ethical relationship is impossible between same-sexes (see page 104). She claims that people should not wait for her to talk about everything that is outside of her experience, such as homosexuality (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 359). However, her project of cultivation of the difference based on the irreducible difference between sexes speaks about homosexuality without speaking about it. Moreover, her claim that putting an irreducible difference between same sexes can only hurt the parties of the equation is already a proliferation of discourse on homosexuality. The most obtrusive of her interpretations on homosexuality, while she was assuming that she was not talking about homosexuality, was her alignment of homosexual desires with desires to rape and violate the other. She told in an interview that every psychoanalyst has to analyze "their homosexual desires, their desire to rape and violate the other" (Hirsh et al., 1996, p. 352).

I particularly focused on Irigaray's sexual difference feminist account because, in her structural analyses of the patriarchy, she deconstructs the heterosexual

organization of the phallic order, claiming that heterosexuality is the euphemistic coverage of the male homosexual desires. I argued that although Duras and Irigaray both interrogated the phallic order by trying to deconstruct it, they both seemed to undervalue or dismiss the fundamentality of the prohibition of homosexuality in the constitution of the modern subject and, in effect, perpetuated the heterosexist and thus homonegative discourses. I also argued that there are important differences between Irigaray's and Duras's political agenda. Although the premises of the sexual difference feminism could be observed within her *oeuvre*, she identified herself more with the *écriture* writing, which showed that her political agenda is not in one-to-one correspondence with the agenda of Irigaray. Duras's political agenda seems to be in more favor of an apocalyptic change that would embrace all the suppressed feelings within civilization, except for male homosexuality, in order to destroy and start anew. The apocalyptic scenario Duras draws for the proliferation of homosexuality (without telling overtly, she reproduces the homonegative rhetoric that homosexuality is contagious) echoes more of genocide than a new innocent beginning. Irigaray's political project of the cultivated sexually different future is on the other hand is located within the boundaries of the Enlightenment project and its sublimated civilized society. Although when I started the research, I thought Irigaray's essentialism could be named as strategic essentialism, reading more of her, especially her reconstructive works, I arrived at the conclusion that her essentialism could not be called strategic but pure essentialism that designates the bodies according to their sexual morphologies. Her claim that a law that legislates homosexual partnerships, before there is a law that recognizes the rights and duties of women and men, would only amount to assimilation to the sameness order reflects this morphologic essentialism. Furthermore, in her book *je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, her alignment of the proliferation of the non-binary genders within Western countries with genocide clearly manifests this morphological essentialism in its barest form (Irigaray, 1993b, p. 12).

Whereas *The Malady of Death* has been analyzed from various perspectives, two main tendencies were substantial for my study. The first tendency was the readings built from a viewpoint taking the female protagonist with the potential of shattering the patriarchy and the second is the ones holding the purpose of discussing the book's homonegativity by tackling the male protagonist as a gay man and primarily focusing on how Duras reproduces homonegative discourses through the text. I intended my reading and analysis to be more integrative and contributing in terms of building the connections between those two and/or disclosing the already available links between the conception of sexual difference as a feminist counter-position and the interrogation of a homonegative discourse (re)produced through the denunciation of male homosexuality. Whilst the literary critics read and interpreted Duras's homonegativity in relation with Duras's literary affiliation with *écriture*, I demonstrated the effects of sexual difference feminism on her work and the critical relation of this account with the homonegative rhetorics reproduced in *The Malady of Death*. My interpretation was first of all important in terms of the literature on *The Malady of Death* because of the gap between readings on *The Malady of Death* particularly focusing on the subversive power of the female protagonist and the interpretations that focused on Duras's homonegative rhetorics. I aimed to show that the critics who only realized a criticism of the patriarchal order within the text reproduced a heterosexist epistemology by assuming the man's sexual orientation as necessarily heterosexual. I think, by leaving the man's orientation rather covert, Duras was from the start pushing many readers to assume him to be heterosexual. Whereas, for others that had not readily assumed his heterosexuality, Duras was again forcing the readers to take him out of the closet and watch her assault him for being homosexual. Her literary strategy seemed to echo the deadly workings of the heterosexist epistemology. In that sense, I aimed to contribute to the critical reading of literary texts from a perspective that does not readily assume the orientation of the characters as necessarily heterosexual. I also emphasized that the heterosexist epistemology marked bisexuality and transgender unintelligible. This point is not merely important for literary readings but also for theoretical practices and day-to-day life embedded within Turkey's political

atmosphere that designates heterosexuality and fundamentality of sexuate distinctions as the norms.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. Duke University Press.

Barrett, M. (1987). The concept of 'difference'. *Feminist Review, 26*(1), 29-41.

Blanchot, M. (1988). *The unavowable community*. Station Hill Press.

Brée, G., Duras, M., & Doherty, C. (1972). An Interview with Marguerite Duras. *Contemporary Literature, 13*(4), 401-422.

Cavarero, A. (2017). Feminism and ancient Greek philosophy. In A. Garry, S. J. Khader, & A. Stone (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to feminist philosophy* (pp. 23-34). Routledge.

Chauvin, S., & Tin, L. (2008). Sterility. In L. Tin (Ed.), The Dictionary of Homophobia: A Global History of Gay & Lesbian Experience. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Cheah, P., Grosz, E., Butler, J., & Cornell, D. (1998). The future of sexual difference: An interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell. *Diacritics, 28*(1), 19-42.

Cixous, H. (1976). The laugh of Medusa. *Signs, 1*(4), 875-93.

Cohen, S. D. (1993). *Women and discourse in the fiction of Marguerite Duras: Love, legends, language*. Macmillan.

Creech, J. (2000). Life and death upon the page: Marguerite Duras and Roland Barthes. In J. S. Williams (Ed.), *Revisioning Duras: Film, race, sex* (pp. 171-189). Liverpool University Press.

Crowley, M. (1998). "C'est curieux un mort": Duras on Homosexuality. *The Modern Language Review, 19*(3), 659-677.

Dean, T., & Lane, C (Eds.). (2001). *Homosexuality & psychoanalysis*. The University of Chicago Press.

De Queiroz, J. M. (2008). Gender differences. In L. Tin (Ed.), *The Dictionary of Homophobia: A Global History of Gay & Lesbian Experience*. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Duras, M. (1986). *The malady of death*. Grove Press.

Duras, M. (1989). *Blue eyes, black hair*. Pantheon Books.

Duras, M. (1992). *Practicalities*. Grove Press.

Duras, M. (2020). *Suspended passion: Interviews with Leopoldina Pallotta della Torre*. Seagull Books.

Foucault, M. (1978). *History of sexuality: Volume I: An introduction*. Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M., Maniglier, P., & Zabunyan, D. (2018). Marguerite Duras: Memory without remembering. In C. O'Farrell (Ed.), *Foucault at the movies* (pp. 123-134). Columbia University Press.

Folkard, R. (1892). *Plant lore, legends, and lyrics*. Sampson Bow, Barston & Company.

Freud, S. (1962). *Civilization and its discontents*. WW Norton & Company.

Hacht, A. M., & Hayes, D. D. (2009). Marguerite Duras. In *Gale contextual encyclopedia of world literature (Vol. 1-4)*. Gale.

Halperin, D. M. (1995). *Saint Foucault: Towards a gay hagiography*. Oxford University Press.

Han, B. C. (with Badiou, A.). (2017). Foreword: The reinvention of love. In *The agony of Eros* (pp. vii-xi). MIT Press.

Hard, R. (2003). *The Routledge handbook of Greek mythology*. Routledge.

Herek, G. M. (2000). The psychology of sexual prejudice. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 9*(1), 19-22.

Herek, G. M. (2004). Beyond "homophobia": Thinking about sexual prejudice and stigma in the twenty-first century. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy, 1*(2), 6-24.

Herzlich, C., & Pierret, J. (1989). The construction of a social phenomenon: AIDS in the French press. *Social Science & Medicine, 29*(11), 1235-1242.

Hill, L. (1990). Blanchot and Mallarmé. *MLN, 105*(5), 889-913.

Hill, L. (1993). *Marguerite Duras: Apocalyptic desires*. Routledge.

Hirsh, E., Olson, G. A., & Brulotte, G. (1996). "Je—Luce Irigaray": A meeting with Luce Irigaray. *JAC, 16*(3), 341-361.

Hoad, T. F. (Ed.) (1996). Passion. In *The concise Oxford dictionary of English etymology*. Oxford University Press.

Hocquenghem, G. (1993). *Homosexual desire*. Duke University Press.

Hope, T. (1994). Sexual indifference and the homosexual male imaginary. *Diacritics, 24*(2), 168-183.

Hudson, W. W., & Ricketts, W. A. (1980). A strategy for the measurement of homophobia. *Journal of Homosexuality, 5*(4), 357-372.

Husserl-Kapit, S., & Duras, M. (1975). An Interview with Marguerite Duras. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1*(2), 423-434.

Irigaray, L. (1985a). *Speculum of the other woman*. Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, L. (1985b). *This sex which is not one*. Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, L. (1993a). *An ethics of sexual difference*. Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, L. (1993b). *je, tu, nous: Toward a culture of difference*. Routledge.

Irigaray, L., & Guynn, N. (1995). The question of the other. *Yale French Studies*, (87), 7-19.

Irigaray, L. (1996). *I love to you: Sketch for a felicity within history*. Routledge.

Irigaray, L. (2002). Why cultivate difference?. *Paragraph, 25*(3), 79-90.

Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer theory: An introduction*. Melbourne University Press.

Lipman-Blumen, J. (1976). Toward a homosocial theory of sex roles: An explanation of the sex segregation of social institutions. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1*(3, Part 2), 15-31.

Lottes, I. L., & Grollman, E. A. (2010). Conceptualization and assessment of homonegativity. *International Journal of Sexual Health, 22*(4), 219-233.

Lucey, M. (2013). The Contexts of Marguerite Duras's Homophobia. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 19*(3), 341-379.

Makward, C. P. (1990). For a stylistics of Marguerite Duras. *L'Esprit Créateur, 30*(1), 28-39.

Mangeot, P. (2008). AIDS. In L. Tin (Ed.), *The Dictionary oh Homophobia: A Global History of Gay & Lesbian Experience*. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Martin, A. (2003). Introduction: Luce Irigaray and the culture of difference. *Theory, Culture & Society, 20*(3), 1-12.

Merck, M. (1987). Difference and its discontents. *Screen, 28*(1), 2-9.

Morrison, M. A., & Morrison, T. G. (2003). Development and validation of a scale measuring modern prejudice toward gay men and lesbian women. *Journal of Homosexuality, 43*(2), 15-37.

Moskos, G. (1991). Odd Coupling: Duras Reflects (On) Balzac. *Contemporary Literature, 32*(4), 520-533.

Quinodoz, J. M. (2005). *Reading Freud: A chronological exploration of Freud's writings*. Routledge.

Rapaport, H. (1994). *Between the sign and the gaze*. Cornell University Press.

Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 5*(4), 631-660.

Roberts, N. A. (2017). *Tapping history: Retrojection, bridging, and invented tradition by North Carolina craft brewers* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. North Carolina State University.

Russell, Y. (2013). Luce Irigaray: An ode to A-(Luce). In B. Dillet, I. MacKenzie, & R. Porter (Eds.), *The Edinburgh companion to poststructuralism* (pp. 291-308). Edinburgh University Press.

Schwab, G. (1996). "While she lives she invites murder": The malady of death. In *The mirror and the killer-queen* (pp. 170-184). Indiana University Press.

Schweigert, J. (2010). *The uncanny: The double as a literary convention* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Masaryk University.

Scott, J. H. (1999). Feminist family politics. *French Politics, Culture and Society, 17*(3-4), 20-30.

Sedgwick, E. K. (1985). *Between men: English literature and male homosocial desire*. Columbia University Press.

Sedgwick, E. K. (1990). *Epistemology of the closet*. University of California Press.

Shildrick, M. (2020). Queering the Social Imaginaries of the Dead. *Australian Feminist Studies, 35*(104), 170-185.

Smith, S. C. (2016). *"Turn his sleep into wake:" Sleeplessness in Macbeth* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Harvard Extension School.

Stone, A. (2007). *An introduction to feminist philosophy*. Polity.

Vasquez, E. A., Ball, L., Loughnan, S., & Pina, A. (2018). The object of my aggression: Sexual objectification increases physical aggression toward women. *Aggressive Behavior, 44*(1), 5-17.

Warner, M. (1990). Homo-narcissism; or, heterosexuality. In J. A. Boone, & M. Cadden (Eds.), *Engendering men: The question of male feminist criticism* (pp. 190-206). Routledge.

Whitford, M. (1991). *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the feminine*. Routledge.

Williams, J. S. (1992). A Beast of a Closet: The Sexual Differences of Literary Collaboration in the Work of Marguerite Duras and Yann Andréa. *The Modern Language Review, 87*(3), 576-584.

Williams, J. S. (1996). All her sons: Marguerite Duras, antiliterature, and the outside. *Yale French Studies*, (90), 47-70.

Woodard, R. D. (2007). Hesiod and Greek myth. In R. D. Woodard (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Greek mythology* (pp. 83-165). Cambridge University Press.

Yazıcı, Ç. (2015). Varlık, varoluş, söz ve doğum. *Cogito: Annelik, 81,* 30-41.

Yazıcı, Ç. (2019). From the solitude of writing to the political: Crossings between feminist thought and Blanchot. In C. Emmenegger, G. Gondino, & M. Stambazzi (Eds.), *A lonely road: Collective reflections on political solitude*. Accademia University Press.

Zaoui, P. (2008). Otherness. In L. Tin (Ed.), *The Dictionary of Homophobia: A Global History of Gay & Lesbian Experience*. Arsenal Pulp Press.