The Other Narratives of Sexual Violence in Phoebe Gloeckner's *A Child's Life and Other Stories*

Introduction

Phoebe Gloeckner's *A Child's Life and Other Stories* (2000) primarily narrates, through obscene and discomforting depictions, Minnie's semi-incestuous sexual violation during childhood and adolescence by two of her mother's boyfriends. In this essay, I examine parallel narratives of sexual violence, identified through an intertextual approach that considers Gloeckner's art-historical and literary influences. Examining these references alongside Minnie's narrative, I argue that they form a network between different cases of sexual abuse and incest in the United States, as those are partly renegotiated in or inspire male art and literature. Gloeckner's reference to Marcel Duchamp, Edgar Allan Poe, Vladimir Nabokov, William Burroughs and Donald Henderson Clarke's works is embedded in a comics narrative also inspired by and recreating Minnie's and other girls' sexual suffering. Investigating the cartoonist's feminist use of the comics medium and the genre of the fairy tale, I propose that *A Child's Life* shows how art imitates life, and *vice versa*, when it comes to sexual violence against women and girls. At the same time, it also demonstrates that the graphic memoir as feminist reparative art can function as a channel through which the abused girl or woman can be lifted from the status of the passive, silent sexual object. Even though the girl is depicted as a vulnerable victim of sexual violence, Gloeckner's choices show that art can also be used to emancipate her from victimization in the space of the graphic memoir, counter-posing this potential to the silence and passivity she is invested with in the aforementioned canonical fathers' works.

A Child's Life is one among the most disturbing graphic memoirs of sexual violence inflicted upon an underage female autobiographical subject in the family domain (see also Gloeckner 2002; Drechsler 2008; Doucet 1991-1998). While not referring to the graphic

genre in particular, Kate Douglas explains that the 'plethora of child abuse survivor narratives' that appeared in 'the U.S. literary scene' and beyond 'during the late 1990s and 2000s' offers templates for the mediation of trauma and the move beyond it (2010, 106). The visuality of comics, specific to the graphic memoir, complicates and enriches these narratives in ways that place readers/spectators in discomforting positions of (dis)identification (Whitlock 2006). Such texts also take what Hillary L. Chute describes as the 'risk of representation' by visually capturing objectification and violation in a 'censorship-driven culture' (2010, 16). At the same time, they challenge 'traditional cultural inscriptions of the gendered body and [claim] the right to represent [female artists'] own physicality' (El Refaie 2012, 80).

Jane Tolmie describes women's graphic memoirs of sexual abuse as forms of 'feminist art activism,' that can lead to 'creative emancipation' (2013, xvi). 'Creative emancipatory work,' she proceeds, 'in the context of the representation of child sex abuse, offers a venue both for the artistic self and for the receiving viewer/reader to do a range of affective and political things: to heal, to make transparent, to undo, and to redo,' and it is this potential of *A Child's Life* that I want to unpack (ibid). Analysing Gloeckner's girl, compared to those found in the artworks and traditions from which she borrows, I aim to show how her status as passive, sexualized and silenced is made transparent, undone and redone. I propose that when we put the pieces of the graphic memoir together, it becomes possible to read Minnie's narrative in relation to other stories of gendered sexual violence and to see how Gloeckner's contemporary text can provide a healing perspective on the artistically recreated self, underscoring and simultaneously countering the normalized objectification of the female body in Western art and literature.

On what is to Be Seen in Contemporary Women's Graphic Memoirs

Tolmie explains that the 'representation of sexual violence, especially violence directed at children or young girls, routinely raises questions of censorship in at least two ways'(2013, x). The first one concerns the labelling of such works as pornographic and the second refers to 'techniques of silencing and shaming […,] key to rape culture and incest culture,' which render such narratives unspeakable and thus '*unacknowledgeable*' (x, xi). Both Chute and Tolmie comment on the censorship *A Child's Life* has undergone, its description as child pornography, and its confiscation on the French borders, with Tolmie pushing us to think about the implications of such acts by posing a set of questions (2010, 75; 2013, xi):

> Why is it that so often those primarily concerned with censorship of self-narration are not the ones who have lived the negative realities at stake or in question? To what extent does censorship of these images participate in a culture of shaming and blaming? To what extent does said censorship work to obscure connections between individual and community in terms of both affect and shared experience? (Tolmie 2013, xiii-xvi)

Tolmie's provocative questions lead to the identification of a differentiated reaction to sexual content in narratives written by women.

Indeed, Chute has noted the celebration of Robert Crumb's underground comics in contrast to the negative reception of *A Child's Life* in 'a situation that clearly bespeaks a sexist double standard' (2010, 83; for his collected work see Crumb 2009). The victim's account of obscene matter and sexual suffering has been received with scepticism or even hostility in psychoanalytic, juridical as well as in artistic/literary circles (see Gilmore 2003; Douglas 2010, 109; Masson 1992; Freud [1896] 2001, 152-66). In Leigh Gilmore's words, 'women's witness is discredited by a host of means meant to *taint* it,' to question it, to make it unreliable; means that are more often than not based on patriarchal understandings of

gender (2017, 2). Tolmie's questions point precisely to what Gilmore describes as the tainting of women's witness that leads to the silencing of the victim and the consequent unacknowledgeability of sexual violence and incest. *A Child's Life* counters these obscuring processes by performing Minnie's sexual suffering next to cases that have inspired or are partly represented in male canonical art and literature, consequently functioning as a patchwork display of different artistically reproduced formations of the female body as a silenced sexual object that can be violated.

In telling and showing Minnie's sexual trauma in *A Child's Life*, Gloeckner refuses to remain restricted within the silencing constraints Tolmie describes. Her graphic depictions, both verbal and visual, of Minnie's sexual suffering, present the female autobiographical subject's authentic experiences, forming a feminist cultural script that breaks the silence imposed on sexual abuse victims.[1] The political impact of her work further lies in that it is also embedded in traditions marked by their representations of the sexual violation of the female subject. For instance, J. Andrew Deman notes that in the twentieth century, comics have produced and reproduced objectifying versions of the female subject, creating 'an intrinsically masculine space which treats women as sexual commodities whose primary purpose is to provide visual pleasure to the male reader' (2010, 155). In mainstream comics we come across 'highly sexual visual representations of women' and in underground comics we face much harsher depictions of objectification reaching extreme forms of rape like those dominating the work of Robert Crumb (155; see also Wolf 1990, 137 and Bailey 2002, 305-24).

Despite Crumb's misogynist underground art, Gloeckner chooses to situate *A Child's Life* in his tradition by starting it with his visual illustration of adolescent Phoebe and with a page-long written introduction in which he informs readers about his sexual desire for the girl, among other things (Gloeckner 2002, 4-5; see also Michael 2014, 41-42 and Chute 2010,

230). Even though it is similarly obscene, a remarkable difference between her work and Crumb's is that it is narrated from the female sexual object's perspective. Hence, while her 'autobiographical stories are among the most sexual comics in circulation,' they are 'also the least erotic' because in 'each of the encounters depicted, sex becomes the violation of some form of trust – trust in parents, in friends, or in boyfriends' (Deman 2010, 159). Consequently, it becomes possible for the reader 'to experience the collateral damage that accompanies sexual objectification;' a perspective that is absent from Crumb's underground work (ibid; see also Burris 2017, n.pag.). Thus, *A Child's Life* performs a defamiliarizing counter-narrative to the one found in mainstream and underground comics in relation to the status of the woman and the girl.

Sexual Violence as High Art: Marcel Duchamp the Black Dahlia and Minnie

In addition to Crumb, Gloeckner acknowledges the influence of Marcel Duchamp's mid-century installation, *Étant Donnés: 1° la Chute d'Eau, 2° le Gaz d'Eclairage* in the chapter 'Hommage à Duchamp Or: "Étant Donnés: le Bain, le Pere, la Main, la Bitte,"' where the eight-year-old Minnie and her younger sister see Pascal, their mother's boyfriend, naked in a scene of masturbation in the bathroom (Gloeckner 2000, 27-29). Upon entering the museum where Duchamp's installation is exhibited, spectators first come across a wooden door with two peepholes in it. Once they approach it to look inside, they see a broken brick wall and the three-dimensional nude body of a woman lying in a ravine with her face cut from their view, her legs spread, her genitals disfigured and shaved, and her hand raised and holding a lit lamp.[2] Duchamp was working on the artwork in secrecy from 1946 to 1966 and left a box with instructions for its display to be staged after his death (Ades, Cox and Hopkins 1999, 190).

The woman in *Étant Donnés* is introduced as a sexual, identity-less spectacle available for voyeuristic consumption. Critics have pointed to the shocking effect of facing an

unidentifiable woman's body, focusing 'on readings that emphasize violation, murder, rape, or other acts that associate criminal violence, eroticism, and the body' (Wallis 2005, n.pag.; see also Harnocourt and Hopps 1969, 8; Judovitz 1995, 8; Barzilai 1999, 11; Parret 2010, 36; Burris 2017, n.pag.). The woman in *Étant Donnés* 'has been described as […] "mutilated woman" and as […] "seemingly dead […]," suggesting that some form of criminal activity either already transpired or is about to occur' (Wallis 2005, n.pag.). Ironically, the only trace of life is the woman's raised arm which holds a lit lamp, underscoring her status as a spectacle. In *A Child's Life*, Duchamp's piece is transformed into black and white drawings to mediate Minnie and her sister's sexualisation by Pascal in the domestic domain. Comparatively approaching Gloeckner's comics in 'Hommage' and Douchamp's installation, Alisia Burris makes a similar argument, explaining how the dynamics of the installation are reconfigured in the graphic memoir to introduce Gloeckner's feminist gaze and to unsettle the normalized objectification of the female body in visual arts, by placing a male body in the position of the spectacle (2017, n. pag.). The aim of this essay is to also examine the relevance of Duchamp's installation to a sexual crime performed in the U.S. in 1947 and to show how this can be read in relation to what happens in Minnie's household.

In 'Hommage,' the two girls notice that the stained glass on the bathroom door is broken and this triggers their curiosity. Approaching it, they take a closer look inside the bathroom (Fig. 1). There, together with us, they see a disturbing spectacle: their mother's boyfriend, naked, sitting at the edge of the bathtub, returning his gaze to them and us while masturbating (Gloeckner 2000, 28). Gloeckner's close-up depiction of the girls' faces stresses both their curiosity and childish unawareness. In one of the following panels, after they see Pascal, they run away and wonder what he was doing, reaching the conclusion that he was probably 'washing his penis' (29). However, we, the aware readers, look with them at a

father figure presented as a sexually active being, involving them, and us, through his gaze in

Fig. 1: From *A Child's Life and Other Stories* by Phoebe Gloeckner, published by Frog Books/North Atlantic Books, copyright © 1998, 2000 by Phoebe Gloeckner. Reprinted by permission of publisher.

his sexual activity (see also Burris 2017, n.pag). The two girls' sexualisation through Pascal's return of the gaze remains restricted in the visual register and it is not physically abusive. Nevertheless, it shares the shocking effect of Duchamp's installation, which becomes even more disturbing precisely because in *A Child's Life* the person we visually consume as a sexual spectacle is neither passive nor identity-less, but a man who is embedded in the family structure in the position of the father-figure.

Elsewhere, I argue that the investigation of intertextual references in contemporary graphic life narratives can enrich and complicate the primary self-referential text by adding further layers of narration to it (Michael 2017, n.pag.). Elizabeth El Refaie and Scott McCloud have written about the inherent 'gappiness' of comics, which calls for reader participation that provides 'closure' to the narrative (McCloud 1994, 67; El Refaie 2012,183-84). When this 'gappines' is paired with intertextual references in the visual/verbal combinations of comics, then readers' involvement in meaning formation can be underscored, depending on the extent to which they read these additional layers of narration and their impact on the main life narrative (Michael 2017, n.pag.). Paying attention to intertextual references as the one identified in 'Hommage' can therefore expand the meaning formed in our interaction with *A Child's Life*. While it is not the aim of this article to demonstrate extra-diegetic factuality as being faithfully reproduced in either *A Child's Life* or *Étant Donnés*, paying attention to a historical event in relation to Duchamp's installation, shows similarities between a criminal and the (Duchampian) surrealist treatment of the female body.[3] *Étant Donnés*, a mid-century surrealist source of inspiration for Gloeckner, is arguably inspired by one of the most notorious sexual crimes in US history.

In his analysis of the installation, Jonathan Wallis proposes that Duchamp 'consciously toyed with criminal methodologies to elude interpretation and heighten the inconclusive nature of his work' by working in secrecy on it for many years and that *Étant*

Donnés ‘partly derived from the shocking murder of Elizabeth Short,’ also known as the Black Dahlia (2005, n.pag.). The beautiful ‘aspiring starlet’ was murdered and her body was found in January 1947, ‘purposefully placed on the edge of an open lot on Norton Avenue in Los Angeles, California’ (ibid). Alexis Sobel Fitz describes the gruesome details of what had taken place before her murder: Short ‘had been forced to eat faeces. Flesh and pubic hair had been shaved off her body and inserted into her vagina and rectum […, her] uterus was removed [and] long gashes extended her mouth into an eerie smile’ (2016, n.pag.). Wallis further relates that in the ‘photograph of the Black Dahlia murder one can see a literal gash that was incised above the vagina into the lower abdomen of the body of Elizabeth Short […,] a means for the sexually ravenous killer to insert himself into’ her (2005, n.pag.). Short’s body was also sliced ‘beneath the lumbar spine, the only spot where the body can be severed in half without breaking bone’ (Fitts 2016, n.pag.). The attention to detail, and the procedures through which this sexual crime was carried out transformed her body into a grotesque, horrific spectacle. Mutilated and displayed on the street, similarly to Douchamp’s woman, it preoccupied the media for years after the crime (Wallis 2005, n. pag).[4]

Wallis takes a comparative approach to the photographs from the crime scene and Duchamp’s installation, accounting in detail for the eerie similarities between the woman in the artwork and the corpse and using art-historical discourse in his description of Short’s dead, dismembered body, deconstructing the boundary between murder and high art. He notes that in ‘a surrealist fantasy become reality, the Black Dahlia represents a real-life example of what was envisioned in the contemporaneous paintings, photographs, and installations of artists such as Hans Bellmer, Rene Magritte, Man Ray, and even Marcel Duchamp’ (2005, n.pag.; see also Nelson and Hudson Bayliss 2006). Discussing the sources of information about the crime Duchamp possibly had, in addition to its massive press coverage, he explains that the former’s friend, the surrealist photographer Man Ray, was in

Los Angeles at the time of the killing and given his 'lifelong fascination with sado-masochism, [he] would certainly have taken an interest in the particulars of this crime,' which he might have shared with Duchamp (Wallis 2005, n.pag.).

In 2016, Steve Hodel, former detective at the Los Angeles Police department concluded after extensive research that the murderer of the Black Dahlia was his father, Doctor George Hodel, a family friend of Man Ray (see Fits 2016; Hodel 2011; Hodel 2016). Hodel, George's son, claimed that his father plagiarized from surrealist art to perform the murder of the Black Dahlia (2011, n.pag.). Sobel Fitz has also pointed to the similarities between Ray's photographs, the *Minotaur* (1934) and *A l'Heure de l'Observatoire: Les Amoureux* (1936), and photographs of Short's dismembered, tortured body (2016, n. pag.). In the first one, the nude torso and arms of a woman embody the head of the mythological Minotaur and her head is cut off from view. In the second, a woman's lips are painted on the sky and below a nude woman is lying on a couch. The back of her head blends with the background, almost disappearing from view because of the darkness of the photograph and since we only see her from behind, given that her body is turned towards the painting.[5] The upper and lower parts of Short's body are similar to the treatment of the female body in Ray's two pieces both in terms of nudity and fragmentation but also because of the smile that the murderer carved on her lips.

A comparison between Duchamp's installation, Ray's painting and photographs and Short's displayed mutilated corpse suggests that the female body is treated in the formers' art and in the crime as a lifeless doll-like object that can become dismembered, disfigured or mutilated. Indeed, critics have noted the disfigurement of the genitals of Duchamp's woman, which are unrealistically depicted (see Jones 1994, 201; Burris 2017, n. pag.). Moreover, Wallis, Walter Hopps and Anne d'Hanroncourt write about Duchamp's fascination with and use of female mannequins in his artworks precisely because they have the qualities

mentioned above (see Wallis 2005, n.pag.; Hopps and d'Hanroncourt 1969, 32). Hopps and d'Hanroncourt also mention Duchamp's use of a headless female mannequin 'wearing only an apron with a faucet affixed to her right thigh' for a shop window he designed in 1945 for André Breton's surrealist publications, describing *Étant Donnés* as 'an extraordinary extension of the idea of the shop window' (1969, 32).

Gloeckner's intertextual reference to the installation in 'Hommage' introduces *A Child's Life* in Duchamp's surrealist tradition but radically subverts the subject matter of his artwork. By evoking the extraordinary public narrative of Black Dahlia's brutal murder as that was possibly captured in *Étant Donnés* in the private story of Minnie's ordinary sexualisation in the domestic domain, the graphic memoir can be argued to connect two cases of sexual violence as those are renegotiated in art, scaling down from the extreme and horrific to its less harmful displays. For these connections to be made, it is important for readers to be aware and to identify her intertextual reference in order to expand the meanings formed in their reading of the graphic memoir. While there is no direct evidence connecting Ray's photographs and paintings and Duchamp's installation to the murder, the similarities in how each reproduces the female body as violated, objectified, doll-like, fragmentary and mutilated are disturbingly noticeable. Gloeckner's replacement of the Duchampian woman with Pascal does not free Minnie or her sister from objectification. It does, however, evoke a gendered sexual violence narrative that interweaves an extreme criminal action with artistic negotiations of the female body.

Like the surrealists, and Duchamp in particular, Gloeckner also uses dolls in *A Child's Life*. In the title page of 'An Object-Lesson in Bitter Fruit' (Fig. 2), on the right side of the panel we see a dismembered doll. Her left arm and leg are detached from her body, there is an arrow stuck in her displaced leg and she seems hanged with a rope tied around her neck. Elsewhere, I read the right side of the room, where the doll is situated next to an excreting cat

with Pascal's speech balloon over her head as a visual, metaphorical structuring of the end of Minnie's sexually unaware childhood (Michael 2014, 47). Indeed, Pascal often sexualizes Minnie during her childhood and later in this chapter, he asks her about the size of her classmates' breasts (Gloeckner 2000, 50-51).

Alisia Chase aptly describes the doll with the girly figure as a 'minnier Minnie,' noting that the Barbie next to the autobiographical avatar 'can be viewed as the adult female body [the other] doll will become, perpetually nude and on her back, her sexuality her only weapon' (2013, 218). In agreement with Chase, I also point to the contrast between the two dolls, further noting the mirroring existing between Minnie's positioning and that of the Barbie, while she is reading Nabokov's *Lolita* (Michael 2014, 47). Minnie's deprecation towards and abandonment of the doll with the girly figure goes hand in hand with her interest in Barbie and the unattainable bodily ideas it promotes, associated with the consumerist sexualisation of the girl in Western culture, a phenomenon described by Gili Durham as '"the Lolita effect"' (ibid). Minnie's attention also shifts to the sexually alluring girl in *Lolita*, a book that has created the prototype for what was to burst into the Lolita craze – the fascination with the sexy adolescent girl.

The Barbie doll in this panel embodies connotations of female sexuality associated with distorted bodily ideals like for example, unnaturally full, plastic breasts contrasting with the childish figure of the mutilated doll. In *A Child's Life*, Minnie takes up the sexual aspect of the adult woman as embodied in Barbie during her adolescence because she is forced into a brutal sexual awareness and maturation quite early in her life. Another reading of the dolls, therefore, can be that the one with the childish figure visually captures Minnie's psychologically wounded childhood and that the Barbie doll embodies the autobiographical subject's reduction to a doll – an object that offers sexual pleasure. If we fuse what each doll

embodies, then both seem to function as cyphers for Minnie's life narrative. Indeed, at the

Fig. 2: From *A Child's Life and Other Stories* by Phoebe Gloeckner, published by Frog Books/North Atlantic Books, copyright © 1998, 2000 by Phoebe Gloeckner. Reprinted by permission of publisher.

age of fifteen she has sex with her mother's boyfriend and an abusive, yearlong affair with him as well as harmful sexual contact with people outside the domestic domain (see Gloeckner 2000, 70-81). It is quite telling that the Barbie doll's posture also mirrors that of Phoebe in the final chapter of 'Other Childish Stories,' where she is depicted having sex with her stepfather for the first time.

Unlike 'A Child's Life,' the first section of the book including narratives drawn and written for the first publication of *A Child's Life* in 1998, the second part is a collection of stories created by Gloeckner between 1984 and 1993 (see Gloeckner 2000, 3). Thus, the girl protagonist in 'Fun Things to Do with Little Girls' is not named Minnie. Rather, she is introduced as Phoebe Gloeckner's child self. In the first panel, the adult cartoonist is drawn shopping in a supermarket, having a flashback to her childhood (66). The sixth panel into this flashback shows her having sex with her stepfather. There, Gloeckner chooses to draw the girl's figure as childlike and with a disproportionally large head and eyes looking at us in a detached way, while he, on top of her, with a grotesquely large head and clearly much older, is forcing himself into her as sweat drops from his forehead. The narrator's caption over her head explains: 'Years later, the first time I had sex was with my mother's boyfriend. I was eager to be sophisticated and wanted nothing more than to please' (67).

Growing up in an environment where she is sexualized by Pascal as a child, Minnie (or Gloeckner's other autobiographical alter ego) has sex for the first time with Monroe at the age of fifteen, since she believes that her worth can only be shown by providing sexual pleasure to her adult male counterpart (67; see also Gloeckner in Orenstein 2001). As such, she embodies all the connotations structured through Gloeckner's use of dolls in 'An Object Lesson in Bitter Fruit.' Minnie's sexual contact with her stepfather is revisited and more disturbingly illustrated in 'Teen Stories,' but that 'Fun Things to Do with Little Girls' is the final of the narratives concerning childhood points precisely to the idea that at fifteen the

autobiographical subject is still also a child. Her drawn body, then, resembles both the Barbie doll because of how it is positioned during the sexual act and the mutilated doll in that it is also childish and psychically injured because of it.

Examining the dolls in 'An Object-Lesson in Bitter Fruit' comparatively next to the surrealist negotiation of the female body and use of mannequins demonstrates how Gloeckner's narrative performs a feminist use of a particular item. While her dolls reproduce the violation and sexualisation of the female body also shown in Duchamp's installation, Ray's photographs and the mid-century murder of the Black Dahlia, reading them alongside Minnie's narrative of sexual violence invests them with affective and political impact. Rather than merely reproducing the silencing and the violent reduction of the female body to a doll – a sexual commodity – Gloeckner's dolls underscore the harm of sexual violence, either implicit or explicit, when the autobiographical subject is forced to become a sexual object from as early as in childhood. Consequently, while they are usually associated with playful, innocent and fun girly pastimes, the way Gloeckner situates dolls in her graphic memoir breaks up that link and makes them foreground the dark, unspoken and 'unacknowledgeable' side of a girl's growing up.

In 'Honni Soit Qui Mal Y Pense,' or 'Evil to Him who Thinks Evil of It' as translated by Gloeckner, there is another parallelism between the broken girl doll of 'An Object-Lesson in Bitter Fruit' and Minnie's metaphorically broken up childhood. In this chapter, Minnie is shown playing with her mother at the age of eight, climbing on her knee and holding onto her breast. The second and third panels of the narrative capture a point-of-view shot from Pascal's perspective. The second panel shows Minnie and her mother, with the former returning her gaze to us and Pascal, who is angrily looking at them. Unlike our gazing into the bathroom scene, here we share Pascal's point of view. Seeing through his eyes, we watch Minnie, looking back at us smiling, while she is holding on to her mother, touching her

breast. Minnie's smile can be read two ways: she is smiling because she is having fun with her mother, or she is smiling in a sneering way towards Pascal, who invests the game with sexual connotations. As he makes a sarcastic remark about Minnie and her mother's play, which he describes as a 'scene of domestic bliss,' a close-up of his face indicates anger and frustration (Gloeckner 2000, 22). At the same time, the newspaper he is reading includes a column on an 'Upper Darby paraplegic woman found dismembered,' evoking another extra-diegetic narrative of a woman's mutilation (ibid).

Later in a discussion with Minnie's mother, Pascal explains to her: 'I've been observing you and Minnie and I've noticed that your relationship has become very physical – I'd say, blatantly sexual [….] You two were practically fucking right in front of me this afternoon in the living room! WHAT A DISPLAY!' (25). Pascal's sexualizing gaze structures the mother/daughter bond reflected in this playing process as incestuous, and Minnie overhears this comment without being seen. Her mother fails to support her, eventually agreeing with Pascal, who also notes that it is not correct for her to allow Minnie to transfer her 'budding libido' onto her and that it is 'the male figures in her life that should be key' at this age (26). Gloeckner chooses to underline and capitalize specific words in Pascal's description of the mother/daughter game to show their impact on Minnie and to underscore the structuring of what he reads as an incestuous relationship in the visual domain – the game is after all, from his point of view, an outrageous and provocative display. In the final page of this narrative, we come across Minnie's hurt feelings reflected in a broken decorative ball drawn next to her in the first instance when she is listening to them on the stairs, and in a broken heart drawn above her when she is in bed. Read next to the broken doll, the ball and the heart form a sequence of mirroring devices, reflecting the damage inflicted on Minnie's childhood both because of her stepfathers' sexualizing gazes and because of her mother's mental absence from her life.

Chase also describes Gloeckner's 'clear allusions to the canon of visual arts,' noting that 'analysis of comics is too often housed in literature departments, where the overt emphasis on text and lack of emphasis on a cartoonist's art historical influences results in detrimentally biased readings' (2013, 209, 213). While I share her belief, I want to note that a simultaneous examination of Gloeckner's literary influences underscores the availability of the medium of comics for the incorporation and conflation of distinct traditions and foregrounds their impact on the narrativization of Minnie's sexual trauma (see also Michael 2014, 38-66). The title page of 'An Object-Lesson in Bitter Fruit' (Fig. 2) is an example of how this process is performed, despite tending 'to be overlooked due to […] relative lack of narrative action' (Chase 2013, 215). The full-page panel shows, as mentioned, the autobiographical avatar sitting in her room reading *Lolita*, the notorious mid-century account of middle-aged Humbert Humbert's affair with the twelve-year old Dolores Haze, with Edgar Allan Poe's *Collected Works* open next to her. Poe and Nabokov's works seem to be strategically placed in Minnie's bedroom because each of them forms a canonical literary channel that introduces sexualized versions of adolescent and pre-adolescent girls in incestuous or non-incestuous relationships with adult male figures in the family domain and beyond (Michael 2014, 45). Minnie is also drawn with an alluring gaze and a short skirt while consuming the girl that Nabokov's unreliable narrator structures. As such, she seems to be internalizing this image of the erotic girl as it is mediated by Pascal and the Barbie doll and as found in Poe and Nabokov's literary works (47).

In Poe's 'Annabel Lee,' for example, the male speaker describes his love for 'a child' that was destroyed because angels in heaven became envious of it. Due to this envy, Annabel died, leaving her lover alone (Poe 1982, 957-58). The girl in Poe's poem comes out as voiceless, vulnerable and eventually life-less, similar to his 'child wife,' his cousin Virginia

Clemm, whom he married when she was thirteen and he was twenty-five and who died of tuberculosis a few years into their marriage (see Bonaparte 1949, 72,77. 139). I mention Poe's marriage to his underage cousin next to his poem, 'Annabel Lee' because both are evoked in Nabokov's mid-century novel, showing how historical and fictional elements are blended and used in a canonical fictional text by a subsequent author. In *The Annotated Lolita,* Alfred Appel provides a detailed account of Humbert's references to Poe, describing the former's first 'nymphic' object of desire, Annabel Leigh, as homophonous to the latter's Annabel Lee (1995, 328-30). Further, he observes that for 'his first conjugal night with Lolita, [Humbert] appropriately registers as "Edgar,"' employing this name twice again in the narrative and explains that Nabokov 'originally intended to call Lolita "Virginia"' and entitle the book *Ginny* (357-58). In Poe and Nabokov's literary works we do not come across the representation of as gruesome a display of sexual violence as that performed in the Black Dahlia murder and partly reflected in Duchamp's installation. Nevertheless, there is here a more subtle form of violation, which concerns the discursive formation of the underage girl as a sexual object available for adult male figures that can also be embedded in the family structure.

On the shelf behind Minnie in the same panel, we see stacked behind two teddies another book: Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, one of the most representative works of the Beat Generation, first published in 1959.[6] The book narrates in a disorderly, fragmented way a drug-addict's hallucinations and it has been received both with praise and with hostility (see Wilson 2012, 98; Paton 2010, 51). Finishing the book, the reader 'is left horrified and disturbed' because of its gruesome representations of sexual sadism and orgies and its grotesque bodily depictions (Peterson 1966, 78-79, 84; see also Breu 2011, 212 and Paton 2010, 50). 'A.J.'s Annual Party,' for example, opens with an obscene description of two underage characters, Johnny and Mary, having sex with the boy subsequently getting hanged

and raped (Burroughs 1993, 79-84). Mary devours his genitals, 'her face [is] covered with blood' and then another man, Mark, 'leaps on her fucking her insanely […]. He pulls her brutally to her feet and pins her hands behind her,' while she screams 'shitting and pissing in terror' as she is also about to be hanged and raped (85). Mark 'sticks his cock up her and waltzes around the platform […]. Her neck snaps,' and then Johnny, who watches the incident starts masturbating and afterwards engages in sexual contact with her (86).

While on the title page of 'An Object-Lesson in Bitter Fruit' Minnie is reading *Lolita*, on the following page, she is drawn from a different angle reading a book; however, it is *Naked Lunch* that she is holding (Gloeckner 2000, 48). Her reading as consumption of sexual violence shifts from its subtler formations in Poe's poems and short stories and Nabokov's *Lolita*, to Burroughs' disturbing violent depictions. When she goes into the living room to talk with Pascal and her mother, Minnie is once again depicted with a book in her arms, but this time, it is the *World Book* encyclopaedia (49). This repetition and simultaneous differentiation of Minnie's reading activity points to the secret consumption of inappropriate content available in the domestic domain, which becomes nevertheless harmful for her because it presents a twisted image of human sexuality.

On Minnie's shelf we also see Donald Henderson Clarke's *The Chastity of Gloria Boyd*, first published in 1932, 'a cheesy mass-market paperback whose real life subtitle states, "The intimate story of a girl who became a woman the hard way"' (Chase 2013, 218). The book is a sample of post-WWI hard-boiled fiction, reflecting the gendered conventions of a genre that is 'historically marked by sexism, racism and homophobia,' and where women are 'invariably (re)defined as sexual objects, domestic nurturers, or vulnerable figures in need of a chivalrous male rescuer' (Smith 1996, 5, 14). It describes yet another seductive girl, Gloria Boyd, who, abandoned by her father, lives with her mother, her five siblings and forty-one year old Julius Fleeter, whom she calls uncle and who starts to sexually manipulate her when

she is around the age of ten (Clarke Henderson 1950, 26-46). The girl is depicted through the male authorial eye/I as a sexually alluring object of desire during her childhood, when she is also frequently described as a child or a baby (26, 32, 38). Apart from her uncle, other older men like her school teacher also take advantage of her and she ends up impregnated by Julius, who convinces her to marry a young boy she does not love and to keep the fact that he is the father secret to avoid jail (55, 72). She proceeds to marry Thomas, who rapes her, she abandons him, she then gets drunk and has sex with Cooper Patten, who was dating her older sister and who also gives her money (94, 134-35). The book ends, rather unconvincingly, with her falling in love, getting married and having children (188-89). It was reviewed in the *Pittsburgh Press*, where Bruce Catton wrote that 'before Donald Henderson Clarke wrote [it] he must have read most of the newspaper clippings about the tragic Starr Faithfull case' (1932, 18). This, he continued, 'wasn't exactly a pleasant reading, but neither is the book. It deals with a girl who got away in life to a very bad start' (ibid).

The case of Starr Faithfull and the *Chastity of Gloria Boyd* stretch the connections between *A Child's Life* and another sexual crime that took place in the early decades of the twentieth century in the U.S. In 1931, the body of the beautiful twenty-five year old Starr was washed up the shore of Long Beach, Long Island (Kennedy 1998, 59). Paul Nigol relates that 'the ensuing *spectacle* (emphasis mine) that followed her death only contributed to the mystery of her tragic life […]. The injuries on her body, which included bruises on her torso and legs, cuts on her face, and the fact that her clothing was undamaged raised a mystery that has not yet been solved' (2002, 197). The investigation following her death showed that a significant political figure was sexually involved with Starr when she was eleven years old under her mother and stepfather's approval who financially benefited from it (ibid; see also Goodman 1990, 62-90; Kennedy 1998, 59). Starr was also connected to the New York artist Edwin Megargee, who again 'on the request of [her] parents was encouraged to have a sexual

relationship with her' (Nigol 2002, 197). What provided insights into her secret life after her death was the discovery of 'two explosive diaries detailing sexual adventures dating to her childhood' and implicating that her death served 'certain prominent individuals' (Kennedy 1998, 59). Her diaries 'vividly detailed 14 years of drug-addled sexual adventures with at least 19 men, including London aristocrats, Manhattan playboys and […] "a man of political importance" who had been her tutor and who apparently paid well for the privilege' (ibid). While Faithfull's mysterious violent death has remained unsolved, I want to point to the significance of her diaries as evidence used in court and as examples of what Gilmore describes as 'alternative jurisdictions' that provide counter-narratives to legal discourses privileging the father's account (2003, 714-15).

The Chastity of Gloria Boyd becomes another example of how a literary work reproduces the identity of the underage female subject as offering sexual pleasure to adult male figures, resembling aspects of Starr's silenced life narrative, which became unveiled because of her diaries. By embedding Clarke Henderson's book into *A Child's Life*, Gloeckner reconfigures its impact because she provides an opposing perspective on the structuring of the objectified girl through the male authorial I/eye. Reading Minnie's sexual objectification with *The Chastity of Gloria Boyd* in mind foregrounds the misogynist perspective through which the female protagonist is discursively formed in Clarke Henderson's text because it visually captures the harms inflicted on the girl through such a treatment. Gloeckner's other intertextual references, together with this one, represent a patchwork of different male literary artworks, that while quite distinct from each other, at their core, they reproduce a silenced, objectified girl. Minnie, as a reader of these books, can become wounded if only by consuming the trauma and the silencing of women and girls as mirrored in these narratives.

Readers come to realise, in ‘An Object Lesson,’ that the way her mother is depicted by Gloeckner and treated by Pascal also reduce her to a passive sexual object lacking agency, thus forming another channel through which Minnie comes to understand the role of women and girls. After we see her in her room surrounded by the aforementioned texts (Fig. 2), Pascal asks her, as explained, about the size of her classmates’ breasts and requests that she compare them to oranges, lemons or grapefruits, which she refuses to do (Gloeckner 2000, 51). Subsequently, two panels form another point-of-view shot, that of Minnie in this case, who is looking at her mother and Pascal, responding that she hates him, or them (52). That she is looking at both of them when she responds to Pascal’s questioninvests her use of the second person pronoun ‘you’ with an ambiguity that implicates her mother’s passivity in her ongoing sexualisation by Pascal. The first of these two panels zooms into Pascal’s hand on her mother’s leg; her head is cut off from view, she is wearing a short dress that foregrounds her legs and her garter is also visible. Pascal’s speech balloon above his hand includes the repeated question about the size of Minnie’s fellow-students’ breasts and the one deriving from her mother indicates that she is laughing and that she is probably drunk, as she is previously depicted drinking wine.

By framing the mother as such, Gloeckner presents her in a way that underscores her sexuality and mental passivity. That Minnie’s gaze focuses on the specific part of her mother’s body suggests that the images she receives repeatedly centre on the sexual status of the woman and the girl. Thus, the chapter displays the sources, familial, literary and otherwise, through which Minnie comes to understand both herself in particular and other women and girls in general. The literary works and the dolls placed in her bedroom can be seen as both influencing Minnie’s self-awareness and as omens for what is to happen to her later on in life. While the autobiographical subject’s objectification is quite disturbing in ‘Teen Stories,’ the following part of the graphic memoir, in Gloeckner’s feminist use of the

fairy tale in ‘Other Childish Stories,’ the girl protagonist manages to emancipate herself from this position.

Children’s Literature: The Fairy Tale and Sexual Violence (Un)Veiled

Next to the inappropriate books addressing adult readers, which Minnie secretly reads in her bedroom, we also see texts for young audiences. George MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin*, first published in 1872, tells the story of the eight-year-old Princess Irene, who together with her friend Crudie and her grandmother manage to escape the evil goblins. In the first chapter of the book, the narrator is interrupted when he is just about to start the tale by a listener who asks him: ‘Mr. Author, why do you always write about Princesses?’ to which he responds: ‘Because every little girl is a princess’ (MacDonald 2014, n.pag.). When the listener tells him that girls will become vain if they hear this, he clarifies that what he means by princess is the ‘daughter of a king’ (ibid). The listener interrupts again and says: ‘Oh, Mr. Editor! I know the story you are going to tell: It’s “The Sleeping Beauty”’ (ibid). To this, the narrator responds with a question on why he would want to tell a story that ‘every properly educated child knows already’ (ibid).

In the fairy tale, the princess becomes a product of the male authorial, editorial and narratorial eye/I, and is defined in relation to her father, the king, with her position as owned and created underscored. Nevertheless, MacDonald’s fairy tale describes the potential that emerges when children collaborate to combat evil forces together with the help of an old wise grandmother’s songs and the feminine domestic art of spinning (see Thacker 2001; Jenkins 2004; Tso 2007). Princess Irene lacks the passivity of the Sleeping Beauty, failing to fit in this stereotypical image, providing a different template for how a princess can function in a fairy tale, contrasting the artistic depiction of girls and women as identified in Duchamp and

Ray's surrealist art and in the literary works of Poe, Nabokov, Burroughs and Clarke Henderson.

On Minnie's shelf we also see Heinrich Hoffmann's *Slovenly Peter: Or Cheerful Stories and Funny Pictures*, first published in 1845 and targeting an audience of children between three and six years old, depicting, visually and verbally, 'gruesome tales' of children's harsh punishment after they misbehave (Zipes 2001, 148). Biting one's nails, for example, has the consequence of having one's fingers cut off. The cause and effect sequence of naughtiness and severe punishment in these tales normalizes, as Jack Zipes notes, parental abuse against children in the domestic domain (154-55). *Slovenly Peter* is not an isolated example of such violence, a common characteristic of many fairy tales, where children protagonists are usually abandoned and/or abused by their parents (see Zipes 1988; Zipes 1997; Zipes 2013, 39-60). The title of Hoffmann's tales is therefore misleading because its stories, written in simple and pleasant rhythm and rhyming patterns and accompanied by colourful illustrations, are not quite cheerful or funny. The title of *A Child's Life* is similarly misleading because it denotes that what is to follow is child friendly content, especially when read in parallel to the coloured cover image of the young autobiographical avatar eating candies. The cover page does not foretell anything in relation to the obscene and disturbing nature of Gloeckner's childish stories, underscoring the contrast between what we expect to read and the actual reading material. In *Slovenly Peter*, violence inflicted against children is not sexual as opposed to Gloeckner's graphic memoir. However, sexual violence and incest were quite common in early fairy tales.

Maria Tatar explains that the brothers Grimm, whose fairy-tales are up to today among the most well-known, produced sanitized versions of the stories they collected to render them appropriate for children (1987, 144). She mentions that reading through the unedited versions, readers 'will find themselves hardly prepared for the graphic descriptions

of murder, mutilation, cannibalism, infanticide, and incest that fill the pages of these bedtime stories for children' (3). In 'Thousandfurs,' for example, the heroin's father 'is so bent on marrying his own daughter that she is obliged to flee from her home into the woods' (Tatar 1999, 365). In 'The Young Slave,' the Italian variation of the 'Snow White,' recorded by Giambattista Basile in 1634, when Lisa wakes up, she has to face the fury and jealousy of her aunt, who believes that the girl has had an affair with her uncle. Afterwards, he sends his wife away and 'reveals a distinct preference for his niece' (76). In Charles Perraut's 'Donkeyskin,' recorded in 1694, a widowed father wants to marry his daughter, who tries to escape the union with the help of a good fairy (see Perrault 2009, 114-41).

In relation to fairy tales by the brothers Grimm, Tatar writes that in some cases, 'incest constituted so essential a part of a tale's logic that even Wilhelm […] thought twice before suppressing it; instead, he resorted to weaving judgmental observations on the subject into the text,' like divine prohibition of this sin (1987, 8). Given that the nuclear family and the domestic domain are usually the starting points of fairy tales, she explains that 'sex and violence in that body of stories frequently take the perverse form of incest and child abuse' (11). While this aspect of the tales was stripped off from their later 'clean' editions, child abuse in other forms has remained intact, as also shown in *Slovenly Peter*. Apart from including the two fairy tales on Minnie's shelf, in "Other Childish Stories," Gloeckner includes her own fairy tale, created in 1989 and entitled "Magda Meets the Little Men in the Woods" (Gloeckner 2000, 55-57). The tale demonstrates influences relating to abuse in the form of incest and sexual violence and in terms of the positive depiction of the girl protagonist, similar to the one found in *The Princess and the Goblin*. As such, Gloeckner's use of the fairy tale is rather ambivalent because while it highlights its representation of abuse, it opens up space for the victim to imagine herself beyond it. This precisely why I am

arguing for the feminist impact of Gloeckner's choice of the particular genre as the domain where the girl victim can be embodied in her most powerful version.

"Magda Meets the Little Men in the Woods" takes us into an imaginary world and its unrealistic nature is shown by the different shaping of the panels with nonlinear frames and rounded corners. Gloeckner's drawing style in thin lining is also different from that in Minnie's stories, which is thicker, with stronger black and white contrasts that render scenes and characters more realistically. The girl protagonist is portrayed with a gigantic figure walking in the woods, one of the 'locations that threaten [fairy-tale] characters with isolation, danger, and violence, including imprisonment and death' (Haase 2000, 364). The title of Gloeckner's tale evokes 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.' In this case, however, the girl protagonist lacks Snow White's passivity, the little men she finds in the forest, unlike the dwarves, are about to harm her and she fights back. In contrast to the gigantic girl, Gloeckner draws these men looking like little muppets in Magda's hands (see Gloeckner 2000, 55-57). Her depictions are similar to the representation of the female subject in Ludwig von Hofmann's *fin-de-siècle* black-and-white drawing, *The Valley of Innocence* (1897), where a huge girl is drawn nude sitting in a valley with tiny mutilated and decapitated men scattered around her, with a knife next to her, playing with a small man whose feet and waist are tied with a thread that she holds.[7] In Gloeckner's graphic memoir, Magda is clothed and the little men are given voice to tell her what is going to happen to her in the future. Their stories evoke Minnie's family narrative and the girl's projected future mirrors that of her mother (see also Marshal and Gilmore 2015).

One of the men informs her that she will be lied to a lot, that she will be seventeen and pregnant, that he will come home late at night after having gotten drunk with his friends, he will try to have sex with her while she will be crying and then he will abandon her (Gloeckner 2000, 55-56). The girl kicks this first man, who mirrors her biological father, out

of her way only to encounter another one, whose story is reminiscent of her mother's relationship with Pascal (on her biological father see Gloeckner 2000, 34). The man is depicted nude, having sex with another woman in a bird's nest on a tree, thus underscoring the fantastic element of the tale. He informs Magda that their marriage will be open and that he will prove his 'love by sleeping with other women but always coming back to' her (56; on Pascal and open marriage see Gloeckner 2000, 23). Later, he mentions that he will also 'discipline [her] children because [she will not know] how,' at which the girl grabs him from the head and kicks him away (57; on Pascal and the disciplining of Minnie and her sister see Gloeckner 2000, 34, 38).

Fig. 3: From *A Child's Life and Other Stories* by Phoebe Gloeckner, published by Frog Books/North Atlantic Books, copyright © 1998, 2000 by Phoebe Gloeckner. Reprinted by permission of publisher.

The last little man mirrors Monroe, who sexually abused Minnie when she was fifteen and he tells her that he will be her boyfriend and sleep with her daughter (57; on Minnie's abuse by Monroe see Gloeckner 2000, 70-73). He is drawn in a series of three panels (Fig. 3) with eyeglasses like Monroe's, first comically climbing on Magda's leg and then sitting on her shoulder. In the third panel, Magda punches him in the stomach and the intensity of the

punch is shown through the onomatopoeic 'pow' exceeding the panel's frame and by how his glasses fly away from his face. At the end of the tale, the girl runs away from the forest to the security of her mother's arms with the mother herself being a figure that is practically absent from Minnie's life. Magda's mother urges her not to worry because she will 'grow up and find a nice man and get married and have children and live happily ever after' (57).

This fairy-tale ending of a life that is led 'happily ever after' through marriage and children functions as an ironic oxymoron in *A Child's Life*, precisely because reading Minnie's stories of sexual violation and suffering in the domestic domain, we see that her family life is anything but secure and happy.[8] Gloeckner's use of fairy-tale traits in the graphic memoir performs a feminist twist to the genre: On the one hand, its girl protagonist manages to survive through the *peripeteia* of the woods by not embodying a stereotypical representation of the 'princess.' On the other, gendered sexual violence, also in the form of incest, existing in early versions of fairy tales, is re-evoked to transpose Minnie's experiences in a fictional realm, further removed from extra-diegetic reality, where as a fairy-tale heroine, the girl can actually harm the men that promise her an injurious future.[9]

That Gloeckner chooses to draw these men as little, muppet-like and maimed in Madga's hands counters the artist's representation of her autobiographical alter ego as a passive doll. In the fantastic realm of the fairy tale, the girl who is to suffer sexualisation and abuse subverts this future by getting the little men who promise her a traumatic life out of her way. Incest and sexual violence in the genre of the fairy tale as adapted by Gloeckner can be prevented by the girl who is, in other contexts, silenced, passive, traumatised and helpless. The abusers become belittled and their power over her is parodically diminished. Hence, this chapter shows how, through artistic creativity, the victim of abuse can be re-imagined beyond trauma and how the abuser can be reconfigured into a comical, powerless creature,

countering the formation of the adult and the underage female subject as always-already passive, muted, and objectified.

Conclusion

Zipes notes that in fairy tales there 'is hardly a story that does not raise the issue of parental oppression. Yet we purposely avoid talking about them,' in the same way that 'we refuse to discuss the trauma of children's real experiences of maltreatment because we want to dream that such trauma did not and does not exist. We want desperately to forgive ourselves, the parents, and happily resolve what, in truth, can never be completely resolved' (1988, n.pag.). I want to situate this kind of 'convenient' refusal to speak about childhood abuse next to the censorship techniques of 'hard material' related to sexual violence against children I mention at the beginning. The silencing of women and children, specifically female children, when it comes to difficult matters, reflects the tendency to pretend that if something is veiled, it simultaneously ceases to exist. Sexual violence against women and girls does not prevail only in the literary and visual artworks examined above, but also in the everyday reality where, as Lynn Sacco relates discussing incest in the U.S., one in five women report having 'a history of childhood sexual abuse' (2008, 17).

A Child's Life, as an example of 'feminist art activism,' reacts against this situation by voicing Minnie's sexual suffering, alluding at the same time to that which other women and girls have experienced. If childhood trauma narratives offer as Douglas suggests templates through which to narrativize trauma and the survival beyond it, Gloeckner's graphic memoir does so in two ways: First, by refusing to hide the harsh, obscene realities of sexual objectification that disturb both the cultural elite and society in general. Second, her manipulation of comics, and her intertextual references foreground the potential offered by the medium in relation to adding layers of narration to the main narrative through its visual component. Her allusions to Duchamp, Poe, Nabokov, Burroughs and Clarke Henderson's

works and the sexual crimes and stories related to them render Minnie's trauma one example among others and demonstrate the different channels through which various forms of sexual violence can be performed. Gloeckner's appropriation of the fairy tale shows that transposed in this genre trauma can be reconfigured and that the child hero can gain some of the control that she does not have in real life against male sexual aggression. *A Child's Life* functions, therefore, as a valuable template because it shows that the medium of comics can enrich and complicate narratives of sexual violence against girls and women towards the feminist ends of re-imagining the abuse survivor beyond victimhood and of visualizing the harm that comes along with sexual violence – both in its extreme and extraordinary, and its subtle and ordinary forms.

Notes:

[1] I use the term 'authentic' as defined by Elizabeth El Refaie who notes that 'authenticity' concerns the narrativization of events with 'aspects that are quite obviously and deliberately exaggerated, adopted or invented' to reflect the artist's unique experiences and understanding of events (2010, 171; see also Hatfield 2004, 128-29; Smith and Watson 2010, 17-19).

[2] For photographic reproductions see http://www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/324.html.

[3] The impossibility of truth in life writing is now a commonplace observation (see Doubrovsky 1997, 400; Boyle 2007, 18; Smith and Watson 2010, 92). This kind of 'lying' is further exaggerated in graphic memoirs because of their visuality and its potential political impact (see Hatfield 2004, 108-127; Smith and Watson 2010, 169; El Refaie 2013, 12; Brandt 2014, 70-78; Michael forthcoming 2018).

[4] For photographic reproductions of the Black Dahlia crime scene see Fig. 14 in Wallis' 'Case Open and/or Unsolved: *Étant Donnés*, the Black Dahlia Murder, and Marcel Duchamp's Life of Crime.'

[5] For photographic reproductions of the *Minotaur* and *A l'Heure de l'Observatoire: Les Amoureux* see https://www.wikiart.org/en/man-ray/minotaur-1934 and https://www.wikiart.org/en/man-ray/bservatory-time-the-lovers-1936.

[6] Gregory Stephenson writes that 'criminality, obscenity, madness, the breaking of boundaries, and the violation of taboos on the part of the Beats are not simply acts of rebellion against rationality and order; rather, these behaviors represent efforts to confront the destructiveness within and to transform it into creative energy' (2014, 9). However, this energy as reflected in *Naked Lunch* can also be harmful in its sexual violence depictions. Beat women writers' works have remained for the most part unpublished, incomplete and suppressed due to the Beat Generation's 'gendered discourses and discursive practices of exclusion' (Johnson 2007, 11,13).

[7] Von Hofmann's drawing is embedded in the *fin-de-siècle* male misogynist visual depictions of threatening and monstrous women and girls as described in detail in Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity* (1986).

[8] On heterosexual marriage as promising happiness see also Sara Ahmed's 'Sociable Happiness' (2008, 12).

[9] In Nabokov's *Lolita*, Humbert also tells Dolores that they 'shall live happily ever after,' referencing various fairy tales and giving her as a present Hans Christian Andersen's 'Little Mermaid' (see Appel 2000, 396). Nabokov also translated Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* in Russian, and mentions both the book and elements from it in *Lolita*, noting that he calls the author 'Lewis Carroll Carroll because he was the first Humbert Humbert' (382). Nabokov further mentions Carroll's 'wretched perversion and [… the] ambiguous photographs he took in dim rooms' getting 'away with it, as so many Victorians did with pederasty and nympholepsy' (382). His, he proceeds 'were sad scrawny little nymphets, bedraggled and half-undressed, or rather semi-undraped' (ibid). Eleven-year-old Alice

Liddell, who posed for Carroll's photographs, seems to have inspired his literary heroine (see Vickers 2008, 26-27).

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