Contemporary Narrative and Transmodern Feminisms in the Era of Globalisation

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It is a truth globally acknowledged that the world we are now living in is radically different from the one we knew only a few decades ago. The new ways of communication are reshaping the human brain, as recent developments in neuroscience are showing. Since they involve a totally different way of relating to others, they are also redefining our sense of self as individuals and members of communities. Hence, while it is undeniable that many exciting and promising things are happening, the current time is also full of challenges, and reality has grown increasingly difficult to define. How can we, for example, account for the allure of globalization and the outrageous inequality and injustice it coexists with? Can we examine undeniable technological developments at the same time as we hold them responsible for environmental degradation and the climate crisis? How do we come to terms with the consolidation of populism and authoritarian regimes all around the world, and simultaneously do justice to the growing awareness of our interconnected nature and vulnerability? Or, focusing in language and literature, how can we still search for truth at the time of post-truth?

When one examines the current developments from a feminist perspective, the complexity becomes even more self-evident. Paradoxically, the past few years have been crucial for female empowerment in an international political context marred by a backlash against feminist achievements. On the one hand, even a sideways glance at official statistics shows that women make the bulk of victims of domestic violence; are, together with children, disproportionately affected by armed conflicts; lead the ranks of the poor;

and prove to be especially sensitive to economic recessions and the devastating effects of climate change. In our age, we are also witnessing limitations to women's reproductive rights, the increasing presence of a rape culture, the detrimental effects of pornography on gender identity constructions, or the emergence of so-called "angry white men,"[1] who are constructing their masculinity violently through an active opposition to anything that can be related to a demonised interpretation of feminism.

On the other hand, recent events show women stepping in to change their lives at the same time that they step out of their limiting traditional roles. The unprecedented strength of feminism is clearly illustrated by the numbers and energy we have been witnessing on March 8 since the International Women's Strike in 2017, by the popularisation of mottoes like "We should all be feminists," or by the variations of the Me Too movement around the globe. Women all over the world are fighting back anti-feminist government policies and preserving hard-won rights. Many are doing it as grassroots activists, and this connects to the vindication of "a feminism for the 99 per cent,"[2] a growing anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist kind of feminism which brings to the centre those many women that have been ignored by previous feminist waves and movements. Others—though sadly still not enough—are working hard from their positions of power, encompassing different causes and undertakings in a wide range of fields: African women have been appointed by the UN as mediators in several peace processes; in Belarus, it was females like the head of the opposition party that took the lead in defying its president's authoritarian drift; female heads of government around the world proved to be particularly adept in managing the pandemic crisis; feminist theologians currently demand more responsibility in the patriarchal ranks of the Catholic

[1]. Kimmel, *Angry White Men*.
[2]. Mohanty, "Preface," viii.

church. On their part, LGBTQ+ activists continue to fight for specific recognition of those differences that have often been erased in whitestream, heterocentric feminist approaches. These are only a few examples of a slow but relentless tectonic change that moves towards the final objective of real and generalised equality.

The winds of change sweeping over the different realms of contemporary life have motivated a wealth of critical reflections that strive to apprehend the gist of the new times. The concept of transmodernity may be the most accurate and promising line of reflection so far. In an era when globalisation is the dominant "Grand Fact,"[3] transmodernity has become established among scholars as a suitable interpretive framework for the contemporary world. The term reveals the inter-connectedness and fluidity of reality, identity, memory and culture. Its relationship with the preceding historical periods—modernity and the shorter-lived postmodernity—is also marked by interpenetration, since transmodernity intends to keep the fire of the modern project burning while nodding to the postmodern critique that laid bare its many prejudices and limitations. Some critics transcend transmodernity as a mere period term and stress the liberating potential of what they consider a different way of being in the world. Dussel, Luyckx, Ghisi, Ateljievic or Aliaga-Lavrijsen and Yebra-Pertusa announce a global shift in consciousness, economics, politics and human relations, with aspirations for inclusivity, diversity, partnership, sustainability, human rights and ecology. They believe humans are more aware of the way "mutual interdependency grows," and of how "the hierarchies between different cultures [have started to] dismantle."[4]

As for the role of women in the new transmodern paradigm, Ateljevic states that transmodernity is "essentially postpatriarchal in a sense that women's visions and

[3]. Rodríguez Magda, "Transmodernidad: un nuevo paradigma," 5.
[4]. Ateljevic, "Visions of Transmodernity," 203.

intuitions are to be recognized as indispensable in order to invent together innovative urgent solutions."[5] Her celebratory vision is somewhat contested by Ferree and Tripp, who argue that gender should play a much more significant role in the global social order to make everyone fully aware that "globalization can work to women's advantage."[6] While we embrace the liberating potential of the new way of being in the world that transmodernity entails, we are also aware that this paradigm definition has not properly attended to the particularities of women's lives or to the complexity of contemporary feminism. As a consequence, the implications of the transmodern paradigm for feminism still need to be addressed in depth.

For this by no means simple task, a previous relevant question would be whether there is any one category that can possibly encompass the great diversity of directions that the struggle for the equality of all humans irrespective of their gender is taking nowadays. Contemporary feminism is difficult to summarise or even name in the singular. We are convinced that its diversity is at the root of its strength, especially since transnational and transgenerational sorority is now more visible and powerful than ever. We heartily believe that this is one of the values that need to be acknowledged, especially if we consider that all the hopeful developments in feminism are also accompanied by calls, mostly from the political right, to embrace a liberal feminism which, in its support of capitalistic structures, does not recognize most of the world's women and cannot address the challenges that the world is facing.

The diversity and complexity of the different layers that compose contemporary feminism is one of the defining characteristics of transmodernity. To start with, our views are shaped by our academic interests in the world of literary fiction. It is clear that the

[5]. Ibid., 203.
[6]. Ferree and Tripp, *Global Feminism*, 22.

changes in the world we are accounting for here are making an impact on narrative. There appears to be in recent literature a refreshed commitment to history, realism and objectivity, alongside a turn to emotions and affects, the latter proving contemporary authors' interest in portraying human beings as essentially related to each other. Multidirectional views of human relationships in which stories and affects transcend periods of time, connecting people through parallel experiences of migration, trauma and/or conflict,[7] are thus also encouraged. Likewise, transmodern fiction responds to the needs of current fluid and ever-changing societies by making visible the intertwined connections between the global and the local as well as the influence of economic, socio-cultural and political factors in the course of geopolitical events.

It is from this perspective that we take the challenge to speak of feminism and transmodernity as two interrelated categories which are mutually dependent in a way that attempts to illuminate them both. For this purpose, we take over from feminist voices that have begun to question the waves trope traditionally associated to feminism, as it fixes generations in "static opposition"[8] and encourages a "closed-minded attitude towards the past, preventing us from grasping the unfinished possibilities of feminisms from earlier times."[9] Thus, we keep a close eye on diversity as we dive beneath the waves to find the common trends that compound the base of our age. Our diving beneath the waves is connected to a methodological statement that we wish to make. As committed scholars, we are always attending to what is new, and trying to advance in the creation of knowledge. Yet, we refuse to be hamstrung by the academic pressure to vindicate something completely original. We believe that not everything that comes from the past

[7]. Rothberg, "Preface: Beyond Tancred and Clorinda."
[8]. Aikau, Erickson and Pierce, *Feminist Waves, Feminist Generations*, 3.
[9]. Browne, *Feminism, Time and Nonlinear History*, 1.

should be discarded, and that relations of different trends, movements and eras should be more explicitly acknowledged than they usually are.

The metaphor of diving beneath the waves makes a connection to the fluidity of the ocean as a characteristic that we all share, which stresses our common humanity and our inextricable relation to the world and its creatures. The ocean is a kind of habitat where every single element is important, and where the disruption of balance has a negative impact on the health of the whole. Yet we trust—and recent scientific observation proves us right—that the ocean can regenerate itself if we only let it. The depth of the ocean speaks of something latent, powerful, in spite of what is going on in the upper layers. From our work in literary and cultural studies, we also know that what has been previously silenced or broken is never completely destroyed and can still emerge, as will the hidden layer of a palimpsest.[10] A dominant culture may thrive, but suppressed ways more often than not prevail and fight for resurgence. Literary voices, too, sometimes speaking in silence, will continue to come to the surface.

It is with all this in mind that we utter a call to look closely at what seems hidden beneath the surface of apparent contradiction or confrontation. Most specifically, we contend that contemporary developments in feminism and the recent definitions of transmodernity share three basic characteristics: an emphasis on interconnectedness and relationality; the recognition of our essential vulnerability as human beings and as inhabitants of this planet; and an appreciative acknowledgement of diversity and complexity. In this exploration we wish to vindicate, once more, that the beauty of life, like the ocean, lies in its essentially fluid, changing and contradictory character. Similarly, feminism and transmodernity are terms that speak of ongoing projects which are still open to definition and challenge, so that they refer to dynamic processes. Relatedly, in the

[10]. See Dillon, *The Palimpsest*.

academic field, thinkers of transmodernity such as Enrique Dussel have welcomed the blurring of the long-standing divide between "the west and the rest," centre and periphery—the poisoned legacy of modernity and its imperial efforts. Although the ingrained belief that "the west is the best" is not easy to root out, the motion of ideas and theories is no longer unidirectional—if it ever was—and, currently, concepts and world views, like transmodernity, flow from the more marginal countries, communities and individuals into the mainstream.

Important contributions to this horizontal "web of knowledge" are being made by Indigenous peoples around the world, whose voices have long been neglected in the academic sphere and whose holistic, spiritually-based systems of beliefs are often rejected as archaic and premodern remnants. For instance, in the context of contemporary Australia, David Mowaljarlai—the Aboriginal artist, philosopher and activist—dedicated the last years of his life to the project of Two-Way Thinking, "a philosophy of mutual respect, mutual curiosity and cultural reciprocity."[11] Writing on Indigenous feminism, Maori activist Makere Stewart-Harawira is convinced that decolonisation, human survival and, ultimately, peace for a world in crisis "require, at the very least, the return of the feminine principle and in the process, right balance and the compassionate mind, to the centre of our political ontologies."[12] In the Native American context, people are considered "an inseparable part of an expansive system of interdependent relations covering the land and animals, past and future generations, as well as other people and communities."[13] Political theorist Glen Coulthard thus theorises an ethical framework of reciprocal relationship that he characterises as "grounded normativity," and which should teach us how to live our lives "in relation to one another and our surroundings in a

[11]. Winton, Tim. Island Home: A Landscape Memoir. Picador, 2015, 191.
[12]. Stewart-Harawira, "Practicing Indigenous Feminism."
[13]. Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks*, 63.

respectful, nondominating and nonexploitative way."[14] What these critics and writers show is that relationality is deeply rooted in various cultures all around the world, and we should always keep this in mind in contemporary western vindications of this value.

Many of those so-called minority groups which had been previously excluded from hegemonic historical discourses on the grounds of class, gender, race, religion, sexuality, or other identitarian categories, have increasingly attempted to re-construct their fragmented and silenced stories through artistic practices in the last few decades. Their "counterstories"[15] challenge long-established totalitarian versions of history and memory, making the contention that art has a crucial role in representing and alleviating more marginal individual and collective experiences. Therefore, we argue that narrative offers a unique space to verbalise, assimilate and, sometimes, even heal conflicting experiences. Literary practices may force their audiences to look at the face of diasporic characters, of transnational images, of dystopian spaces, of multidirectional memories, extracting from them ethical lessons that can be extrapolated to the social realities outside the cultural artefact itself.

Along with this, art in general, and literature in particular can help us become more empathic towards many of the inequalities still affecting women's lives. Literature can give us the opportunity to both explore ourselves and cooperate with others, whereas literary criticism also enables the self-construction of identity and can be interpreted as a political act. Nevertheless, we can identify a gap in current transmodern feminist practices which could do more to consider the potential of literature as a powerful scenario for the project of contemporary feminism. This way, we draw on Richards' ideas when she claims that literature is a fruitful tool that "affords the transnational exchange of cultural

[14]. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 60.
[15]. Nelson, *Damaged Identities*, xii.

realities in the period of late capital" on the grounds that the exchange of cultures that may be represented in literature imply the sharing of experiences, relationality, solidarity and empathy among women across the globe. Accordingly, literature can act as "a female space that makes possible the coalition building based upon feelings of empathy across identity categories and difference"[16] that our transmodern world is urgently demanding. As feminist critics and readers in the transmodern era, we should be aware of our own locations to be able to "'travel' to the 'world' of another"[17] and avoid misinterpretations and wrong appropriations of the experiences of those we are reading about.

In order to place all these ideas in context, we have selected three works from different cultures within the realm of contemporary narrative in English in order to illustrate the way literature represents and responds to the challenges posed by globalisation in our transmodern era: Charlotte Wood's *The Natural Way of Things*, Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God*, and Libby Cone's *War on the Margins*. To begin with, *The Natural Way of Things* is a feminist dystopia published in 2015 by the Australian author Charlotte Wood. It is set in the Australian outback in contemporary times. The novel tells the story of ten girls in their late teens and early twenties, who are kept prisoners by a mysterious corporate organisation because they have been sexually involved with a series of powerful men. The detention centre is run by three warders—two males and a female—who treat the prisoners brutally. It is not clear whether the purpose is to rehabilitate the young women or simply to wreak revenge on them. *The Natural Way of Things* might imply something that has become normal, ordinary or usual after a time, despite being intrinsically aberrant, like the ingrained sexism of society, which is the central topic of Wood's novel. In the following quotation, the external

[16]. Richards, *On the Winds and Waves of Imagination*, 27.
[17]. Richards, *On the Winds and Waves of Imagination*, 35.

narrator highlights the insidious, normalised violence against females, which is often blamed on them, and which ignores male responsibility, as is evident in the use of the passive voice:

> What would people in their old lives be saying about these girls? Would they be called missing? […] Would it be said, they 'disappeared', 'were lost'? Would it be said they were abandoned or taken, the way people said a girl was attacked, a woman was raped, this femaleness always at the centre, as if womanhood itself were the cause of these things? As if the girls somehow, through the natural way of things, did it to themselves? They lured abduction and abandonment to themselves, they marshalled themselves into this prison where they had made their beds, and now, once more, were lying on them. (Wood 2015, p. 176)

The word "natural" also refers to the natural world, where the novel takes place, and to the attitude of one of the main characters, Yolanda, who ends up adopting the ways of a rabbit in order to escape captivity. Yolanda's extreme *zoe*egalitarianism—*zoe* being "the non-human, vital force of life," in Rosi Braidotti's definition[18]—is pitted against the second protagonist, Verla. Verla's quest for an identity does not exclude the animal force of life, of which she is very aware, but it is fully grounded in her human role, especially in interpersonal relations, solidarity and care for the community. It is Verla's position that the novel finally endorses. Family relations, empathy and caring for each other gain prominence as the story progresses. They are mainly associated with the character of Verla but also amplified in some of the practices and behaviour of the whole group of girls. In the following fragment, Nancy, the female warder, has just died of a morphine overdose and the girls prepare her body for the funeral pyre:

> Inside the sheet she is naked. […] They washed her as best they could […] scrubbing with a rag the odorous hollows of her armpits, between her thighs, behind her knees and ears. They wiped her stained face, cleaned away the crusts of vomit and smoothed her brow. They washed and combed back her hair. Now all the girls gather round (p. 270). […] She is laid out in the centre of the pile. […] The girls sit by the fire through the morning and all afternoon. They have hated Nancy, wished her dead […]. But now she lies there in her girl's bare skin, they see she is only one

[18] Braidotti, "A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities," 12.

> of them, […] and for the first time they wonder if she has a mother too […]. The girls huddle closer together, arms about each other's shoulders. Tending the fire, keeping watch, holding vigil. Joy sings clear and low (p. 271). Lydia and Joy nudge and whisper to each other, nodding at the growing curve of Hetty's belly […] (p. 272). One body disintegrates in flame and another forms in water, cell by cell by duplicating cell (p. 273). Neither Boncer nor Teddy comes out of the house […]. Here, laying the dead to rest, like washing and feeding and birth, is women's work (p. 273).

Nancy's funeral turns into a powerful communal ceremony, stemming from a radical ethics of care which includes caring for the enemy. In the passage, the emphasis is placed on sorority and the body: as embodied creatures, the characters are connected by their common vulnerability. Interestingly, the natural cycle of life and death feels complete when, in the light of the bonfire, the girls' notice Hetty's pregnancy. The scene puts the spotlight on what connects the characters at a very basic level, the commonalities of existence: mortality, giving birth, having a mother and the need for bodily care. There is also a nod to transcendence and meaningful symbolic rituals characteristic of humans, as opposed to the reaction of Yolanda, who ends up isolating herself from the community and fully embracing the life of a rabbit. Notice, besides, that one of the characters engages in a song, an exclusively human activity. We can find echoes of indigenous rituals in the passage, which is very relevant, since cultures which were looked down on by modernity for being primitive are now being recognised as having important contributions to make to a more meaningful and ethical way of life. It is also significant that the two male warders do not take part in the ritual. The fact that these tasks are exclusively ascribed to women might be controversial. However, it can also be interpreted as promoting a form of ethics inspired by values traditionally attributed to women like the ethics of care.

Another interesting example is Anishinaabe writer's Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* (2015), an unusual text for a writer who is usually focused on the past and the recovery of her Native American traditions. This is a feminist dystopia

set in the near future in Minnesota and structured as a journal written to her unborn son by Cedar Hawk Songmaker. The baby may or may not survive, for in this context evolution has stopped all of a sudden, animal and vegetable species are manifesting unexpected changes, and the few women whose pregnancies are viable or do not die in the process more often than not give birth to primitive-like babies. The U.S. government has been replaced by the Church of the New Constitution, an authoritarian regime which imprisons pregnant women and takes any healthy baby that is born. The text, characterised by formal fluidity and genre blurring, is composed as a mixture of different genres and intertexts. While this is not exactly new, it does respond to the definition of Transmodernity as a combination of transformation and transcendence, as it points to Indigenous traditional values which are urgently needed globally at present. The following excerpt exemplifies one of the novel's main themes, namely, the unstoppable climate change that has already taken place:

> FEBRUARY
>
> My dear son. I know you're going to read this someday. I can tell that you're going to wonder what it was like, in the before.
>
> My parents would tell me things about the world, the way it was before, the way they knew it and loved it although, they always said this, We didn't know it was heaven. [...]
>
> First the cold didn't hurt your lungs. [...] Soon the cold stopped pinching, stopped running its fingers up your back, stopped numbing your face, your fingers. The snow still came in fluffy flakes sometimes. Once or twice it was finely suspended in the wind and we tried to call it a blizzard. But it was only here a moment. Next winter, it rained. The cold was mild and refreshing. But only rain. That was the year we lost winter. Lost our cold heaven. (pp. 265-266)

This quote offers the changes witnessed by three generations from a nostalgic perspective, as seen in the poetic descriptions of snow, the cold or the frozen lake. Describing the land as if looking at it for the last time, the text calls readers to action, thus pointing to literature

as activism.

The novel also illustrates the idea that dystopia—like trauma—is always contingent of context. When the narrator asks her uncle what he thinks is going to happen, he responds:

> "Indians have been adapting since before 1492 so I guess we'll keep adapting."
> "But the world is going to pieces."
> "It is always going to pieces."
> "This is different."
> "It is always different. We'll adapt." (p. 28)

This calls for a revision of common assumptions of normality and chaos, health and trauma. In Erdrich's words, "Indigenous people in the Americas are descended of relatives who survived the dystopia of genocide. To us, dystopia is recent history. (For many, it is the present)" (Louise Erdrich, in interview with Christian Coleman).

Together with a call to act in the face of climate change and to reconsider our perspective on dystopia and normality, the novel provides a useful affirmation of values which are urgently needed globally today. In the book women who may be able to bear a child are imprisoned, and most of them will die during pregnancy or at childbirth. In spite of this terrible and terrifying situation, the women can still make beauty and relate to nature and to one another in creative and healing ways:

> It surprises me [...] how even though the women are passing through with only a slim chance of survival, they have tried to make beauty. Here and there inside the prison, pots are set out, filled with plants with arrow-shaped leaves, waxy purple blossoms, bulbous stalks I've never seen before, nameless plants, all numbered with fascinated attention, as though someone has kept track of how they grow. I see that other accidental plants are pushing into the prison as well. [...] Inside, the plants are spreading from the pots of soil. Some vines are thin as threads, others are green ropes that loop against the windows and up the stairways, always toward the light. The leaves proliferate and already in some places here you can walk in the shade of the understory. [...] Every day there is an ever thicker green profusion. When I walk around the yard, I see that even in December vines burst from the stomped ground and catch hold of the slightest ridge or frame to travel, almost visibly upward, thrusting skeins of waving leaves across the fences, across the razor wire, even along the glass towers of the guards, rearing into the ferocious sunlight. (pp. 258-259)

As illustrated here, the creative and resilient power of nature, which will prevail in spite of human violations, echoes the new awareness of female companionship and the Native values of caring for nature, land and women. Appropriately, Cedar's new hybrid, relational set of beliefs shows resonances of Transcendentalism, another intertext of transformation and transcendence:

> And the sky has bloomed, it is verdant with stars. I've never seen stars like this before. Deep, brilliant, soft. I am comforted because nothing we have done to this earth affects them. I think of the neurons in your brain connecting, branching, forming the capacity I hope you will have for wonder. They are connecting, like galaxies. Perhaps we function as neurons ourselves, interconnecting thoughts in the giant mud of God. (p. 106)

Cedar's creation of a new human being connects both mother and baby to nature, the universe and God. In spite of uncertainty, danger and betrayal, Cedar finds joy in the integrative power of motherhood and loves the world: "every fresh new cell of blood, every icy flash of neuron, a love of you, a love of everything" (209).

Finally, another text that may be interesting for our research purposes is Libby Cone's *War on the Margins* (2008). This is a historical novel set on Jersey during the German occupation and whose main character, Marlene Zimmer, helps us discover a good range of minor stories of war and survival. This novel shows the female characters' fight against injustice and their struggle for pacifism from such marginal perspectives as those of female members of the French resistance, Jewish and lesbian artists, and Jewish women concealed during the occupation together with those of British citizens, deserters, bystanders, Nazi officers… Through Marlene's reflections, the novel points to the establishment of multidirectional and transcultural links connecting the suffering endured by these women (Marlene and the other characters) with diverse people in different places across Europe. This is observed when she elaborates such profound thoughts as:

With a history book with maps borrowed from Lucille and Suzanne's vast library,

> she began sorting out the different locations mentioned on the wireless: Tunis, Berlin, Kiev, Singapore. She wanted to put a map of the world on the wall and put pins in locations where war was being waged; she wanted to put a big pin on Jersey. Maybe she should just put a pin in her heart, to locate her on the map of suffering which unfolded almost worldwide. (p. 80)

Here, the female protagonist opens her consciousness to the world and other experiences of suffering, acknowledging that her agony may not be unique but it unites her with other human beings. This way, her transcultural attitude in the face of war reaffirms the humanity that the armed conflict wants to steal from marginal subjects like her.

The main characters' calls for peace and solidarity are fulfilled through the act of communal reunion depicted at the end of the narration, when the characters gather on the liberation day. This is recreated in the peaceful realm that Lucy and Suzanne's cottage represents throughout the novel. Their house is portrayed as a harmonious small world where, at first, Lucy, Suzanne, and Marlene could share their scarce belongings and struggle against the common enemy (pp. 123–124), and where all the characters can now reunite after the war:

> "She opened the jar and held it out to Suzanne, then Marlene. The once-ordinary fragrance was almost too much to bear. Pauline continued to stare straight back. Marlene took a dollop of cream, warmed it in her hands, then took one of Pauline's hands, peeling her grip off the chair arm, and began to smooth it into the rough skin. When she started on the other hand, Pauline leaned back in the chair and looked at Marlene. 'Thank you', she said" (p. 241)

> "She imagined people all over Jersey, all over the world, hugging or sobbing, standing in ashes and thanking God for all they had or lying face-down and cursing God for all that they had lost" (p. 245).

This ordinary act of sharing some skin-cream becomes a symbol of communion, reconciliation, and both physical and spiritual healing. The strengthening of these feminine connections allows Marlene, on the one hand, to feel transculturally united with all the people that have been hurt by the war; However, she is now capable of finding some sense of belonging in the Jewish identity the war has unexpectedly brought upon her, which she wants to embrace together with Peter (p. 247). This final reunion has a

clear gender dimension, as it is the women in the narrative that have had an active role in expressing anti-war claims and fighting against the Nazi occupation of the islands. In addition to this, these characters' communal act of healing responds to the transmodern model of interdependent relationships. This process is made explicit through the metaphor of sharing the skin-cream, which illustrates that now they "hav[e] the other in one's skin" (p. 115). In accordance with this, by understanding resilience as the ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune and change, the resilient attitudes promoted by Cone's novel are mainly achieved through the acts of love, solidarity, and empathy in which the female protagonists are involved.

The very final words of the novel again point at the healing union between Marlene, Lucy, Suzanne, Pauline, and Peter. Echoing the transmodern belief in the multiple possibilities that emerged out of such transcultural encounters as those depicted by Cone, this passage illustrates a group of damaged individuals that may start working through their traumatic experiences by empathetically and multidirectionally sharing their pain with those "Others" who have also lived painful events.

> At night by the fire they (Marlene, Lucy, Suzanne, Pauline, and Peter) all held hands and listened to the wireless with its constant flow of good news. Of course, they began to hear of those who were coming back, and those who were not. They had to deal with the bitterness of seeing the Bailiff knighted, the Aliens Officer still at his job. Healing would go on and on; for some it would never finish. History, like a wave, had picked them up and deposited them unceremoniously back on the sand; at least there was some comfort in recovering together. (p. 248)

What makes *War on the Margins* especially singular in this transmodern and "postpatriarchal" context is that it fosters a sense of collectivity and bonding that partially reminds us of those third-wave feminist scholars who endorsed a historicist approach to women's issues by highlighting the need to rewrite history from a feminist perspective as the starting point for a critique of patriarchy. The main features linking the characters are hybridity, marginality, and liminality when it comes to defining their gender and sexual

roles as well as other identity categories such as race and religion. Cone establishes deep bonds between female characters of very different classes and backgrounds, as can be seen in the final scene. In Cone's work, the Channel Islands become a transnational space that acts as the perfect location to transcend local, national, and international frontiers. European and international powers are fighting for this land but their inhabitants go beyond all kinds of identity labels and turn it into a more global space, where the rights these women defend are not exclusively female but necessary human rights to pursue the transmodern vision of global empathy, peace, justice, and sexual, political, and religious freedom. Strong proof of this is the fact that a man is included in the final female reunion, showing a more open-minded view of what feminism may contribute in our transmodern era. Cone's liminal narrative opens more possibilities to communal bonding after the multidirectional forces of history have reunited these marginal subjects. Furthermore, this is mostly achieved by relying on the female characters' capacity for love and resilience. This interdependent recovery from the trauma of war demonstrates that, from a transmodern outlook, the main way of conceiving our plural and diverse damaged societies is through community links as those represented here.

All in all, the examples we have examined contribute to demonstrating that literature is a successful way to expose and help us become more aware of the inequalities still affecting women's lives. Also, to consider the different challenges that the future may bring if we do not take better care of our peers and the environment. In keeping with this, we contend that literature not only reflects reality, offering representations of what is happening around us; it contributes to its continuous transformation as well. Importantly, the study of contemporary narrative provides a good opportunity to put the spotlight on the unquestionable vulnerability, interconnectedness and complexity of existence. We believe that vulnerability, relationality and complexity are not just theoretical ideas that

help characterise the transmodern paradigm; they point to the deeper nature of reality and make up the substance of our globalised world. No matter the current nationalist and extreme identitarian threats, we are all inextricably related. Besides, literary texts are often among the first to account for the latest concerns and the new trends that are subsequently detected and examined by critics (sociology, political theory, etc.). This is why an account of feminism and/or transmodernity necessarily has to take literature into consideration. Nevertheless, we also have to acknowledge a gap in current transmodern feminist practices which could do more to consider the potential of literature as a powerful scenario for the project of contemporary feminism. In conclusion, we think our work on transmodern feminisms and contemporary narrative opens new venues for rethinking feminism alongside our way of being in the world.

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