

MOTHERHOOD AS THE RESULT OF RAPE IN KAREN MALPEDE'S PLAY THE BEEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

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Abstract: Motherhood as institution was defined for the first time in 1976 by Adrienne Rich in her book "Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution" in opposition to motherhood as experience. According to the writer, motherhood as institution is a patriarchal concept that oppresses and inhibits women's creative power by dictating them how to act / react, how to behave and how to feel in their relationship with their children. Karen Malpede's "The Beekeeper's Daughter" mirrors motherhood as institution and the way in which patriarchy has transformed women / mothers into victims. Moreover, it highlights the consequences of war and rape on motherhood and a woman's body. Admira, a Muslim refugee and one of the three women characters of the play, experiences a forced pregnancy as a result of war-rape. Her will and body have been under total control. Therefore, her silencing, emphasized by the loss of her voice, equates with the impossibility of mothering. Yet, beyond all the boundaries that come with loss, and pain, and suffering, not only Admira, but also the other two women characters of the play, Sybil (the beekeeper from the title) and her niece, Rachel, refuse to comply and identify themselves with the victim image. They all find solutions to help them not only cope with reality, but also rise above; at the end of the self-rediscovery process, they all become survivors.

Keywords: motherhood, rape, war, trauma, survivor

Introduction: motherhood and rape

Author of seventeen plays and winner of the Obie award, Karen Malpede is a contemporary playwright and ecofeminist whose plays (*The End of War, The Beekeeper's Daughter, I Will Bear Witness, Prophecy, Us, Extreme Whether*, etc.) deal with social injustice, survival, climate change and the magical connection that bonds human beings altogether and human beings with nature, perceived mythically. She is also the co-founder of 'Theatre Three Collaborative' which was inaugurated with *The Beekeeper's Daughter* in 1994, a play that, even though it is not a war play, deals with the consequences of the war. Moreover, Malpede tries to envision a better world that transcends the boundaries imposed by the patriarchal means of illustrating power (through violence and the destruction of both the physical and emotional worlds of those involved) and to emphasize the common string that links people together, beyond gender, religion, nationality. Nevertheless, the play reconnects women through motherhood or, more exactly, through the sufferings brought by motherhood, as one of the characters, Admira, becomes a mother after having been raped, Rachel chooses motherhood out of her sense of duty and sacrifice, and the third woman of the play, Sybil, "renounces" motherhood as she kills her daughter in an accident, as a reaction to the violence and humiliation they endured.

Taking into account the fact that the play deals with the Bosnian war, several similarities with the situation from Syria were made and therefore, the play was revived in 2016, as a response to the tensions raised by the immigrants as perhaps a solution-giver for the violence and hatred that seem to take over.

As Karen Malpede herself declared in a 2016 interview (to Brad Rothbart for the American Theatre publication), *The Beekeeper's Daughter's* inspiration came while she was teaching ecology and theatre at NYU. That way she met the ecofeminist, trans-singer Anohni who was a young student in her class (an inspiration for Jamie, the bisexual character of the play, and maybe for Rachel, a strong advocate for women's rights). At the same time, Malpede was doing some research

about the lives of Robert Graves and Laura Riding, and studying Greek mythology and theatre; she states that “Graves, along with Julian Beck and Allen Ginsberg, both of whom I knew—Julian very well—are the models for Robert Blaze in the play. These are men who redefined traditional ideas of masculinity in order to become themselves and affect change in the world.” (interview 2016). When the war in Bosnia exploded, while the playwright was on holiday at a castle in Umbria, “living in bucolic luxury”, Malpede felt that, even far away from the war, she could still “feel the guns rumbling through the earth and hear the cries of those whose lives were being torn apart. That contrast between Western luxury and an upsurge of hysterical, xenophobic violence informed the play. Since then, xenophobic violence seems to be ascendant.” (ibid.)

In short, the four-act play sets both its characters and its readers on a journey of self-discovery by moving from the house (the first act, a safe place full of harmony, isolated from the “real” world) to the beehive (second act, on the edge of peacefulness and danger, a first trial of reconnecting to nature), to the forest (third act, a symbol of the descending in the unconscious, and dealing with the traumatic past) and, eventually, to the sea (the fourth act, a metaphor for cleansing and rediscovery of one’s self, after having come to terms with the past and being able to embrace the present, and thus the future). Thus the play presents the story of an American family and a refugee from Bosnia, highlighting an oxymoronic view on humanity. While Sybil Blaze, the beekeeper from the title, her brother, Robert Blaze and his bisexual lover, Jamie Knox seem to live in paradise on an island in the Adriatic, a brutal war is exploding only a few hundred miles away. When Robert’s daughter, Rachel, an activist for women’s rights, returns home, it is as if she brings also some of the tensions and turbulence from the front, invading therefore the previous harmonious and bucolic atmosphere. Moreover, Rachel does not return home alone, but together with Admira, a Muslim refugee and a victim of sexual violence. What is more, Admira is pregnant and has not any other place to go. Rachel promises safety and security to Admira and, as a consequence, when she comes back to her home, she has specific instructions as to how her family will treat her friend while she stays with them. However, the arrangements bring on disagreements between Rachel and her poet father, taking into account the fact that they have lived very different lifestyles over the past few years. Whereas Rachel has been directly on the war front, she has seen a lot of disturbing things and this is why she tends to be overcautious, her father has been living in a safe and luxurious space with little contact with the external world.

Besides having been raped, Admira is not sure whom the child belongs to: to the man she loves and who probably was killed in the war, or to one of her molesters. As a consequence, she is caught between her wish for revenge and desire of killing the baby and the thought of killing herself. After the baby is born, Sybil assumes the role of taking care of Admira, while Robert is the one that becomes in charge with the baby, as the readers witness a reconfiguration of the classic roles of a family. Jamie falls in love with Rachel and they become involved in a sort of relationship, even though Robert disagrees and Rachel perceives it more from a practical point of view, only as a way of consuming their sexual desire, and not as something emotional or spiritual.

In the end, after Rachel’s return to the war front, the new family seems to have come to terms with their past and have found novel ways of dealing with it and surviving (through art, for example). Rachel comes back, pregnant and married to a journalist from Sarajevo (another victim she just wanted to help and save) and sharing Admira’s previous dilemma: she does not know either who the father of her child is.

Therefore, the play was revived in 2016 as it highlights some contemporary issues; in the Foreword of Karen Malpede’s *Plays in Time: The Beekeeper’s Daughter, Prophecy, Another Life, Extreme Whether (Playtext)*, Marvin Carlson has emphasized that “the play moves easily between contemporary and classic reference, weaving a rich poetic tapestry of human relationships and of negotiations with the extremes of human love and hate. Today, two decades later, with not only the Adriatic but the entire European continent attempting to deal with the political, social and psychological challenges of countless abused and damaged Muslim women like Admira, the play strikes a disturbingly contemporary note.” (2017: XI) Then, he adds: “Despite its echoes of Greek

tragedy, the B's D can be considered within the general mode of realism, often with heightened or symbolic elements, that characterize much of the more ambitious work of this national tradition" (XII). Moreover, motherhood and the way female roles are perceived receive a different perspective, as the reader gets the story from the ones usually silenced and weakened; now one has the chance to find out about the struggles of the victims that prove to be in the end survivors.

The traumas of rape

Admira Ismic, is a Muslim refugee, victim of what Gutman coined as "rape camp" and Rachel Blaze's friend (apud. Hirschauer, 2014: 97). Even though we do not find out too much about her previous life, Rachel highlights the fact that, ironically, Admira was a student at university and she speaks five languages, thus she is an educated woman. However, the woman is never associated with either the level of her education, or with what she represents as a person. Throughout the play, she is constantly linked to the horrific experience she has been through. Even from the beginning Robert associates her with death: "She's brought death into the house. [...] Didn't you feel it? The icy chill." (BD, 11). Her husband died in the war and she avoids talking too much and when she does it "she speaks clearly, but stiffly. There is tremendous pain hidden in the voice" (BD, 12). Her deep suffering is caused not only by the fact that they have just come from the war, as Rachel states ("We've just come from the war", (BD, 13), the collective *we* standing for all the women that take part actively, directly or indirectly, in the war, even though they are never mentioned in history because they do not prove the heroism men do), but mostly by the fact that she was "held in captivity for three months, tied hands and feet to a bed, repeatedly brutalized day and night by a bevy of smug, self-satisfied men" (BD, 18). And the result was not only a destroyed self, but also a forced pregnancy that deepened her suffering because of the lack of knowledge in what concerns the identity of the baby's father that could have been her dead husband or one of those "monsters" (BD, 19).

Unfortunately, rape and war have been complementary actions throughout history. According to Cambridge Dictionary, the verb "to rape" (from Latin *rapio*, *rapere*) means: a) to force someone to have sex when he or she is unwilling; b) to damage or destroy something by using it in an unsuitable way. Louise du Toit in *A Philosophical Investigation of Rape. The Making and Unmaking of the Feminine Self* underlines that the first written record of the English word 'rape' with the explicit meaning of "violation or ravishing of a woman" (2009: 36) appears only in 1481, even though it has represented a practice of subjugating women from the oldest times, when women were perceived as merely sexual property inherited by their men for their own pleasure. In what concerns war time, it seems that rape has been used as a weapon against women, what Sabine Hirschauer calls in *The Securitization of Rape. Women, War and Sexual Violence* the "perennial othering of women" (2014: 4), marginalizing and objectifying them. The recognition of mass rape as a collective, not individual domestic problem was made in the 1990s, after the Bosnian war, when rape was "securitized", that is acknowledged as an international dangerous strategic practice and crime with political implications. (ibid. 5). As a matter of fact, Susan Brownmiller is the one who, in her book *Against Our Will*, coined the term "rape as a weapon of war" when she referred to men's genitalia "as a weapon to generate fear (1975: 14).

What is more, it seems that in Bosnia, women were raped in public spaces or in in front of their neighbors and relatives "in the knowledge that the victims would thereafter carry a cultural stigma" (apud. Hirschauer, 2014:10). When remembering about what has happened to her, Admira says: "They did it all in front of everyone. They took four of us. In front of everyone. On the ground. They did it. Everyone saw it. No one moved" (BD, 69). Thus the pain is augmented by the fact that she was seen by the others and publicly ashamed, as rape becomes a guilt shared both by the aggressor and the victim in the patriarchal society, where men possess and women are to be possessed. Witnessing the aggressions does not bring comfort or release either as the feelings of powerlessness and rage highlight an identification with the victim in what concerns public shaming, humiliation, physical and psychological injuries: "But I saw what they did to the others. To young

girls and old women. And their eyes were so cold. They had no life in their eyes.” (BD, 71) and also a crashing of the whole, as women become living bodies with dead souls / spirits, a kind of double consciousness. There is a split between “Leib (lived body) and Körper (corpse), between subjective and objective existence, between the threatening and consumable aspects of the body as thing, and between the masculine universal and the borderline feminine” (du Toit, 2009:84), an element associated with rape’s destruction of the victim’s sense of self in relation to others. Therefore, rape functions “as a demarcating function—if women’s bodies serve as the border of the group, the enemy break down their defences if they rape the women, and at the same time they break into the hidden heart of the *corpus socians*.” (ibid. 47)

On the other hand, along with Admira’s weakening of the will and self that led eventually to her spiritual death (“No. I am dead. No one survives. [...] I was dead already I had died so all I could do was hang from the top of the ceiling and look down” BD 70-71), the aggressors go through a process of becoming stronger and empowered. Admira knew the “monsters” that “killed” her because she has taught in the village and they were village boys; one of them was a teacher, a former colleague, who, with a knife in his hand, covered in blood told her; “Now you see how strong I am”. (BD 71) Men, who in the patriarchal society are characterized by power and have as responsibility the protection of the weaker sex. get stripped of their masculinity during the war while exposed to several acts of heroism. According to Louse du Toit, rape suggests a way of opposing emasculation:

Rape serves to affirm the rapist’s masculine sense of self and his sense of having a place in the world, through a sharp and violent demarcation of his identity from the feminine. Rape is thus always about territory—symbolic, political, physical territory—and its logic dictates that the struggle plays itself out in terms of the dehumanization of the female sex and the feminine symbolic. Rape is first and foremost a violent (re-)assertion of the legitimacy of the masculine universal, and therefore always in the first place a pushing back of woman (especially her independent, therefore threatening and contestatory aspects) onto the margins of the political, whether the territorial struggle is primarily one between the sexes or not. By this I mean that purely masculine territorial struggles often also play themselves out in terms of the systemic rape of ‘each other’s’ women. (2009: 88)

In this way, one of the myths about rape is called into question: the rapist is neither sick, nor sexually controlled by lust or desire, but rather by power and the need of dominating the other, as Rachel points out during her conversation with Jamie: “But, nevertheless, to prove that they were made of heroic stuff, they took turns raping her over and over. And the act itself had an odd effect on them for it seemed to endow them with a superhuman strength.” (BD, 19)

Admira’s damaged self and loss of her former identity are emphasized by both loss of her voice and the forced pregnancy that reminds her the pain, the humiliation and the impossibility of possessing her own body and taking a decision for herself. Once she has become a “disembodied spectator” (du Toit, 2009: 99) of her own life, Rachel is the one that takes charge of her and urges her to talk in order to recover; the biblical “word” is emphasized as a source of life and an antidote to suffering: “I can’t stand the silence anymore. [...] I’m not going to let you destroy yourself. Do you understand? I want you to tell me everything. [...] You’re alive and you’re going to talk.” (BD, 68) However, Admira cannot find the right words to unleash her pain until she accepts the baby and her new identity as a mother. Even though after giving birth to her baby boy she has a short moment of identification with him due to the similarity between their eyes (they both have green eyes), after that the woman enters a state of obliviousness and alienation.

Pregnancy as a consequence of rape contributes to the further isolation and dishonoring of the victim; it also represents a constant reminder of what has happened and birth “does not resolve the situation because the opprobrium may be transferred to the children, who are seen as the offspring of the enemy. The repercussions of rape are thus transmitted across the generations.” (Branche & Virgili, 2012: 13). More devastating than this is forced impregnation in connection with

ethnic cleansing that were part of Serbia's war strategy: using, thus, the penis as a weapon, "the particular anatomical device which allowed these men to destroy a woman at the same time as making her pregnant" (BD, 19)

According to Sabine Hirschauer, it seems that during the Bosnian conflict, "many of the estimated 20,000 women were forcibly impregnated and held captive in numerous camps spread throughout the region until an abortion was impossible." (2009: 19), the purpose being that of producing little Chetniks/Serb soldiers and therefore social disorder, by creating "lasting social chaos to the extent of destroying the culture and institutions of a society Mass rape and enforced pregnancy, its associated trauma and terror, affected entire generations. It led not only to the physical destruction of the community, but warped and changed its communal psyche and identity." (apud. Hirschauer, 2009: 11).

Motherhood as a consequence of rape could also be perceived as a " 'time-bomb' that is detonated much later, sometimes in circumstances that have changed completely, and which leaves a physical trace of the original rape in the postwar world" (Branche & Virgili, 2012: 5). In addition, women are not only "faced with being stigmatized by their families and communities as tainted and impure, but further marginalized and rendered invisible as mothers of children born from mass rape." (Hirschauer, 2009:232)

Forced impregnation was widely recognized as a device of ethnic cleansing. This was, however, highly illogic because the child born from such forced pregnancy would carry the ethnic gene of both – the Bosnian mother and the Serbian father. This then implied that wartime rape through forced impregnation as a function of 'ethnic cleansing was "paternally derived" ' (Weitsman, 2008, p. 565). This rendered the Bosnian Muslim mother, the rape survivor invisible. Her genetic contribution to the child was considered insignificant. If forced impregnation and forced maternity, according to the Serbian rationale, was implemented to create Serbian offspring, such a notion then eliminated the Bosnian mother, rendered her nonexistent or existent only as a vessel to produce Serbian children. The society's sole focus and the exclusive connection to the Serbian father, marginalized the mother (the rape survivor). The mother's biological significance and genetic participation – in the child's ethnic footprint – then became irrelevant. The child's identity was solely connected to the Serbian father. As such, it de-humanized the Bosnian mother and rape survivor and reduced her to a reproductive instrument of war. She became the perennial, invisible 'other'. (ibid.)

Becoming invisible as a mother and dead as a person, Admiria does not want anything else but revenge. First of all, she wants to kill the baby, because she feels him as the other, and not as belonging to her self, but also out of fear that he will repeat the actions of his supposed to be father(s): "I want to kill my child" (BD, 69). Later on, she decides to raise him, but only with the purpose of taking revenge in her place: "I want to raise him to know he must fight to the death. That there can be no peace." (BD, 85). Realizing that in this way she will perpetuate pain and restlessness, Admiria comprehends that she could free him by killing herself: "If I die, my son can live. He won't have to grow up to be a killer. If I die, he won't have to remember." (BD, 85) Ironically, besides naming him Robert after Rachel's father (due to his kindness to her), this is her first conscious decision concerning her son's future, emphasizing her care and love for him. Once she frees him of her rage, Admiria realizes that she wants to live, too. In the last act, after tasting the water of the sea, Admiria gets purified and cleaned and she embraces life and motherhood as she identifies herself with the waves:

All I could see, Robert. All I could see. Suddenly all I could see were swollen bellies. In the room all around were women crying. I was one of their voices. All alone, shivering. But all I could see were bellies heaving. Like the bellies of the sea swollen sea bellies. And the sea was singing to us; she opened her mouth, swollen bellies heaved out. I tasted sea salt in my mouth. I cannot explain what I saw. We were each one of us waves, all the women alone in that room

were like the waves of the sea; I saw it all in that moment. I remember I said to myself, “I am going to live.”. That is my story, too, isn’t it, Robert?” (BD, 86)

Regaining her voice and escaping the traumatic male gaze, Admira gets in control of her words and therefore of her future. She is finally capable of looking at what comes ahead and she succeeds in coming to terms with her past by voicing out her suffering and loss (her former self, her husband, her community), altogether with her gains (her son and her new friends and home) through art. While Sybil paints her own demons in order to tie them down, Admira chooses sculpture to express her novel identity and to transform herself from a victim into a survivor (her marble sculpture is entitled “The Survivors”).

Rediscovering the self

There are three female characters in *The Beekeeper’s Daughter*: Admira, Rachel and Sybil and they all may be linked to motherhood in a way or other and they also take a journey towards reinventing their selves. Admira has been raped several times during the Bosnian war and she is pregnant at the beginning of the play; then she gives birth to a baby boy, whom she will name Robert, the same name as Rachel’s father. Rachel is pregnant at the end of the play, without knowing who the father of the baby is (sharing thus Admira’s dilemma), the difference being that her pregnancy involved her will, and representing thus a form of underlining the re-possession of the female body (Admira becomes a mother against her will and her body is used only as a terrain that has to be conquered whereas Rachel chooses to become a mother). Sybil was the mother of a girl, whom she killed in a car accident, as a means of escaping male violence (a victim of physical and emotional violence, Sybil tried to kill herself and her daughter in order to escape her husband). Not only the five-year old girl died in that accident, but Sybil the mother did, too. Therefore all the female characters need to rediscover themselves, to heal some wounds and to take in charge their own selves and lives. What is interesting is the fact that the male characters are presented and reconfigured differently, too, as a response to all the male violence emphasized both by the war and by the patriarchal society that has imposed stereotypical roles to women and men. Thus, Robert becomes a male nurturer and care-giver, while Jamie is an androgenic character, highlighting gender fluidity and cutting through gender roles.

What Admira and Sybil share is the fact that they are both direct victims of male violence, they both experience the loss of their voices and they both heal with the help of art. Exactly as her name suggests (from the Greek word Sybilla, meaning prophetess, connected to divine knowledge), Sybil Blaze, Robert’s sister seems to be in great union with nature. She has a special connection with her bees (a symbol for love, beauty, community, productivity) in which she seems to read the future and which helped her to recover after her daughter’s death. A few moments before meeting Admira, associated throughout the play with coldness and death, Sybil mentions that her bees are cold: “The bees are cold. I can feel them shivering in their hives.”(BD, 4) “All day long my bees have been upset” (BD, 7) What is more, Rachel’s aunt deduces quickly the fact that Admira intends to kill her baby and accepts her niece’s challenge to try to save her, even though this triggers back some of her old memories. While bathing Admira (in a symbolic scene where she tries to wash all the dirt away) and singing to her (as if voicing out the beauty and also the reality of the world), Admira confesses: “Your voice keeps me anchored here.” (BD, 25). Sybil, a mysterious woman, that talks little but tells a lot, has been in Admira’s position, that of being silenced by the male power and that is why she is the most appropriate to understand her and help her.

In the third act, entitled symbolically *The Forest*, the two women descend in their unconsciousness and they both deal with their demons, in a series of monologues/ dialogues that mirror and complete one another. Each woman tells the story of her silencing – Sybil: “they were going to take her away. Because I watched him one night from the door, when he hurt her, I watched. My tongue turned to ash in my mouth” (BD 70), Admira: “ I am dead. The dead don’t speak” (BD 68). Therefore, the voice as a means of expressing one’s identity, will, wishes and

desires, and also of connecting to the others and defining oneself as a subject, becomes devoid of power under the terror provoked by the threats of the dominant male in patriarchal society. “The victim’s voice loses its creative, connecting, imperative and meaning-giving force, and her voice, like all other aspects of her self, becomes caught up in the rapist’s logic” (du Toit, 2009:90) --or, in Sybil’s case, in her violent husband’s logic. As the voice gets nullified and loses its effect, the self also loses its consistency.

Sybil learns to “talk” or, more exactly, to communicate again by reconnecting with nature through her bees, whom she starts understanding: “That’s how I learned to keep bees. [...] They live as if they were free. They talk to each other with their wings. They make up dances. In times long ago, people used to understand the language of bees but now we’ve forgotten how to understand them.” (BD, 71). Sybil does not keep only bees, but it is as if she kept the secrets of survival as an atemporal eternal mother connected to her foremothers and daughters and empowering one another. She tells Admira: “You are rooted right to this spot by a silken cord that runs through your mother’s mother to you and on again to the end of time.” (BD, 25) Moreover, exactly as an ancient priestess in a hypnotic ritual, she paints Admira’s demons in order to tie them down. Mirroring Sybil’s liberation through art, Admira herself will take up carving in the end in order to tell her story, not that of becoming a victim, but a survivor.

The reaffirmation of the female will is also emphasized by Rachel, who stands for feminism, female power and strength, care, kindness and altruism. She resembles nothing of the stereotypical female image: she is brave, speaks up her mind and perceives love in a practical manner. She (together with Admira, after her recovery) becomes the daughter of Sybil (Mother Earth), as her aunt loses her daughter and she loses her mother. However, she seems more rational and anchored in the present and reality: “Why don’t you wake up and join the twentieth century. You live on an island where you invent the rules of decorum but a few hundred miles away from here men are cutting other men’s testicles and disemboweling pregnant women.” (BD, 62). Her pregnancy stands for embracing motherhood in a conscious way: she goes to war like a man and chooses to have a child as a woman.

All in all, at the end, all the three women find their freedom near the beehives, after having dealt with suffering, pain and loss in a way or another. They go through a journey of rediscovery and experience several phases or “elements of damage or loss” (du Toit, 2009: 6) in order to re-make their selves, such as “spirit injury, victim complicity, loss of voice (silencing), loss of moral rage, and thus of moral standing and agency; and finally, homelessness (dereliction) or displacement and alienation” (ibid.). Admira’s carved belly of her “Survivors” is mirrored by Rachel’s pregnancy, as a new survivor of the “War” (with its both denotative and connotative meanings): she survives both the Bosnian war and the emotional war, crossing both physical and spiritual boundaries in order to reconnect to her lost self.

Conclusions

The dynamics of power and oppression in the institution of motherhood reflect not only the expectations of the male society in what concerns the way in which m/others perform motherhood, but also the marginalization and the othering of women. Winnicot’s “good enough mother” and the idealization of the mother do not take into account the context, and the context is the one that usually changes the rules. The mythical angelic image associated with the white middle-class woman enlarges its connotations as it is replaced by a Muslim woman, such as Admira. She becomes a victim of outer forces and stereotypes that impose to women to behave in the same way, even though they have diverse backgrounds. The suffering brought by discrimination and rape alienates her from her identity and self.

Admira experiences a forced pregnancy as a result of war-rape. Her will and body have been under total control. As a result, she cannot cope with mothering. Admira perceives herself as the other and not as a mother, while “doing the motherhood” (Short 2005: 285), that is giving birth and breastfeeding, in opposition to mothering, that is creating a relationship with her child.

Yet, *The Beekeeper's Daughter* offers some alternatives in order to combat the stereotypical gender-based roles: it highlights the power of art in the process of healing. Nevertheless, the male characters in the play have been reinterpreted: Robert, for example, symbolizes nurturing and caretaking, as if counterbalancing for Admira's powerlessness of bonding and mothering her son. All in all, beyond all the boundaries that come with loss, and pain, and suffering, Admira, but also Sybil and her niece, Rachel, refuse to be defined by the victim image. They all find solutions to help them not only accept reality, but also to comprehend it and transcend it. Therefore, the victims become survivors: Rachel chooses to become a mother as an open declaration of reclaiming her body (in opposition to Admira's loss of body and identity), Admira contours her new self with the help of art and Sybil becomes an inspiring mythical healer who brings comfort to m/others.

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