

Politics of Parody in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*

This thesis efforts to search the textual elements of Shakespeare's *King Lear* in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*. In *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley artfully rewrites the classic work—*King Lear*. It tells a realistic story of the 20th century by way of such concrete forms of intertextuality as pastiche, motif, quotation, parallelism, allusion to illustrate how the two masterpieces are inter-referential to each other. The text has a more progressive feminist perspective and represents an impressive verbal symphony of woman's awareness. Through rewriting the classic tale, *A Thousand Acres* subverts the traditional gender roles, which depict females as submissive, greedy, and emotional being. Through rewriting, Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* manifests the development and change of the social culture and people's ideology in America. It efforts to vocalize females writing back *The King Lear*.

Set in Iowa in the Midwest in the late 1970s, *A Thousand Acres* tells the story of a father, Larry (Lear), and the effects of his sharing his farm with his three daughters, Ginny (Goneril), Rose (Regan), and Caroline (Cordelia), and their respective husbands, Ty (Albany), Pete (Cornwall), and Frank (France), as seen through the eyes of Ginny (Goneril). The youngest daughter, Caroline, hesitates as to the advantages of transferring the farm, which results in her father's excluding her from the project. The transfer of property and Caroline's denial to accept Larry's decision develops enmity between daughters and fathers, between spouses, as well as between siblings; but they also have an effect on the Gloucester- subplot that finds its way into *A Thousand Acres* through Harold Clark and his two sons, Jess (Edmund) and Loren (Edgar), who live on a neighboring farm. The dispute over the Cook farm awakens repressed memories, and the unremitting phrase 'there's more to that than

meets the eye' acquires poignancy as we find out that Ginny and Rose were incestuously assaulted by their father (Smiley 134).

A Thousand Acres contributes interpersonal conflicts and intertextual relations to *The King Lear*. However the plot of the novel, transposed to the American Midwest in the late 1970s, and the narrative perspective is changed to a woman's perspective. The appropriation and re-positioning of plot, characters, and themes into a 20th century setting incorporates a distance between past and present which invites a critique of both. Smiley thus engages in what Cowart calls an epistemic dialogue with the past one which forces readers into a recognition of the historical or diachronic difference between "the voice of one literary age and that of another" (Cowart 1). Smiley's critique is aimed against the conventional reading of *King Lear*: "I had an intention in *A Thousand Acres* that grew out of something less rational, a response to the play. I wanted to communicate the ways in which I found the conventional reading of *King Lear* frustrating and wrong" (Smiley 160). *King Lear* from a feminist perspective creating a space from which Ginny/Goneril speaks, counteracting the patriarchal images of Shakespeare's women and giving silenced female character a voice. In contexts concerning opposition or resistance to male normatively, voice has come to denote 'power of expression' (Gilligan xvi).

The interaction between the two texts renders possible similarities between different worlds, between past and present, between different conditions of and possible means of existence, which has important consequences for the reader's understanding of both texts. Importantly, the meeting of and the similarities between the two texts rule out any simple 'takeover' on the part of the contemporary novel. For a different picture of Goneril to emerge, *A Thousand Acres* would require the continuous presence of *King Lear* and is therefore not an attempt to preferential truth.

One text is not different at the expense of the other in terms of conflict and jealousy of the characters.

King Lear is a play that deals with patriarchal rule and the relationship between father and daughters, and these factors are often considered to be the main reasons why this play holds special interest for women authors (Sanders 5). Even so, *King Lear* has something that attracts many female writers apart from the father-daughter relation. More than any other Shakespeare play, it offers a broad range of interpersonal relationships between parent and child but also between king and people, between husband and wife, and between siblings of both sexes. The distribution of power generates tragic consequences for the family; it leads to clashes between generations, disagreement between fathers and daughters and fathers and sons, rivalry between siblings, fight between husband and wife, and enmity between king and people. Supposed values of loyalty, obedience, and duty are upset, questioned, and brought under careful analysis, not only in the kingdom but in the family as well.

Caroline the female protagonist in the novel *A Thousand Acres* is presented with the negative stereotypes of patriarchy. She is moral, strong and determined, She walks her own way and life, But the patriarchal society mocks her. The men gaze her with the purpose of commodification and male members of the family have economic interest from her. These facts associated with the relative domination upon the feminine gender due to the male prejudice open the problem of the notion of the gender discrimination which is best addressed by the notion of gender subaltern as it concentrates on the notion of the relative domination upon the females in the patriarchal society. The factor of the society and politics causes the domination upon the feminine gender. What are the hidden dialectics of patriarchal society in terms of

the color and race? How is the miserable condition that the females undergo? These are some of the questions, the research raises to solve.

The story seems to cover several different themes simultaneously. It has resemblance with Shakespeare's *King Lear*, covering the theme of love and jealousy. In this, point Stephen Michael Claims:

I don't wish to sound ageist by mentioning this, as this is still a well-written piece, and he clearly has at least as much talent as a younger author, but I do feel that he perhaps ought to have written about characters of his own age, as I feel he may have been able to characterize them more effectively. However, I feel that the latter of these themes would have fitted equally neatly into an earlier setting, and that the former is a relatively insignificant sub plot which would have been better left untouched in the context. (54)

Thus it is evident that how the novel excels in the dramatization of the contemporary life of the society and the social happenings. Another critic Ken Kessay claims:

If an author decides to write a realistic novel, they can use the first person perspective only for one character if they don't want to lose credibility. If they use it for a second character as well, they must introduce a third character or an institution who or which brings the two accounts together in a plausible way. Someone can find two diaries or a confessor reveals the secrets he's heard from two people or I'm wondering again what editors get their salary for.(84)

John Keplom have given skeptic eyes on its trust worthiness. For Keplom the novel has the greater degree of efficiency to present the notion of the truth and reality in relation of the society. He puts:

To some extent this book was what I was expecting, but in other ways I, personally, felt this novel failed to deliver. The story following *A Thousand Acres* has been rather unsatisfactorily married for ten years, and are approaching middle age, childless and in a rut until the changes in Michael start had potential I felt. Perhaps the fact that the tale alternates between the two main characters as a narrator, without their "voice" being very distinct.(94)

Caroline is doomed to sacrifice the real taste of life owing to her subordinate condition. She is helpless and decides to be a choice of injustice suffered by the blow of the male of her country Salina Rosa puts in her review:

A Thousand Acres is one of the best-loved books of all time. Ginny, Rose and Caroline forced to work in the farm: these are hard lessons of poverty and of growing up in North America. Through their dreams, plays, pranks, letters, illnesses, and courtships, women of all ages have become a part of this remarkable family and have felt the deep sadness when Ginny, Rose and Caroline leave the circle of friends to go to home. Later part, Caroline mishaps as a young husband, Caroline's struggle to become an independent woman results in to difficulties. Based on Jane Smiley's childhood, this lively portrait of twentieth-century family life possesses a lasting vitality that has endeared it to all generations of readers. (16)

Thus, it is proved that the novel captures the feminist overtones. The tone of feminism in the novel is replicated through the depiction of miserable condition of Ginny, Rose and Caroline as Saya Abro asserts in her review;

I was so, so looking forward to reading to my daughter, so she could be caught up in it as I was at an early age. I particularly chose the "Whole Story" edition

because of its broad margins, easy-to-scan pages, and charming illustrations and margin notes that add historical texture to the story. *A Thousand Acres*, personalizes the political and social changes in his country over the past few decades in this novel disguised as autobiography—or vice-versa.(23)

Overall all these reviews highlights upon the dark and doubly isolated condition of females in male dominated society. The issue of worry and disillusionment created by modernity is extensively deals with in this novel. In the fictitious world of the *A Thousand Acres* much vaunted western thoughts like political liberalism, egalitarianism, welfare economics, universal democracy and universal human rights as well as gender equality are portrayed as enfeebled and counterproductive. In the peculiar world of America, the western thoughts turn out to be the source of despair. Hence, the issue of the gender subaltern is really justifiable and pertinent from the research viewpoint. By using the perspective of gender subaltern, the researcher makes the thorough analysis of the text.

At the center is the complexity of relationships between Larry Cook and his three daughters, Ginny, Rose, and Caroline, *A Thousand Acres* follows the Lear story not quitely, but obviously enough to provoke thought. The most successful farmer in his northwest Iowa county, Larry suddenly and inexplicably decides to give his farm to his daughters and retire. Caroline, a lawyer who plans to marry soon, objects, and for her opposition is summarily cut out of the partnership. Though Ginny and Rose have raised Caroline after their mother's early death, the younger sister becomes alienated from them. This opening parallels Lear's decision to divide his kingdom between Regan and Goneril after Cordelia offends him and he banishes her.

Intertextuality as a term was first used in Julia Kristeva. The concept of intertextuality that she initiated proposes the text as a dynamic site in which relational

processes and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structures and products. The "literary word", she writes in "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", is "an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings" (65). Developing Bakhtin's spatialization of literary language, she argues that "each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (66). There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures.

Rejecting the New Critical principle of textual autonomy, the theory of intertextuality insists that a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole, and so, that it does not function as a closed system. From this initial approach, there have appeared a wide range of attitudes towards the concept of intertextuality and what it implies, to such an extent that it is practically impossible to deal with it without considering other related subjects or without taking into account the various contributions made by a large number of literary critics. One of the most immediate consequences of such a proliferation of intertextual theories has been the progressive dissolution of the text as a coherent and self-contained unit of meaning, which has led, in turn, to

Like Kristeva, Barthes holds that the limitations of the linguistic-structuralist approach have to be overcome by means of a meeting of different epistemes, namely dialectical materialism and psychoanalysis. This new method will produce a new object that we call text and which is intertextual by default: other texts are always present in it, at varying levels and in more or less recognizable forms (Barthes 39). Barthes' vision of intertextuality also highlights the frequent anonymity of the

"sources" of intertextual quotations. This idea was implicit in Kristeva's discussion of the "absorption" of social texts, because the social may be thought of as the network of anonymous ideas, commonplaces, folk wisdom, and clichés that make up the background of one's life. Whereas traditional influence studies primarily hunted for allusions to celebrated works of the past, Barthes, however, makes the commonplace central: "the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read" (160). The "already read" in Barthes encompasses more than the idea that we all possess conventional knowledge whose sources we cannot recall. It extends towards a notion of the subject as constituted by the texts of his/her culture, the subject as already read: "This T which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost" (10). Kristeva herself has consistently argued, in accordance with new French psychoanalytic theory, for this re-definition of the subject as always already cleft asunder or even radically dispersed. The fracturing of the reading subject is inevitably associated with the dissolution of the author, or death of the author as Barthes puts it. This implied rejection of authority does not correspond exactly to the political or even revolutionary thrust which Kristeva emphasizes in Bakhtin. Barthes tends to sound rather neutral in his sense as he seems ever ready to politicize matters of taste, but also to aestheticize political issues. Valuable as Barthes' account of intertextuality is, it does not provide the critic with a particularly effective tool for analyzing literary texts.

In *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, share common features of ironies lie in the conflicts between the father and his daughters. It is through these ironies that Shakespeare and Smiley reveal some truths to the reader. In both the two books, with the development of the story, different ironies arise at different stages. First

are the ironies from the conflicts between the father and his youngest daughter. As a father of three daughters, both King Lear and Larry Cook enjoy definite authority and great power over their kingdoms at the beginning of the two stories—one is the king of Britain, while the other is the most renowned farmer and the owner of the largest land of a thousand acres in Zebulon County, America. Both the aging fathers declare about division of their properties into three parts for their three daughters without any negotiations with them beforehand. Facing the negative and non-cooperative response from their favorite youngest daughters—Cordelia’s “Nothing, my lord” (Shakespeare 422) and Caroline’s “I don’t know” (Smiley 19), the fathers feel hurt and deprive the youngest daughters of their right of inheritance right away. It seems generous and selfless for the father to allocate his possessions among his children. There’re not enough democratic communication and understanding between the father and the daughters. On the one hand, in both the two stories, the distribution of property is declared suddenly in public. To divide a family’s possessions (even a kingdom) is a big issue, but such a vital declaration is made without a discussion with the children ahead of time. The decision is only the father’s. As we can see, in patriarchal society, it’s the family tradition for daughters to follow the father’s orders, including this one. The father alone can make every decision for the family at will, just like the king can make every decision for the country alone. Just as the monarchy system rejects a democratic relationship between the king and his ministers, the patriarchal and paternalistic relationship hinders a democratic communication between the father and the daughters, whether it’s in Shakespeare’s time or in Smiley’s time. On the other hand, in both the stories, the rash condemnation of the youngest daughter and merciless abolishment of her right of succession prove a lack of understanding between the

father and daughters.

Take *King Lear* for example. Lear, being a king and a father at the same time, is used to taking charge and giving commands. Because of his approaching old age and a prevention of future strife among children, Lear decides to divide and distribute the kingdom to his three daughters. He requires his daughters to claim their love for him publicly before receiving their portions. It's really ironic for a father to "exchange" his possessions with required loving words from his daughters. Lear doesn't know what love is, neither does he know his daughters, for the basic respect is absent in the family. His first two daughters Goneril and Regan cater for Lear's needs to be respected and flattered, while the youngest one Cordelia refuses such a "trade". Lear's arrogance and narcissism blind him so that he doesn't figure out the reasons for his daughter's seeming non-cooperation and see her true heart. He blames Cordelia for her pride, abruptly cuts off the father-daughter relationship and abrogates her right of inheriting a third part of the kingdom. Here the dramatic irony is that Lear rarely realizes his own pride and tyranny. He makes judgments only through superficial words rather than probing the depth. He longs for daughters' love but knows little about how to love. When disobeyed by Cordelia, he resorts to extremely ruthless resolution as punishment, which is far from the essence of love.

According to Kristeva, when readers read a new text, they are always influenced by other texts, which they have read earlier. When a writer borrows from other texts while writing his own, he attaches layers of meanings to his work as well. When that work is read under the light of the others, it gives it a new meaning and interpretation. According to Kristeva, any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. She

further asserts that:

Intertextuality is a sophisticated literary device making use of a textual reference within some body of text, which reflects again the text used as a reference. Instead of employing referential phrases from different literary works, intertextuality draws upon the concept, rhetoric, or ideology from other writings to be merged in the new text. It may be the retelling of an old story, or the rewriting of popular stories in modern context. (87)

The first is to look at the specific presuppositions of a given text, the way in which it produces a pre-text, an intertextual space whose occupants may or may not correspond to other actual texts ... The second enterprise, the study of rhetorical or pragmatic presupposition, leads to a poetics which is less interested in the occupants of that intertextual space which makes a work intelligible than in the conventions which underlie that discursive activity or space.

After her mother passed away, Caroline and her sisters were forced to obey their father Larry's every word. His control over them affected them in the most negative ways. Ginny and Rose never chose to leave the farm. They both transitioned from caring for their father to taking care of their husbands, never living life on their own. Larry's controlling attitudes lead to his daughters' eventually standing up to him and going against him. Caroline narrates her condition as:

I was depressed, but that was a side issue. This was more like closing up shop, or, say, having a big garage sale. I had been with my father so constantly for so long that I knew less and less about him with every passing year. Every meaningful image was jumbled together with the countless moments of our daily life defeating my efforts to gain some perspective. (67)

After remembering of past experiences with their father, Rose and Ginny realize all of the pain and sorrow Larry caused in their lives. He sexually abused and molested them when they were younger and left them with an incurable scar in their spirits. He made them suffer in hopes of trying to make himself feel better. These unforgivable actions influenced the two daughters' eventual decisions to turn against him. Paternal abuse has turned Rose hard and angry. Caroline, by contrast, is stuck in peace-making inertia, perpetually afraid, uncertain and empty. The five miscarriages she has suffered standing as metaphor for her inability to create new life out of the broken, battered remains of her own.

Rejecting the poststructuralist dispersal of meanings, Riffaterre claims that there is only one correct reading and that it is the intertextual method that guides the reader in his/her interpreting. According to him, the ability to recognize gaps and ungrammaticalities are part of every reader's linguistic competence and it does not require much erudition or "preternatural insights" (373). Yet his own interpretations of poems and novels are full of learned allusions and draw on an encyclopaedic command of French and English literatures. Anyway, what is relevant in his theory is his basic concern with the effect on the reader of a textual presupposition: readers presuppose that there is an intertext which gives structural and semantic unity to the work, but the success or failure to locate that intertext on the part of the reader is, in a sense, irrelevant to the experience of intertextual reading. Analogous if not identical with Kristeva's assertion that every text is under the jurisdiction of other discourses, Riffaterre's thesis is that literary reading is possible only if the reader recognizes that the text articulates a presupposition of intertext, to such an extent that the text can be considered not simply a sequence of words organized as syntagms but a sequence of presuppositions (627).

The same principle goes to Larry Cook in *A Thousand Acres*. At a pig roast prepared by the neighbor farmer competitor Harold Clark (Gloucester) to welcome the return of his eldest son Jess Clark (Edmund) after his leaving for thirteen years, Larry, out of a sudden, declares his plan of establishing a corporation, with all the shares of the thousand acres divided among his three daughters—Ginny, Rose and Caroline. His explanation is that he is too old for running the farm and this arrangement can avoid seven or eight hundred thousand dollars inheritance taxes in the future. Out of habitual obedience to the father, the eldest daughter Ginny responds positively and agrees with her father, followed by the second daughter Rose. The third daughter Caroline, a lawyer in the town, doubts it. Her hesitating answer leads to Larry's irritation and abandonment. He asserts with her, "You don't want it, my girl, you're out. It's as simple as that" (Smiley 21). When Larry makes a decision, he takes it for granted that his daughters should support and follow it. He is too tyrannical and haughty to go deep into his daughters' hearts and to tolerate any objection. He loves Caroline most, but throws her away once she refuses to abide by his decision. Here the father's love is so ironic and fragile. Larry doesn't feel anything wrong with himself till the end of the novel. It's always the others that should be responsible for what happens. That is also a dramatic irony about Larry in the story. Besides the ironies in the early conflicts between the father and the youngest daughter, there're still ironies in the later conflicts between the father and the other two daughters. As a matter of fact, the conflicts arise from the authority-transferring from the father to the daughters. In *King Lear*, since Lear already gives his kingdom to his two daughters, it's natural for his daughters to be in charge and make decisions thereafter. Nevertheless, Lear still wants to control his daughters and leads the same glorious life as before. The seeming argument

between Lear and his two elder daughters is about how many knights are in need to follow Lear, but the key problem is who has the say and who has to obey. The problem is first disclosed by Goneril's complaints:

By day and night he
wrongs me! Every
hour He flashes into
one gross crime or
other That sets us all
at odds. I'll not
endure it.

His knights grow riotous,
and himself upbraids us
On every trifle...

If he distaste it, let him to my sister,
Whose mind and mine,
I know, in that are one,
Not to be overruled.

Idle old man,

That still would manage those authorities

That he hath given away! ... (Shakespeare . 437)

As we can see from the above, the reason for Lear to have one hundred knights to follow him is, to some extent, a reluctance of giving up all his power. The daughters are ready to take care of the old father, but no longer willing to live under his control. The authority has been transferred since the day when Lear divides his kingdom and allocates it to his two elder daughters. However, Lear keeps on denying the fact and

lives in his dream. That is a dramatic irony. In addition, Lear curses his own daughter in such a cruel way, which forms a sharp contrast to his earlier generosity to his daughters. At the same time, the stormy conflicts between Lear and his daughters also form a sharp contrast to the earlier harmonious relationship between them, which is a situational irony.

Bakhtin's vision of the world as dialogic and polyphonic. The world is not a static, readymade thing, but an "event" (52), and human life is a dialogic exchange of individuals in the sense of an open and open-ended process. In this scheme texts appear as one type of utterances: utterances that are conceived as ACTS in a given context to a specific end. Bakhtin thus furnishes, in 'Methodology', a visionary contemplation of a world made up of textual utterances that are in constant contact with one another; that borrow from, appropriate, relate to, demand from and contradict each other. For Bakhtin, the dialogic contact of a text with another text (or context) is "life"; and it is when it is joined "to a dialogue" that a "light flashes" (Bakhtin 162). Such a dialogue can take place inside the reader who reads a text into a specific context; it can also be formalised as a commentary, or take place in interaction with symbolically encapsulated words (163).

The Lear story in Shakespeare's hand ends as a tragedy with so many characters' deaths: Gloucester, Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Cordelia, Edmund, Lear, and some others. The deaths of the father and all his three daughters end the conflicts among them, which is absolutely a situational irony if considering the united family and kingdom they live in together at the beginning.

It is the same with the ironies in *A Thousand Acres*. After Larry entrusted one thousand acres to his two elder daughters, what he does all day long is idling about the streets in his car, drinking and drunken driving everywhere, waiting for his eldest

daughter Ginny to prepare dishes for him just like before, and giving orders to Ginny without any negotiation. The conflicts increase when Ginny begins awakening, and gains more and more courage in front of her father Larry. The father's authority is gradually dwindling and a daughter's right to speak is taking shape. Here is the conversation between Larry and Ginny, which is a case in point:

I made myself say, I don't think you can say that we're lazy. Anyway, I don't think you show us any respect, Daddy. I don't think you ever think about anything from our point of view. You don't, huh? I bust my butt working all my life and I make a good place for you and your husband to live on, with a nice house and good income, hard times or good times, and you think I should be stopping all the time and wondering about your, what did you call it, your point of view?(Smiley175)

Larry takes it for granted that his daughters should follow whatever he asks, just like what he reiterates—"You girls should listen to me" (Smiley 176). However, Larry couldn't resist getting old and losing authority, neither could he avert his daughters' awakening and rebellion. The conflicts between Larry and his two elder daughters result from Larry's refusal to give up his tyrannical power and the daughters' strengthening independence. The pitiful thing is that Larry sticks to the old way and old thinking, refuses to change and listen, and despises his daughters' opinions and emotions. He doesn't realize his own problems till the very end, which is greatly ironic.

The conflict between them soars to the peak on a stormy night, which is similar to the famous stormy scene in *King Lear*, when the father curses his daughter Ginny:

He leaned his face toward mine. You don't have to drive me around any more,

or cook the goddamned breakfast or clean the goddamned house. His voice modulated into a scream. Or tell me what I can do and what I can't do. You barren whore! I know all about you, you slut. You've been creeping here and there all your life, making up to this one and that one. But you're not really a woman, are you? I don't know what you are, just a bitch, is all, just a dried-up whore bitch. I admit that I was transfixed; yes, I thought, this is what he's been thinking all these years, waiting to say it. (Smiley 181)

It's really hard to imagine that those harsh words come from a father's mouth. Larry's curses are doubtlessly a sharp contrast to his earlier deed of bestowing his daughters a thousand acres' land, which is definitely a situational irony. The violent confrontation is also a situational irony to the former seemingly peaceful Cook family with a powerful father and obedient daughters. However, the ironies don't stop here, but rocket when a past crime committed by Larry is uncovered through a conversation between Ginny and Rose. When Ginny is fifteen and Rose is thirteen, Larry starts threatening, sexually harassing and raping them respectively for several years. Ginny does not remember the shameful scenes with her father when she grows up due to selective amnesia. She even can't believe it when Rose discusses it with her for the first time on that stormy night when their father curses and runs away. After Rose's reminding and Ginny's own reminiscence, those terrible pictures in the past finally loom up in Ginny's mind and wake up her paralytic body:

One thing Daddy took from me when he came to me in my room at night was the memory of my body... And so my father came to me and had intercourse with me in the middle of the night. I could remember pretending to be asleep, but knowing he was in the doorway and moving closer. I could remember him saying, Quiet, now, girl. You don't need to fight me... I remembered his

weight, the feeling of his knee pressing between my legs, while I tried to make my legs heavy without seeming to defy him. ...I remembered that he carried a lot of smells—whiskey, cigarette smoke, the sweeter and sourer smells of the farm work. I remembered, over and over again, what the top of his head looked like.(Smiley 280)

Throughout the whole story, neither Ginny nor Rose has any chance to confront their father on this crime. On the contrary, the daughters are sued by their father under the help of the youngest daughter Caroline. When Larry calls his own daughter a whore, he doesn't remember his own incestuous misdeed. His ignorance of his past crimes and his over-strictness and rudeness to his daughters form another dramatic irony. Furthermore, most neighbors show mercy to Larry, an old man seemingly driven out by his daughters into a storm at night. Since Ginny and Rose are not willing to spread the family scandal to the others, the neighbors have no access to the truth. Larry's crime can never be disclosed to the world. The most ironic thing is that even after Ginny tells her husband Ty (Albany) about her father's abuse of her, Ty never believes so. In some sense, the patriarchal society shields the voices from women, neglects their contribution, and doubts their minds, just like what Ginny protests to her separated husband Ty:

You see this grand history, but I see blows. I see taking what you want because you want it, then making something up that justifies what you did. I see getting others to pay the price, then covering up and forgetting what the price was. Do I think Daddy came up with beating and fucking us on his own?(Smiley 342-343)

It is not only the father Larry alone, but also the whole society over a long history that

creates this tragic irony. Until his death, Larry doesn't feel guilty about the past and even chooses to forget it. It's a dramatic irony for him, and thus intensifies a pathetic shadow over the whole story, which ends with an understated sadness.

I can't say that I forgive my father, but now I can imagine what he probably chose never to remember the goad of an unthinkable urge, pricking him, pressing him, wrapping him in an impenetrable fog of self that must have seemed, when he wandered around the house late at night after working and drinking, like the very darkness. This is the gleaming obsidian shard I safeguard above all the others. (Smiley 371)

Leslie makes a comment on the passage as this: "This passage poignantly captures the difficulty of the incest survivor. Forgetting is a kind of death, but then so also is remembering" (Marina, 48). With the deaths of Pete (Cornwall), Larry, and Rose, a divorce of Ginny and Ty, and a loss of the one-thousand-acre land, the story also ends in a tragic way. The conflicts between the father and daughters as well as the conflicts between daughters themselves (the sisterhood conflicts aren't mentioned in the paper yet) end. In view of the beginning pig toast and a description of a thousand acres' land owned by the Cooks, the ending is undoubtedly a situational irony.

Traditional linguistics and stylistics treated words and discourses as if texts are self contained systems with no relation to anything else but their own closed context and linguistic world (Bakhtin 276). This means that traditional linguistics allows no room for disputation and questioning of its own theories and methods, which has the consequence that dialogue between different discourses is, in principle, not possible and therefore any communication is obstructed from the start. Unified and contained systems of thought have the tendency to be totalitarian in the sense that they exercise control over the way in which communities see the world and understand their

everyday life. Powers that be in communities decide what truths are valid and what truths are not valid in order to establish and maintain the power structures conducive for keeping them in power.

Dialogic truth, on the other hand, ‘requires a plurality of consciousnesses ... [*that*] in principle cannot be fitted within the bounds of a single consciousness’ (Bakhtin 81). Whereas monological truth is constituted by abstract ideas, dialogical truth can be described as an open-ended dialogue by people who cannot be contained by defining them and who are ‘unfinalizable’. In other words, for Bakhtin, dialogism indicates an:open-ended, back-and-forth play between the text of the sender (subject), the text of the addressee (object), and the text of culture. In so doing he [*Bakhtin*] introduces a dynamic instability which is unallowable in formalisms and structuralisms (Beal 29). This ‘dynamic instability’ flows from the acknowledgement that discourse is a social phenomenon and that it forms part of a vast universe of textual worlds. Words and discourses generate their meaning at particular historical moments and in socially specific environments, and: “cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue” (Bakhtin276)

Texts are situated and embedded within history and society, which, in turn, become texts read by readers and writers. A reader becomes a writer and a writer, to be a writer, always has to remain a reader – of texts, of history, of society. Therefore, for Bakhtin, writing is a reading of preceding literary corpuses and texts are absorptions of and replies to other texts. Timothy Beal formulates this intricate interweaving of texts and intertextual allusions as follows: Intertextuality is a theory that conceives of every text as a set of relations between texts, an intersection of texts

that are themselves intersections of other texts, and so on. Every text is a locus of intersections, overlaps, and collisions between other texts. Every text is an *intertext*, that is, a between-text (*inter*, 'between'), a paradoxical locus of dislocation, without center and without boundaries. (128) In terms of the focus of this article, this means that intertextual allusions in *Judith* 16 form part of already existing discourses and ideologies about the relationship between God and his people, which were known to readers and writers and which were used to construct a story meant to maintain and/or challenge existing discourses. These discourses include and exclude, they befriend and alienate, they are overlain with values and qualifications, and they are opened or closed to dispute. As such, these discourses are, as Bakhtin states:

The transfer of power and property is central in both *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*. As any reader of *King Lear* knows, the division of the kingdom will come to dominate the original purpose of the ceremony: to select a future husband for Cordelia. In *A Thousand Acres*, the transfer of the farm comes to overshadow the welcome-home party for Harold Clark's son Jess. Without previous notice and without any intention, it seems, of diminishing his power, Larry announces his plan to form a corporation between his three daughters and their respective husbands. Both taken by surprise, Ginny and Rose express their admission. Ginny thinks '[i]t's a good idea', whereas Rose thinks 'It's a great idea' (Smiley 19). Similarly to Cordelia, Caroline refuses to play the role of the complying daughter. In full career as a lawyer, Larry's youngest daughter has established a life for herself and her fiancé outside the perimeters of the farm. Her answer 'I don't know' when confronted with Larry's plan does not have the same turbulent effect on Larry as the equally enigmatic 'Nothing' has on Lear, however. Larry's response is terser but none the less powerful. With the assertion, 'you don't

want it my girl, you're out', Larry leaves the party (Smiley 21). The transfer of the kingdom/farm in *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres* triggers a struggle between the generations and stages the inherent differences between them.

In *A Thousand Acres*, Larry Cook, the 'king' of his 'unmortgaged' thousand acres of well-cultivated land, is the epitome of power in the farming community. Larry is not just any farmer; he is also a public figure. As one of the most prosperous farmers, he is one of the most revered men in the community. After all, he is, as Ginny remarks, 'one of the biggest landowners' in Zebulon County (Smiley 141). Asking, Lear is also a public figure. In addition, asking, he is also the biggest landowner in the country. In Jacobean England, the political theory of kingship was defined 'as the possession of the kingdom and of the subjects who inhabit it' (Brayton 402). Lear's status as king is contingent on the land, 'the champains riched' and the 'wide-skirted meads' as his property, as well as on the obedience of those who inhabit this land, including his family (64-65). Despite his desperate attempts to retain 'the name' and 'all th'addition to a king'; losing possession of the kingdom means losing his identity as king (137). The experience of powerlessness - the loss of control over his subjects and his daughters - that comes with the loss of property is thus destructive to the family as well. Lear's role as a father is affected and directed by his kingship and the anxieties that come with this public role, or, perhaps even more, the anxieties that develop from the lack of this role. It is Lear's political decision to divide the kingdom that impinges upon the domestic sphere and leads to marital breaches between Goneril and Albany and the deadly antagonism between Goneril and Regan. It is in such a context that Goneril has to be regarded.

Mutual trust is already subverted as a result of Lear's favouritism, and mutual distrust will be reinforced by Lear's efforts to trigger a division between the two sisters. Lear's threat to leave Goneril's abode to go to live with Regan further undermines the loyalty between the sisters. Taking up the abode with Regan would be a threat to Goneril, not only political:*Lear*: Degenerate bastard, I'll not trouble thee: "Yet have I left a daughter.*Goneril*: You strike my people, and your disordered rabble Make servants of their betters." (Smiley 245-48) It is perhaps worth mentioning that critics have argued that after the banishment of Cordelia and Kent, the sisters are seen to plot together against their father. This is, however, Goneril's way of asserting her authority over Regan. Goneril is trying to recover her power over her sister and find out where Regan really stands. Discussing this scene in relation to sibling rivalry could also explain why the sisters never actually implement their plan 'i'the heat'. Critics have found it puzzling that nothing comes of their meeting. Clearly, then, the relationship between Goneril and Regan is one of the aspects of Shakespeare's tragedy that take on new meaning when the reader returns to *King Lear* after reading of *A Thousand Acres*.

The competitive configurations of the outside world were seen to motivate Larry's decision to hand over his farm to his daughters, and this make-up of society influences the relationship between Ginny and Rose. The competition between farmers and the repeated comparisons between Larry's farm and other adjacent farms create a system of rivalry on a larger scale with selfishness, greed, rights of possession, and desire to own as the outcome. As a child, Ginny was indoctrinated with such a conception of the world as the right order of things:

I recognized the justice of Harold Clark's opinion that the Ericson land was on his side of the road, but even so, I thought it should be us. For one thing, Dinah Ericson's bedroom had a window seat in the closet that I coveted. For another, I thought it appropriate and desirable that the great circle of the flat earth spreading out from the T intersection of County Road 686 and Cabot Street Road be ours. (Smiley⁴)

This system of rivalry is hence established in the minds of Ginny and Rose very early on, and it is stimulated throughout their adult life. From early childhood, they have been used to competing for the same object, influenced by the competitive constitution of society.

Any external element that comes into Ginny's and Rose's world hence feeds the fire and sustains the rivalry. Ginny sees Rose as a rival for Rose's own children. Owing to nitrates (used by the farmer to fertilize the land), that poisoned the well-water, Ginny cannot become pregnant, and the sight of Rose and her two daughters affects her 'like poison'. Again, rivalry is prompted and Ginny's desire to own the children takes over: 'they were nearly my own daughters' (Smiley 1991: 8). Ginny tries to convince the reader that the jealousy she once felt towards Rose is set aside: 'the sight of those two babies, whom I had loved and cared for with real interest and satisfaction, affected me like poison . I was so jealous, and so freshly jealous every time I saw them, that I could hardly speak' (Smiley 1991: 8). A rhetoric of rivalry permeates Ginny's way of speaking in her efforts to convince herself that she has got over her jealousy.

The rivalry over Jess should thus be discussed with reference to competition in the larger world. Even if Jess triggers the 'outbreak of rivalry' between Ginny and Rose;⁹ it is the transfer of property that exposes (and activates) the tacit and

already existing rivalry between siblings in both *A Thousand Acres* and *King Lear*. When Jess in *A Thousand Acres* comes into the picture there is thus more at stake than merely sexual jealousy. They are unconsciously competing for the same object. Handsome, charismatic, and attractive, Ginny and Rose notice Jess at the same time, but importantly, Ginny also notices that Rose has detected him. Ginny imitates Rose's desire in a typically Girardian fashion: 'Rose noticed him [U]ess], too, right when I did' (Smiley 10). Rene Girard has presented a model based on triangular desire that is interesting in this context. He suggests that we base our desire on another person's desire, a person whom we admire. Ginny does not choose the object of her desire herself; it is a 'third person', i.e. Rose, that indicates to the narrator the object she will begin desiring passionately' (Girard 30). However, Jess does awaken Ginny to sexual awareness, and her subsequent knowledge that Rose has an affair with him seems not so much to lead to sexual jealousy as foster an awareness on Ginny's part that she is in fact a different person from Rose: "My deepest-held habit was assuming that differences between Rose and me were just on the surface [...] that somehow we were each other's real selves. But after all, she wasn't me: Her body wasn't mine. (Smiley 332)

When Jess swaps Ginny for Rose, Ginny's sole purpose in life will from then onwards be to remove Rose by whatever means. Ultimately it becomes an end in itself, quite apart from any considerations about Jess. Ginny cannot control the story any more; the desire to poison Rose takes over. Being brought up in a system that feeds and sustains competition between people, they are forced into rivalry over something they think rightfully belongs to both of them, namely Jess (as property). They only recognize the justice of their own needs and their own rights. The deadly antagonism between the two sisters actually makes Ginny's

attempted poisoning of Rose, to which some critics have objected, seem believable.

Clayton and Rothstein mention the example of Barbara Johnson, for whom "questions of gender may enrich, complicate and even subvert the underlying paradigms of intertextuality theory (Johnson 124). It hardly needs to be said that the work of decentering male-centred culture as it is expressed in language, literature, art and institutional configuration has always been a major concern of feminist criticism. For more than two decades now, feminist scholars have been reacting against the apparently systematic neglect of women's experience in the literary canon, neglect that takes the form of distorting and misreading the few recognized female writers and excluding the others. Moreover, the predominantly male authors in the canon have dealt with the female character and the relations between the sexes in a way that both reflects and contributes to sexist ideology (Robinson 213). The feminist alternatives to the male-dominated membership and attitudes of the accepted canon have contributed to widening and enriching the intertextual space through the recovery of lost works by women, and the restoration of the value of disdained genres. Even if, as Lillian S. Robinson asserts feminist criticism has tended to concentrate on writing by women, it has also emphasized alternative readings of the tradition, readings that re-interpret women's character, motivations, and actions, and that identify and challenge sexist ideology: "from this perspective, Milton may come in for some censure, Shakespeare and Chaucer for both praise and blame, but the clear intention of a feminist approach to these classic authors is to enrich our understanding of what is going on in the text, as well as how - for better, for worse, or for both - they have shaped our literary and social ideas" (Robinson 214). Feminist critics' recognition of the individual as a site crossed and modelled by the dis- courses that surround him / her, their moving from

the margins of culture an entire literature that was previously dismissed and their alternative approaches to traditional works now presented in a new light, ultimately tend to support the already acknowledged relevance of questions of gender within the realm of intertextuality. To mention a last example, most feminist criticism has questioned the overall anonymity that surrounds the figure of the author in the main discourses of intertextuality.

Thus Smiley rewrites and emphasizes the distinction between Ginny and Rose, which also has a bearing on our reading of *King Lear*. Many critics explain the rivalry between Goneril and Regan with reference to sexual jealousy over Edmund, although feminists have presented a more nuanced picture of the two sisters. Goneril's and Regan's lust for Edmund is not exclusively sexual; it is also based on a system of rivalry made palpable through Lear's love-test. It might be Edmund that triggers the rivalry between Goneril and Regan, but rivalry has certainly been lurking beneath the surface all along. The two sisters have to compete for love, attention, land, and power, being forced to vie for the same space, politically as well as personally - something Cordelia never had to do on the personal level, and arguably refuses to do on a political level when she says 'nothing'. Whereas Ginny does not succeed in poisoning her sister and actually survives herself, Goneril succeeds in marginalizing both herself and her sister. What was once so important to Goneril in *King Lear*, the battle between the kingdoms of England and France, yields to her desire to avoid experiencing, at any cost, her sister's alliance - sexual as well as political - with Edmund: "I had rather lose the battle than that sister should loosen him and me." (19)

The deadly rivalry between Goneril and Regan is no longer over Edmund. The competitive configurations of the political world have so deeply infringed on

the relation between the siblings that nothing stands in their way when they wish to destroy each other. Towards the end of *King Lear*, Edmund himself is no longer important to Goneril; it is more important to her that Regan does not get him - just as possessing Jess had ceased to matter to Ginny in *A Thousand Acres* once she decided to try to kill Rose.

Finally, when we read *King Lear* against *A Thousand Acres*, the play's as well as the novel's deeply problematical preoccupation with relations between women, particularly the dynamics between Goneril/Ginny and Regan/Rose, is foregrounded. So is the complexity of marriage seen in the relationships between Goneril/Ginny and Albany/Ty. *A Thousand Acres* alerts the reader to other characters' influence on Goneril's, but also Regan's, behaviour and actions, helping us see how that influence affects the relationship between the sisters. The reader comes to realize that Goneril and Regan are part of a larger network of interpersonal relationships. *A Thousand Acres* thus shows the reader how women's position in patriarchy is informed by constraints rooted in their roles as mothers, daughters, siblings, and wives. When we return to *King Lear*, it is with a sharpened awareness of the complexity of family relationships. The picture of the family as a site of dynamic interaction in *The King Lear* is consequently intensified and brought to the fore through the interaction between the two texts. The novel also draws attention to the tension between the domestic and the public. The stress on family relationships and the ways in which those relationships are seen to be informed by the competitive configurations of the outside world are texts common features of both.

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