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Relationships between Women in Sarah Daniels' Play "Neaptide"

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah satu eksplorasi mengenai perhubungan erat di antara wanita dengan wanita menggunakan teori feminisme dan psikoanalisis untuk menganalisis sebuah drama Inggeris bertajuk "Neaptide." Dapatan kajian memberikan faktor-faktor psikoanalisis untuk menerangkan ikatan erat perhubungan antara ibu dan anak perempuan. Ia juga dapat menerangkan bahawa di dalam drama "Neaptide" Sarah Daniels memberikan masa depan yang positif kepada dua orang protagonis wanitanya kerana mereka telah diselamatkan oleh ibu mereka Joyce. Daniels menggunakan mitos Demeter-Persephone untuk menunjukkan peluang terhad yang ada untuk protagonis wanita dalam menangani krisis keluarga. Seperti Demeter, Joyce merapatkan pertalian keluarganya dengan menyelamatkan anak-anak perempuan beliau daripada dominasi kaum lelaki: Val daripada suaminya, Colin, dan Claire dan Poppy daripada Lawrence. Pengakuan ikhlas Claire sebagai seorang lesbian telah membawa kesengsaraan kepada dirinya, manakala Joyce pula telah membuat keputusan yang wajar untuk menyelamatkan anak perempuan beliau daripada dibelenggu oleh masalah keluarga.

ABSTRACT

This paper is an exploration of female relationships using feminist and psychoanalytic approaches in reading a British play "Neaptide." The findings provide us a unique way of explaining the bondage between mother-daughter relationships, and it also tells us that in the play "Neaptide" Sarah Daniels offers a positive future to her two female protagonists because both have been rescued by their mother Joyce. Daniels uses the Demeter-Persephone myth to illustrate the limited choices that her female character Joyce has in handling her family crisis. Like Demeter, Joyce keeps her family together by delivering them from male domination: Val from her unhappy marriage with Colin, and Claire and Poppy from the devious and ruthless Lawrence. Claire's bold and honest public confession of herself as a lesbian has clearly entailed suffering and sacrifice. However, Joyce has made the right decision to help both her daughters to get out of their predicaments.

INTRODUCTION

This paper (appropriating the psychoanalytic intepretation) examines the portrayal of the relationships between women in Sarah Daniels' play "Neaptide." It is seen in the context of a lesbian feminist stance that Daniels' play was written, reflecting her critiques of sexology and psychoanalysis which fail to give an adequate and unpejorative explanation of lesbianism, and insisting on the importance of 'coming out' and being proud that one is a lesbian. This reading will provide a reader with an understanding of why and how relationships between women are seen as negative and limiting. Before delving into a detailed analysis, a brief background of the writer and an overview of the various definitions of lesbianism and the history of love between women are pertinent to help readers understand the work analysed.

From the early 1980s to the middle 1990s Sarah Daniels wrote nine plays which have been both produced and published. Born in 1957 in London, Daniels began to write at an early age and her first play was staged when she was twenty-four. As a playwright-in-residence at the Royal Court Theatre, London since 1984, Daniels

has been able to produce some of the most popular plays there despite the negative criticisms she has received from some theatre critics. Among the awards that she has received for her work are: the George Devine Award for "Neaptide" in 1982; the London Theatre Critics' Award for Most Promising Playwright in 1983; and the *Drama Magazine* Award for Most Promising Playwright, also in 1983.[1]

Seeking authenticity in her material, Daniels often conducts research before she writes her plays: for "Masterpieces," she consulted feminist literature on the subject of pornography and attended a meeting of Women Against Violence Against Women; for "Byrthrite," she conducted research into the role of midwives in the seventeenth century; for "Gut Girls," she investigated the history of women's work in the Deptford slaughterhouses; for "Beside Herself," she contacted and interviewed the survivors of child sexual abuse, and for "Head-Rot Holiday" she interviewed ten women who had recently been released from Broadmoor Special Hospital. Despite the fact that most of her plays have been based on true accounts of people's lives, Daniels has been criticised for using "improbable and unrealistic characters".[2]

"I don't like plays where the audience goes out feeling purged ... I like challenges ... I write issue plays," Daniels remarks in her interview with Lizbeth Goodman in London, dated 11 July 1988.[3] This statement explains why most of Daniels' plays are based on controversial issues such as power relations between the sexes and the position of women in "Ripen Our Darkness" (1981); protest against nuclear war in "The Devil's Gateway" (1983); pornography and male violence in "Masterpieces" (1983); women and reproduction in "Byrthrite" (1986); the rights of a lesbian mother in "Neaptide" (1986); the exploitation of working women in "The Gut Girls" (1988); sexual abuse in "Beside Herself" (1990); women and mental health in "Head-Rot Holiday" (1992); and infanticide and self-harm in "The Madness of Esme and Shaz" (1994).[4]

Daniels' latest play, "Blow Your House Down" (unpublished), was staged and commissioned by Newcastle's Live Theatre in 1995, then toured around the North. It is adapted from Pat Barker's novel (granted with full artistic freedom) about a serial murderer terrorising a Tyneside community of prostitutes. Daniels has also been a visiting lecturer at various universities in Britain and abroad,[5] a writer of several radio plays and for three television series: "Medics, Grange Hill and Eastenders." She is therefore actively juggling both theatre and television writing.

Various Definitions of Lesbianism

Celia Kitzinger, in her detailed sociological study of lesbian identity in "The Social Construction of Lesbianism" (1989), argues that women who give their individual accounts of their lesbianism basically reinforce rather than resist established norms. Based on the results of her research forty-one self-defined lesbians aged between seventeen and fifty-eight were asked to reply to sixty-one questions regarding their identity. Kitzinger identifies seven distinct accounts of lesbianism. Most of these accounts, she adds, show the great tendency of the respondents to fit into ideals set for them by the dominant order. For example, the accounts which emphasize personal fulfilment, 'discovering one's true self', 'getting in touch with one's own feelings' she sees as unthreatening to the establishment:

> To conclude, then, an explanation of lesbianism in terms of personal happiness and self-fulfilment serves to remove lesbianism from the political arena and to reduce it to a private and personal solution. This, then, is an account clearly acceptable in terms of the dominant patriarchal order (Kitzinger, 102)

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1 See Bakker, 'A Critical Analysis of the Plays of Sarah Daniels' for a full account of Daniels' professional work.

2 Heidi Stephenson and Natasha Langbridge, (eds.) "Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting" (1997: 7).

3 Goodman, Interview with Sarah Daniels: London, 11 July 1988, in "Contemporary Feminist Theatres," p. 128.

4 Daniels' most recent play *Blow Your House Down* (unpublished), first performed in 1995, was adapted from Pat Barker's novel (granted with full artistic freedom), commissioned by Newcastle's Live Theatre in 1994 and received favourable reviews from theatre critics. It is about a serial killer of prostitutes in a Tyneside community.

5 Daniels was a visiting lecturer at Guelph University, Ontario, Canada, summer 1990; she was the recipient of the M.Thelma McAndless Distinguished Professor Chair in the Humanities at Eastern Michigan University, winter semester 1996; and an invited speaker at the 1991 International Women Playwrights' Conference in Canada. See Bakker, p.229.

Two other equally acceptable lesbian accounts are based on "the concept of lesbianism as a private sexual preference or orientation, as natural and normal as heterosexuality" and "the ideology of romantic love" (Kitzinger 1981). Again, both accounts are morally acceptable to the dominant order because they are essentially personal experience. The only unacceptable account of lesbianism, one that provides a genuine challenge to the heteropatriarchal establishment, is the radical feminist one:

> The great achievement of the radical feminist lesbian account of lesbian identity is to alienate and disturb proponents of all other lesbian identities. This hostility is derived from the fact that this account of lesbian identity fails to explain and justify lesbianism in terms familiar and acceptable to the dominant order: instead it attacks that order, presenting lesbianism as an explicit threat to society (Kitzinger, 118-19).

Here, the women who give this account of themselves claim that their lesbianism is an active choice; they were not born lesbian, nor do they identify themselves as 'gay women'. They do not see themselves in alliance with 'gay men'.

Similarly, the Lesbian History Group in their book "Not a Passing Phase" (1989) insist that heterosexuality is neither 'normal' nor 'natural' sexuality; rather, it is culturally constructed in order to organise social relationships under male dominance. The group argues that:

> Heterosexuality, as an institution, not just a sexual preference, exists to subordinate women and wrest from them their physical and emotional energies for men's use. To create this political institution, women born with the capacity to relate emotionally and sexually to persons of either sex, are deliberately conditioned into heterosexuality by being deluged with heterosexual images and role models (lesbian images and models being systematically excluded or distorted), and by being taught that heterosexuality is normal and natural. This ensures that women as a rule 'fall in love' with and attach themselves to men. However, this socialisation does not always work (Lesbian History Group, 13)

This is also saying that in order to enforce heterosexuality, lesbians have to be pathologised and criminalised by male supremacy. Lesbian feminists refute these views and believe that becoming a lesbian is a political choice; a commitment to be with women.

HISTORY OF LOVE BETWEEN WOMEN

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, lesbian and feminist historians such as Caroll Smith-Rosenberg and Lillian Faderman focused their interest on women's passionate friendships and traced these relationships from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, using a variety of novels, letters and diaries of middle-class women in America and Europe.[6] In her essay "The Female World of Love and Ritual" Smith-Rosenberg shows that middle-class women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who indulged in romantic same-sex love did so with social approval. She explains that such relationships between women were necessary and approved by men because they helped women who were going through a difficult period of adjustment in heterosexual marriages.[7]

In "Surpassing The Love of Men," Faderman traces the changes in society's attitudes towards lesbianism - as an encouraged source of intimate confidantes; as idealized romantic friendships, and as lesbian-feminists' (first-wave feminism) redefinition of the meaning of love between women. However, she finds that same-sex relationships between women came to be seen in the late nineteenth century as a threat as women began to challenge male dominance with the changes in social and economic circumstances which permitted middle-class women the possibility of living and working independently outside the structures of heterosexuality. This change in society's attitude, argues Faderman, was also due to the publication of French

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[6] See Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America', in N.F. Cott and E.H. Pleck (eds), *A* "Heritage of Her Own" (1979), pp.311-342; and Lillian Faderman, "Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present" (1981).

[7] Smith-Rosenberg does not underestimate the importance of passionate friendships. She explains that women "lived in emotional proximity to each other. Friendships and intimacies followed the biological ebb and flow of women's lives. Marriage and pregnancy, childbirth and weaning, sickness and death involved physical and psychic trauma which comfort and sympathy made easier to bear. Intense bonds of love and intimacy bound together those women who, offering each other aid and sympathy, shared such stressful moments." See Smith-Rosenberg, p.328.

pornographic novels, the development of anti-feminism, and the sexologists' 'discovery' of lesbianism as a disease. Faderman and Smith-Rosenberg sees the sexologists as playing a major role in discouraging and stigmatizing passionate emotional involvement between women by classifying and categorizing female homosexuality and passionate friendships as an abnormal form of sexuality. Another lesbian and feminist historian, Sheila Jeffreys, concurs with Smith-Rosenberg and Faderman in criticising the sexologists for considering "homosexuality as innate" (Henry Havelock Ellis); as "a hereditary taint" and unchangeable (Richard von Kraft-Ebing); as the practice of "a third or intermediate sex" (Edward Carpenter); and as "a result of childhood trauma" (the work of psychoanalysts from Sigmund Freud onwards) in her historical review of feminism and sexuality in 'Women's Friendship and Lesbianism'.[8]

Faderman details the attempts of the sexologist Havelock Ellis and the psychoanalyst Freud to explain the same-sex inclination in women. She summarizes Ellis's findings concerning sexual inversion in women: he believed that it "was due to 'cerebral anomalies', that it was the sign of 'an inherited diseased condition of the central nervous system' and a 'functional sign of degeneration'" which "he consistently referred to as 'taint'"[9]; she adds that this belief has been most influential on the popular view of homosexuality derived from works written in English (Faderman 1981). As a result of Ellis's view, asserts Faderman, women who were independent, assertive, and showed feminist tendencies came to be associated with lesbianism; such qualities of women in the 1890s prefigure those condemned in early twentieth century Britain (Faderman 1981). In 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman' (1999) Freud theorizes a sixteen-year-old girl's desire for an older woman as a masculine attribute and combines his discussion of her penis envy with feminism:

> As a schoolgirl she was for a long time in love with a strict and unapproachable mistress, obviously a mother-substitute.[...] From very early years, therefore, her libido had flowed into two streams, the one on the surface being one that we may unhesitatingly designate homosexual. This latter was probably a direct and unchanged continuation of an infantile mother-fixation.[...]The analysis showed, further, that the girl had brought along with her from childhood a strongly marked "masculinity complex." A spirited girl, always ready for romping and fighting, she was not at all prepared to be second to her slightly older brother; after inspecting his genital organs she has developed a pronounced envy for the penis, and the thoughts derived from this continued to fill her mind. She was in fact a feminist; she felt it to be unjust that girls should not enjoy the same freedom as boys and rebelled against the lot of women in general (Lesser and Schoenberg, 1999:29).

Faderman argues that Freud, insisting on the masculinity of homosexual desire in woman, has failed to conclude that it is not the 'penis' that the young girl is envious of, but male freedom and what the penis signifies in her society" (Faderman 1981). Freud's explanation suggests that female homosexuality is not a "normal path" to womanhood; it is a complex to be overcome. Unlike the hysteric, who is still tolerated by society because she is not a threat to the family as an institution, the woman with a 'masculinity complex' is dangerous because of her rejection of patriarchal marriage or relationships with men. In her chapter on 'The Spread of Medical Knowledge' Faderman points out that many medical men continue to believe that noncongenital homosexuality may be cured and converted to heterosexuality, that love between members of the same sex is "a psychic disease and is curable by psychic treatment", and that most homosexuals suffer from some form of neurosis" (Faderman 1981).

Faderman gives the example of Radclyffe Hall's "The Well of Loneliness" to explain the popular application of the sexologists' definition in literary works (1920s): the heroine of the story is a 'masculine invert' (following Ellis's definition), suggesting an unchangeable congenital trait. By adopting this sexological explanation, says Faderman, lesbian identity is

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[8] Jeffreys, 'Women's Friendships and Lesbianism', "The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality" 1880-1930 (1985: 112). See also Jeffreys, 'The Creation of Sexual Difference' in "The Lesbian Heresay: A Feminist Perspectives on the Lesbian Sexual Revolution" (1994: 1-19).

[9] Quoted in Faderman, p.241.

able to receive some measure of public sympathy and tolerance as it is a genetic flaw and cannot be avoided. However, she still condemns sexology for categorizing lesbianism as a form of congenital perversion because as a result:

> [...]many women fled into heterosexual marriage or developed great self-loathing or self-pity if they accepted the label of 'invert'. By the early twentieth century, European popular literature, influenced largely by the sexologists, was referring to 'thousands of unhappy beings' who 'experience the tragedy of inversion in their lives,' and to passions which 'end in madness or suicide.' In the popular imagination, love between women was becoming identified with disease, insanity, and tragedy. It soon become a condition for which women were advised to visit a doctor and have both a physical and mental examination (Faderman, 252).

As a lesbian feminist, Faderman sees this sexual categorization of lesbians as negative because it constitutes a form of social control imposed on women who love women and destructive of solidarity between women.

Another influential notion derived from sexology is that of role-playing by lesbian couples. Faderman cites an example from Freud's "The Sexual Aberrations" where he distinguishes 'the active invert' ("butch") from the 'passive' ("femme") (Faderman 1981). She adds that Radclyffe Hall seems to use only these two types of lesbians in her work but explains that neither Hall nor Freud were aware of the influence of social roles in a patriarchal culture, which some lesbians relationships were imitating because these were "the only examples of domestic situations available to them [...], that they often felt compelled to force themselves into these roles and did not assume them by inborn or trauma-acquired impulses" (Faderman 1981). What Faderman is saying is that lesbian feminists reject the sexologists' categorization of lesbianism as perverse, evil or sick, and do not adopt either the appearance or attitudes of men or heterosexual role-play because lesbians are 'women-identified', women who give "their energy and commitment to women's interests" rather than to men's.[10] It is in this context of a lesbian feminist stance that Daniels' play "Neaptide" was written, reflecting her critiques of sexology and psychoanalysis which fail to give an adequate and unpejorative explanation of lesbianism, and insisting on the importance of 'coming out' and being proud that one is a lesbian.

Staging of Love between Women

"Neaptide" was first performed in 1986 at one of the most prestigious venues in Britain, the Cottesloe in the Royal National Theatre, London. According to Sandra Freeman (1997), writing on lesbian theatre, it is the only lesbian play "to have been performed there before or since" (158). In "Neaptide," Daniels' critiques of the negative images associated with lesbianism throughout the play reveal pronounced affinities with Faderman's ideas. Daniels uses the setting of an all-girls school to illustrate socially unacceptable, passionate and sensual relationships between women in 1980s Britain and depict the 'coming out' of a young lesbian teacher, Claire, to her colleagues. While in her other plays "The Devil's Gateway" and "Ripen Our Darkness" Daniels confines lesbian relationships to minor sub-plots in each play, in "Neaptide," Claire's coming out and the repercussions it entails in her life constitute the main story line. Here, the right to be a lesbian is championed by three generations of women, represented by Diane, a seventeen-year-old schoolgirl, Claire herself, and Bea, the headmistress, who is in her fifties. The two older women's lesbian consciousness is triggered by Diane's boldness and fighting spirit. She sets an example for them by disclosing her sexuality in school even under the threat of expulsion.[11] At the core of this central plot is Claire's struggle with her ex-husband, Lawrence, for the custody of their seven-year-old daughter Poppy. Claire, who has no current lover and shares a flat with her heterosexual friend Jean, pretends to be a 'normal' woman and remains 'in the closet' to secure a favourable verdict from the court. By doing so, Claire can deny her sexuality and remain 'safe' in her silence.

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[10] Faderman, p.377. The term 'women-identified' was coined by New York Radicalesbians in their May 1970 essay "Woman-Identified-Woman". See "Lesbians Speak Out" (1974: 87-89). See also Hoagland and Penelope (eds), "For Lesbians Only: A Separatist Anthology" (1988: 17-22).

[11] I have used the term 'lesbian consciousness' in a loose sense to designate the character's realization and acceptance of her true nature of sexuality and also her 'coming out' to the public or other people.

Jeffrey Weeks' explanation of 'coming out' illuminates the importance of sexual revelation among gays and lesbians. He suggests in "Coming Out" (1977), that there are three important stages of sexual revelation: first is coming out to oneself, accepting one's own "homosexual personality and needs"; second is coming out to other "homosexuals, expressing those needs in a gay community and in relationships"; and finally, "and most crucially, it means coming out to other people, declaring, even asserting, [one's] sexual identity" to everyone (192). Therefore, it is clear that coming out to the public is the most important stage in which lesbians (or homosexuals) assert their identity and practise their sexuality despite social prejudice. In "Neaptide," the concern with coming out involves the three women mentioned earlier. Diane is openly comfortable with her lesbianism and wants everyone to know of her sexuality; Claire does not want to reveal her sexuality for fear of losing her pending custody trial for her daughter; and Bea is a successful professional woman and sees no point in jeopardising her career by revealing her lesbianism. However, as the play proceeds, Claire and Bea gradually change their minds about behaving according to their principles. In Scenes Four and Five (Part One), Daniels dramatizes the lesbian crisis in the school with the discovery of the deviant sexual behaviour of Diane and another sixth-former, Terri; the two girls are caught kissing in the girls' cloakroom. This incident triggers the display of homophobia by the teachers in the staff room as they gossip about Diane, who is also suspected of writing "[the] phone number for [...] gay switchboard" (262)[12] on the toilet wall. While the other teachers voice their prejudices against lesbianism, Claire, who is also in the room, initially pretends not to hear and hides behind a newspaper. However, later, feeling rather irritated and disgusted, Claire attempts to defend the girls (unsuccessfully) by saying that kissing between women is "natural" when it is "for comfort"(265). Another teacher, Linda, the games mistress, who is later revealed as a closeted lesbian, also tries to defend the girls by saying: "I practically had to prize Terri off one of the boys from Drylands Park on the playing field this afternoon"(265). In both scenes Daniels' intention is twofold: to reveal some of the stereotyped prejudices regarding lesbianism in 1980s Britain, and to portray Claire's oppression as a closeted lesbian trying to cope with her colleagues' prejudice. Her colleague Annette says, "It's the parents I feel sorry for"(265); Marion is adamant that she will not tolerate any lesbianism in the school because "it's certainly not the age of perversity. Not in this school anyway. We must be on guard for hanky-panky or horseplay"(262); and Roger remarks that such girls are "bent genes"(265) in the family tree, and that "it only affects women who can't get men"(266).

Daniels' critique of the negative stereotyping of 'butch' and 'femme' role-playing in lesbianism is implied in Diane's relationship with Terri; more hostility is shown towards Diane because she, being more aggressive and masculine in appearance, is assumed to take the role of "butch"(262) lesbian, as opposed to 'femme', signifying that she is usurping the role of the male. As Faderman observes, "it was not the sexual aspect of lesbianism as much as the attempted usurpation of male prerogative by women who behaved like men that many societies appeared to find most disturbing" (Faderman, 17). Terri, who is viewed as "quite attractive"(264) or 'femme' is not seen as threatening because she plays the feminine role, to be easily seduced and lured into lesbianism by the "hermaphrodite" (286) Diane. This scene illustrates Daniels' lesbian feminist stance, from which she critiques society's use of heterosexual role-play to stigmatize lesbians.

As the play progresses Daniels indicates that Claire has become increasingly sensitive towards the verbal abuse hurled at her lesbian students and her conscience will no longer allow her to remain silent, as we shall soon see. In Scene Six (Part One) the two girls, Terri and Diane, are summoned by Bea for interrogation about their sexual misdemeanour. While Terri denies the accusations by supplying evidence that she is heterosexual, Diane boldly declares that she is a lesbian. Bea lets Terri go but orders Diane to remain silent about her sexuality, or face expulsion from the school. After reprimanding Diane, Bea promotes Claire to acting deputy head. Her first task as Bea's deputy is to handle the case of the "sexual perverts"(272) in the school. Claire suggests that Diane should be sent for counselling

[12] This page number and all the subsequent page numbers for Daniels' text refer to "Neaptide" in Sarah Daniels, *Plays:One* (1991).

to a qualified Educational Psychologist, Jean Boyd (Claire's housemate). Later that same day, Claire explains the situation to Jean and asks if she would agree to counsel the girl. Jean agrees but advises Claire not to reveal her sexual identity in order to protect the girls, to which Claire replies: "Throughout the day I invalidated myself three times" (276). Here, Daniels is indicating Claire's first pricklings of conscience at not being her true lesbian self.

Claire's conscience becomes increasingly troubled when she is given another task: to discover if there are any other lesbian girls and take disciplinary action. As the new deputy head, Claire is pressured to conform to the norms of the establishment and play her part in denying the girls' right to choose their sexual identity. She offers to read a declaration (obviously Diane's) in the school magazine to the other teachers in Scene Nine (Part One):

> CLAIRE (*reads*). Women should never again have to apologize for loving each other. How natural is it to spend your life in service to a man? When I deny through silence I am only reinforcing my isolation. I am a lesbian and I am not alone(287).

Here, Diane is appealing to other lesbian schoolgirls to 'come out' too and not to suffer in "isolation", stressing that concealing one's sexuality is painful and that those who remain silent cannot hope for emotional support from others. Another anonymous article, a tirade condemning the school, is equally provocative and confrontational:

> MARION (*reads*). It is about time the education system recognized the hypocrisy it transmits while trying to be liberal in its purporting to care for the individual. Its liberalism is total reactionary rubbish and sexist crap. We are not allowed freedom of choice over our sexuality, which if it is different to that as suggested by the hierarchy of this establishment, is evil. We have a right to our identity and we are not going to be silenced by a smack in the gob from this fascist, poxy school(288).

Diane's boldness in publishing her confession of lesbianism, and the other article attacking the school's biased policy drive Bea to draconian measures in order to control the outbreak of lesbian sexuality. To curb the "epidemic"(298) of lesbianism Bea instructs the teachers to catch and "send every girl in the school who could possibly be a [lesbian]"(291) to her for punishment. Bea's attitude here indicates how far removed the attitudes of the 1980s are from the acceptance by earlier times that love between two women could be asexual, "considered noble and virtuous in every way", and even thought to be of help to train a woman in love which could later be redirected to a man, as noted by Faderman (Faderman, 16), At this point, when asked by Bea whether she approves of the latest lesbian revolts, Claire's immediate response is still to hide her real sexuality and pretend to condemn the magazine articles: "No. (*Slight pause.*) I mean...it's dreadful, disgraceful, disgusting"(288), said awkwardly and untruthfully (indicated by the pause and ellipse in her sentence when answering Bea's question).

Finally, Claire's confrontation with her student Diane in Scene Eleven (Part One) represents a turning point in her attitude towards her own sexuality. Initially she is angry with Diane for "coming out" and urges her to be silent (Marion is eavesdropping):

> CLAIRE: (*noticing* MARION and *talking more softly*). Try to be...
> DIANE: (*angry*). No. I'm not going to try to be anything, least of all forcing myself to act normal. I hate the word, normal is a lie. You're always on about change, well I don't know about you, but I intend to change things.
>
> Exit MARION.
>
> CLAIRE: Standing in the dole queue won't change much. The only way to change the system is from within.
> DIANE: (*flatly*). Cop out.
> CLAIRE: You think so?
> DIANE: Every day making another compromise until you become so demoralized you hate yourself. (*Long pause.*) What about all those thousands of women who were burnt as witches? It was you who told us that it was because they were independent and men were frightened of them. (*Silence.* CLAIRE *still doesn't respond*). What are you thinking?
> CLAIRE: Something stupid, like how nice to be seventeen when the only dirty word is 'compromise' (295-96).

Diane's determination to deal with her lesbianism in a confrontational way makes sense to Claire. It leaves her thinking hard about herself as a teacher who preaches about "change" but does not allow change in herself.

As a result of her confrontation with Diane, Claire decides to "come out" in Bea's office; the headmistress' reaction is one of shock and disbelief:

BEA. Hell fire, it's an endemic. (*Then.*) No, no, you can't be, you're married and ...
CLAIRE. Divorced. Don't you mean epidemic?
BEA. And you've got a little girl. What nonsense. I know what I mean, it's your vocabulary that's flagging.
CLAIRE. I left my husband to live with a woman. Anyway, it's not a disease of any description (297-98).

Claire's confession triggers Bea's disclosure of her own lesbianism but she urges Claire not to reveal her sexual orientation for the sake of their careers. Bea warns Claire that if she were to reveal herself, there would be only one option left for her; that is, to resign. Failing to persuade Bea to see things her way, Claire demands that Bea sack her and refuses to tender her resignation. Daniels' depiction of lesbianism as an "epidemic" echoes the 1920s' anxiety about the spread of lesbian "disease", the fear of women leaving their heterosexual marriages for lesbian relationships (Jeffreys, 120).

Claire's 'coming out' is strongly opposed by both Linda (Claire's colleague) and Jean (Claire's housemate). In Scene Two (Part Two) Linda admits that she is also a lesbian but disagrees with Claire's decision to "crucify" herself by revealing her sexuality because she herself, especially as she is games mistress - "I can see them in the shower for Christsake" (306) - would not be able to cope with the shame and humiliation that would follow her coming out and adds: "besides it would kill my mother"(306). Similarly, Jean discourages Claire from revealing her sexuality:

JEAN: For God's sake, Claire, compromise your principles.
CLAIRE: It's not a principle we're talking about. It's me. And what do you think I've done. I've compromised myself so much I've lied my way out of existence.
JEAN: Then why wreck it over some headstrong schoolgirl who probably wouldn't bother to turn around to thank you?
CLAIRE: (*furious*). Wreck it? Wreck what? Something I've got very little hope of and absolutely no control over when the system dictates the outcome before the ushers clapped eyes on you. When welfare officers write down the names of books with the word 'woman' in the title and incriminate you. To be humiliated and ridiculed by a group of men and to gradually believe that the only thing that would change them is a bullet through the head. What sort of world is it where I have to plead for my own daughter? (314)

Here Claire realizes that she is no longer able to compromise. She has become a lesbian-feminist who must condemn patriarchal society and its law where "a group of men" set the rules, where she has to "plead" for her own daughter. As Faderman says, "[e]ven if they do not suffer personally - if they do not lose their children in court or if they are not fired from their jobs or turned out by their families because of their political-sexual commitments - lesbian-feminists are furious, knowing that such possibilities exist and that many women do suffer for choosing to love other women" (Faderman, 413). Daniels makes it clear that Claire's emotional distress is not caused by her identity as a lesbian, but rather by her own hypocrisy ("I've lied my way out of existence", 314); her guilty conscience for not doing enough to help her lesbian student in trouble ("I was beginning to feel very guilty about being a Judas", 305); and by the threatened loss of her daughter ("What sort of world is it where I have to plead for my own daughter?", (314). Claire's anger is even more aggravated when Roger, who knows about her personal background and pending custody case, approaches her and offers "to say on oath in court"(307) that they are having a heterosexual relationship to counter her ex-husband Lawrence's accusations, but in return for his help Roger wants his reward - to "consummate" (307) their relationship.

Towards the end of the play (Part Two, Scenes Four and Five) Daniels dramatizes the coming together of lesbians to help each other. For example, Diane and Terri join forces to help their teacher, Claire, with her fight for custody by personally appealing to Bea at her house. While there the girls accidentally discover that Bea is also a lesbian, living with her lover Florrie. Armed with this new information, the girls bargain for a lighter punishment for themselves and also request Bea to "testify for Mrs. Anderson [Claire]"(323) in court; Bea agrees to testify and rules out the expulsion of Diane. Finally, in Part Two, Scene Five, Daniels shows a scene outside the courtroom, where Bea has come to support Claire:

BEA. I'm here to offer what support I can.
CLAIRE. Thank you. (*Pause.*) And what of Diane *et al*?
BEA. I'm still negotiating with them. Oh, absolutely no question of expulsion. We are simply haggling over the new section of the history syllabus. But I'm very much hoping for a settlement on the word 'spinsters'. But first things first. I've explained to your barrister that should it be necessary I will testify to the fact that you are my deputy and an excellent teacher.
CLAIRE. Thank you.
BEA. Whatever else, I do understand about loss especially when it can go unrecognized or without a glimmer of sympathy from those around you.
CLAIRE. I've got a lot on my side, a good home and career and, if I say so myself, I'm a very good mother.
BEA. You're not going to be judged on the quality of your parenting but on the basis of your sexuality (324).

Claire is too optimistic about the court hearing and Bea reminds her that it is her "sexuality" which is on trial now, not her other attributes. Also in this scene Daniels shows Lawrence's barrister confiding in him that the verdict is a "foregone conclusion" because "Everything's in [his] favour" and promises him that they "will have dismantled every right she[Claire] thought was hers"(324). Despite this portrayal of the conspiracy between the law and patriarchy against lesbianism, Daniels still promotes 'coming out of the closet' as a positive choice for the lesbians in her play: the two schoolgirls achieve liberation by refusing to hide their sexuality and their actions raise the consciousness of the two older women, giving them the courage to stand up for their right to practise a sexuality which is denied by society.

In "Neaptide," besides the dramatization of lesbianism, Daniels also turns to myth and legend to convey a close and yet ambivalent relationship, the mother-daughter dyad, which has received a good deal of attention in recent feminist and psychological theory on both sides of the Atlantic.[13] The use of mythical figures may be seen in Daniels' play "Ripen Our Darkness" where Mary represents the image of the submissive woman associated with the figure of the Virgin Mary; and in "Neaptide" the goddess Demeter represents the mother-figure who rebels against her separation from her daughter, Persephone. If in "The Devil's Gateway" and "Ripen Our Darkness" Daniels portrays brief mother-daughter relationships, in "Neaptide" the bond is given further attention, enhanced by the use of myth applied to a contemporary situation, and given a radical lesbian feminist slant to strengthen her victimized female characters.

To be able to make a connection between the Greek myth and Daniels' "Neaptide," a summary of the Demeter-Persephone story is necessary to enhance the reading (refer to Nini Herman, 1989). Persephone, Demeter's virgin daughter by Zeus, and her first born, was picking flowers in a field with her maiden friends (Athena and Artemis) when a beautiful narcissus flower caught her youthful eye. As she ran to pick up the flower, the earth opened at her feet. Hades, the middle-aged God of the Underworld, carried the maiden off to live with him in the realm of death. In rage and dark despair, the grieving mother turned wanderer to find her daughter. When the search proved unsuccessful she threatened to put an end to each and every growing thing, as was within her power as the Goddess of Life. All growth on earth then ceased, and Zeus was compelled to intervene. He sent his messenger to Hades to make the famous pact whereby Persephone was to divide her time between her husband and her mother. Before Persephone left her husband in the Underworld he gave her the fateful seeds of the pomegranate. As the fruit was cut, bright red juice was spilt like blood to symbolize that the girl was no longer a virgin. She had undergone a transformation. The seeds themselves represent unbreakable union, or marriage between man and wife. Hades also promised his wife that as his queen she should be mistress of her own domain and might rule however she wished. Mother and child were reunited but Demeter's happiness was shattered on hearing that her child had eaten the pomegranate seeds which her husband had offered her. Now her daughter would never belong to her as before. While they were together vegetation would grow, only to die back every year during their separation.

[13] See Nancy Chodorow, "Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender" (1978); Dorothy Dinnerstein, "The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World" (1987); Adrienne Rich, "Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution" (1977).

Although the abduction and rape of Persephone and the consequent loss of her mother is the main story line, the myth also shows that a daughter belongs to her mother first, her relationship to husband or child is secondary. This mother-daughter tie resembles Freud's preoedipal phase in infancy, where there is no room for the father in that dyadic embrace; the phallic mother is the sole caretaker and the source of nurturance for the child. While Persephone was returned for half the year to her mother, Athena, who sprang straight from the brow of her father, Zeus, in a second birth, armed like a man; Artemis had as a child asked her father to give her a bow and arrows in place of finery, became a hunter and remained chaste.[14]

In Daniels' version Demeter has four daughters: Psyche, Athena, Artemis and Persephone. Psyche becomes the Queen of Love after marrying Eros, the son of Aphrodite, and is doomed to love her husband "in ignorance" (308). Athena never returns home and proposes to Zeus that she should be reborn as a man, thus forgetting "her earthly female origins"(308). Artemis returns home and asks to be consecrated to the moon "so that no matter how far she'd have to wander, she would never forget, never betray"(308-9). Only Persephone, rescued from Hades, "belonged to her mother" because she is "Demeter's gift to herself"(239). As the play proceeds, the mythical figures become firmly connected to the characters in the play. For example, in Part One Scene Two, it is Poppy who points out that Joyce is Demeter; the grandfather, Sid, is Zeus; Val, the unhappy housewife, is Psyche; Sybil, who wanders far in America, is Athena; Claire, her divorced lesbian mother, is Artemis; and Poppy herself, who is about to be taken by her father for full child custody is Persephone. But Daniels' Joyce/ Demeter does not have the power over life of the goddess; she is just an ordinary mother with old-fashioned ideas, especially about sex, marriage, and sexual orientation. Yet, like the goddess, she manages to rescue her daughters: Claire from having her young daughter 'abducted' by the middle-aged Hades (Lawrence); and Val from her unhappy marriage to Eros (Colin) because both daughters belong to her; "neither husband nor child nor stranger would ever claim her [daughters] as his own"(239). Daniels uses the Demeter-Persephone myth, which offers a relatively happy ending and presents women as strong characters, rather "than Cinderella or *Sleeping Beauty*" (240); such stories of success and failure picture stereotypically obedient maidens who are kept in domestic slavery like Cinderella; tied to their spinning wheels or locked up in towers, and put to sleep for a hundred years like Sleeping Beauty.

As "Neaptide" opens, Val is already in a psychiatric ward for "plenty of rest"(235) with two male doctors discussing her state of mind as a female nurse hovers in the background. At the end of Scene One Joyce comes to visit Val and Daniels presents an image of an apparently superficial mother-daughter relationship. Through stage directions and the conversation between the two women Daniels shows that the mother is in a state of denial concerning her daughter's disorientated condition and her failure to cope with her married life:

> Enter JOYCE. She crosses to the bed, pulls up a chair and sits down very unconfidently.
>
> JOYCE: Hello love, how are you feeling? (*Pause.*) Don't worry about the boys, they're fine. We took them to playschool this morning. They were ever so good, no tears or nothing and I'll collect them for as long - (*She stops herself.*) - for as long as they want to go. (*Pause.*) Colin's rearranging his timetable at work so not to worry. He sends all his love. (*Pause.*) He's beside himself, I mean he's very concerned. Well, we all are, we all are. For you. That you get well, back to your old self. (*Finally.*) Have you got a message for him? (Silence.) Val?
>
> VAL: (*quietly*). Here I sit, mad as a hatter with nothing to do but either become madder and madder or else recover enough of my sanity to be allowed back to the world that drove me mad.
>
> JOYCE: (*shocked*). I don't think I can remember all that. What on earth possessed you to come out with a mouthful like that?
>
> VAL: I didn't say it.

[14] There are several versions of the myth. The one summarized by Phyllis Chesler is closest to Daniels' feminist interpretation of the myth.

JOYCE: (*gently, slightly patronisingly*). Oh, Val, who did then? The washstand?

VAL: Some woman years ago. I don't think there are any original states of mind left to reclaim.

JOYCE: (*sighs*). Val, love, this won't do. Now, I've brought you a clean nightie and two flannels (237).

As indicated in the stage directions, Joyce "sits down unconfidently" and the pauses between her initial sentences show that there is disconnection and awkwardness between mother and daughter. Val is obviously not listening to her mother and tries to reveal her state of mind by saying "Here I sit, mad as a hatter" but her words are dismissed "patronisingly" by Joyce as nonsensical. Both feel the need to hide the extent of their pain from each other, causing more anger and depression since nothing is achieved; Val's distress is increased by her mother's inability to talk openly and freely about her own anxieties as well as Val's, and to have any empathy with her daughter's pain. The mother here is "shocked" and refuses to believe that her daughter is on the brink of psychosis ("mad as a hatter").

In Scene Two Daniels provides more clues to Joyce's relationship with her daughters; this scene takes place two days prior to Val's hospitalization where the family celebrate Mother's Day at Claire's house. Joyce is clearly disappointed with the state of her three daughters' adult lives, although she denies it repeatedly:

CLAIRE: Mum, we've done all right. Everything considered. And we owe that to you.

JOYCE: (*to* CLAIRE). I've taken enough blame for everything. Don't start on me.

CLAIRE: Look Val and I went to university, neither you nor Dad went there. And we weren't pushed into it like loads of others. Mum, you were always saying don't get married like you did at nineteen and regret it.

JOYCE: Regret it? Regret it? What have I got to regret? I might have said don't get married at *sixteen*, but I didn't say don't get married at all or fornicate or emigrate or crack up or go the other way or whatever. My God, I wanted three daughters like the Brontes and I ended up with a family fit for a Channel Four documentary. Regrets, me? It's you lot that should have regrets (247).

Joyce criticizes Jean (Claire's heterosexual housemate) who is an unmarried mother and indulges in "fornication"; Sybil for emigrating to New York; Val for "cracking up"; and Claire for being a lesbian or "going the other way". In fact, Joyce is a mother who continues to deceive herself and her children by failing to recognize that her children lack the ability to be a phallic mother like her, an omnipotent maternal figure who can cope with everything. She is able to care for all her offspring and also maintains a good marriage with her husband. Here, Daniels is saying that a heterosexual mother expects her daughters to experience the same life that she has gone through - the experience of getting married, having children and caring for the family; and that no other life is considered possible. The mother can only offer 'demure' literary figures like the Brontes, who, she thinks, were stereotypical Victorian daughters, as ideal role models for her children. She sees her daughters as extensions of herself and is incapable of conceiving otherwise. While Joyce chooses to confront Claire openly, with Val, on the other hand, she seems to avoid direct engagement with her daughter's feelings of pain, despair and bitterness, shown by her refusal to discuss Val's illness truthfully and openly. For example, when Claire asks how Val is doing Joyce interrupts, saying "just not been herself, right now...lately."(243-44) and discourages Claire from asking Val more intimate questions: "Now don't you start probing and upsetting everyone"(243-44). Then, when Val quietly says "One by one we all file on down the narrow aisles of pain alone"(244), Joyce hears her remarks but chooses "not to take this up"(244). And again, when Val remarks: "The distortion of abortion is a Catholic contortion from which I can only conceive that the Papist is a rapist."(245) in retaliation to Joyce's statement that "Val could have been a poet"(244), Joyce chooses to evade or deny Val's increasing state of depression and disorientation by saying "Well, you haven't been feeling very well lately, have you? No, no, we won't go into that now. Every day in every way getting better all the time. You look much better than when I last saw you. Doesn't she?"(245). Again, this shows that Joyce is unreceptive to Val's unconscious pleas for her to pick up the signals of her present deteriorating state of mind and not to let her slide into deeper depression. Much later, in Part One, Scene Seven, the

audience is informed by Joyce that she is not as close to Val as Claire is when she asks Claire to accompany her to Val's house (just before Val's self-harming and consequent hospitalization): "You get on with her so much better than me"(277).

Val's mental disorientation is observed by the other characters around her. She is described by Poppy as "crackers"(252); by Claire as "depressed"(252); by Jean as "unhappy"(277); and by Joyce as "crack[ed] up"(246). In Part One, Scene Eight Val's obvious disorientation is shown by her inability to cope with the stress of motherhood; she is too depressed to play with her children when they are left in her care. Colin is about to go to work when he sees his sons crying; Val sits in a state of distracted hopelessness indicated by the stage directions: "Val, helpless, sits, vaguely stroking their hair"(279). Later, after telling Colin: "I don't want to take responsibility for this relationship any longer"(280) - her husband is at a loss how to deal with Val's suffering; he is well-meaning but ineffectual and emotionally dependent - Val "goes over to the window and smashes her fists and arms through it"(280). Here, her self-destructive action is indicative of a person suffering from inner hysteria. But unlike Mary in "Ripen Our Darkness," who smashes her husband's toy army tank to release her overwhelming anger, Val's intense rage is primarily directed towards herself. Val's inner hysteria may be caused not only by her inability to be a 'normal' mother and wife, but also by her repressed feelings of insecurity in her relationship with her mother. Here it will be useful to return to Nancy Chodorow's theory of feminine oedipal configuration in order to explain Val's mental disintegration. According to Chodorow:

> [A] girl's libidinal turning to her father [at the oedipal stage]is not at the expense of, or a substitute for, her attachment to her mother. Nor does a girl give up the internal relationship to her mother which is a product of her earlier development [at the preoedipal stage]. Instead, a girl develops important oedipal attachments to her mother as well as to her father. These attachments, and the way they are internalized, are built upon, and do not replace, her intense and exclusive preoedipal attachment to her mother and its internalized counterpart [the struggle for a sense of separation, identification, dependency, ambivalence]. If there is an absolute component to the change of object, it is at most a concentration on her father of a girl's genital, or erotic, cathexis. But a girl never gives up her mother as an internal or external love object, even if she does become heterosexual (Chodorow, 1978:127).

What can be inferred from Chodorow's psychoanalytic explanation is that a girl, even at the adult stage or after heterosexual marriage, is still unconsciously attached to her mother and remains in an ambivalent and incomplete heterosexual relationship with a father figure because he is only seen as the erotic object; but emotionally the mother is still the primary love object. Analogously, Val's mental breakdown may be read as resulting from her inability to have a complete emotional relationship with her husband; thus ambivalent feelings of hatred and love towards her mother arise because of her inner difficulty in accepting her separation from her mother (implied but not dramatized in the play). Val's state of mind is fully exposed through her monologue towards the end of Part Two, Scene Five. She recollects:

> I think now, that I knew I was getting ill, losing control. I remember when the boys were just babies and we lived in hard-to-let flats with the railway track running behind our block and lifting one of them up to see a train go past - it all seems so insignificant now. He was fascinated and as I held him I started to cry and repeat over and over 'This is a little person'. I felt happy and overwhelmingly sad at the same time. I don't know why and from then on it was like getting drunk.[...]like when you start to get drunk, you relax, tell yourself you can sober up in a minute, only you can't and when confronted with sober people you know you're losing ground, so you appear more drunk, not that you could appear sober if you wanted to anyway(325).

Clearly, her psychological problem, her symptoms of inner hysteria ("getting ill", "losing control", "losing ground") may be seen as reaching a crisis within the early mother-child relationship, as regressive and infantile, leading to psychological immaturity, self-destructiveness and passivity. As a girl child, Val accepts her castrated position, but instead of maintaining an attachment to a father figure (Colin), she prefers the lost preoedipal tie to her mother. Val has not been able to accept her motherhood after having had her twin sons ("I felt happy and overwhelmingly sad at the same time") because she herself has unconsciously failed to see herself as separate from her mother. Being the first born, Val has not overcome her feelings of anger

and jealousy (at the post-oedipal stage) caused by the birth of two younger sisters. Thus, deprived of physical and emotional closeness to her mother, this sense of 'lack' is carried unconsciously into adult life and results in feelings of resentment, yet she craves intense motherly attention and love. It is her desire to re-create the intimate pre-oedipal mother-daughter bond. Val's hatred for her mother and jealousy of her two sisters is seen in clues provided by Daniels. For example, in Part One, Scene Two at the family gathering, Val seems very passive and quiet, and she is the only one who does not give present to her mother for Mother's Day; instead, she ridicules the celebration, saying without apparent emotion: "Hurray, hurray, it's Mother's Day"(244). While both Val and Claire went to university, Val gave up her studies in the "classics"(248) for marriage and children but obviously regrets her decision. To Val, there is nothing to celebrate in being a mother. Earlier, when her mother tells her daughters that she has received a Mother's Day card from Sybil, the youngest, Val becomes irritated and remarks: "Oh Sybil, Sybil, Sybil. What a name to call a child, don't dribble Sybil"(241); and later in Part One, Scene Ten, Val remarks to Claire: "You know, you were always her favourite"(294); such utterances indicate Val's resentment and jealousy of her mother's unequal division of affection between her and her younger sisters. It is apparent that the breakdown of communication between Joyce and Val has its roots in events long past. Val craves maternal love for herself and is bitterly resentful of her own maternal self-sacrifice, of having had to give up her education and career, her ambition and her peace of mind in order to marry and raise a family.

Unlike her relationship with Val, Joyce's relations with Claire are seen as more open and expressive, although initially friction is caused by the fact that Claire has been involved in a lesbian relationship; she left her husband for a woman. If Val suffers inner hysteria through her failure to meet the demands of motherhood within a patriarchal family and her unconscious incapacity to be separate from her mother, Claire, on the other hand, may be seen (in Freud's term) as suffering from a 'masculinity complex'. Val's hysterical illness is uncomprehendingly tolerated by her mother because she is not a threat to the family as an institution, but Claire poses a threat because of her total rejection of heterosexual relationships. Joyce feels utter abhorrence of Claire's sexual orientation and voices her pain, caused by the implications of her daughter's behaviour for her own life; her judgments are based on the values of the dominant culture which the mother has internalized (Part One, Scene Two):

JOYCE: Honestly. Have you no shame?
CLAIRE: (*slowly*). Will you stop picking on me.
JOYCE: Me? Me? Picking on you? Huh, I like that. It's usually only drunk and insane mothers who are considered unfit for parental control.
CLAIRE: Shut up.
VAL: Stop it. Stop it. Stop it.
JOYCE: There, look now, what you've done now. Look.
CLAIRE: I haven't upset anyone. If anyone's upset anyone...
JOYCE: What about me and my ties with her?
CLAIRE: (*shouts*). Drop it please (249).

Joyce is disgusted by the thought that her own flesh and blood, the person in her family with whom she identifies most closely, is a lesbian. She is shamed by the fact that lesbians as well as "drunk and insane mothers" are considered "unfit" to become parents. Despite this, the lack of inhibition of both Claire and Joyce in forcibly expressing their negative emotions without the fear of losing their connectedness shows not only their anger and disappointment, but also their deeper feelings of closeness and love. However, Joyce's generation's standards and challenges are obviously different from Claire's and there seems at this point to be no possibility of improvement in the mother-daughter relationship since neither of them is able to accept the validity of the other's experience and come to a compromise. In Part One, Scene Nine Joyce shows her distaste for Claire's divorce from Lawrence:

JOYCE: I'll never understand what came over you. He wasn't such a bad bloke. He might have had some weird ideas but then, let's face it, he wasn't the only one.
CLAIRE: (*angrily*). For Christ's sake don't start all that up now!(285).

Here, again, the mother and daughter seem to have nothing in common. Joyce disagrees with Claire's decision to leave her husband especially for a woman, and feels free to criticize her daughter for this although she knows that

Claire cannot bear it. In her eyes, Claire has destroyed her only chance of having a good and normal life.

Besides repeatedly hearing her mother's disapproval of her lesbianism, Claire also has to deal with her ex-husband, Lawrence, who has been humiliated by her leaving him and is unable to accept her for what she is. Lawrence is fighting for custody for their child Poppy; his case is based on Claire's 'abnormal' sexual orientation. He is confident that her lesbianism will be the deciding factor: "The sordid details are going to make you look unfit to have a goldfish bowl in your care"(253). Despite having married again, he later tries, in Part Two, Scene Three, to persuade Claire to go back to him:

CLAIRE. You know Poppy means everything to me You can keep anything, take anything, but not this, let me keep Poppy.
LAWRENCE. It's up to the courts to decide now.
CLAIRE (*with quiet dignity*). You can change your mind. Anything else, you can have anything else.
LAWRENCE. Can I have you back?
CLAIRE. Oh, Lawrence. That's impossible.
LAWRENCE. Well, then. Can't you see I have to go through with it?(312)

Daniels is saying that, at an individual level, men are particularly unable to come to terms with rejection when their spouses change their sexual orientation. Heterosexual (patriarchal) marriage is the only way of life that Lawrence is able to accept and glorify, but it is what both Val and Claire are escaping. Lawrence's behaviour may be read as that of the castrating father figure who attempts to break the preoedipal bonding, insisting on the transference of attachment from the mother to the father, thus demanding heterosexuality. But the girl child refuses to renounce her primary object of love, and maintains her attachment to the phallic mother.

Later in Part Two, Scene Three Daniels portrays the surprising change in Joyce's attitude towards her daughter; she arrives after consulting a lesbian solicitor regarding child custody. Initially, Claire is angry with her mother, thinking that she has come to criticize her again, but eventually Joyce manages to make it clear that she has taken steps to help Claire with her custody problem. The solicitor has advised Joyce that both Claire and Poppy should "skip the country"(318) and Joyce suggests they go to the United States of America. Although Joyce still cannot conceal her distaste for Claire's lesbianism, she will do what she can to prevent Poppy being taken away from her mother. To Daniels, Lawrence's decision to take Poppy is analogous to Persephone's rape by Hades, although Lawrence is supported by the law and has the approval of society. As we have seen, Joyce is fully aware that her daughter's sexual identity will be used to discriminate against her in the matter of the custody of her young child. Joyce says to Claire: "We have our differences - we'll probably have them until the day I die, but I do know this much, if we didn't have them, Lawrence wouldn't be able to use them to get back at you"(319), signifying that she has come to terms with Claire's sexuality and is able to accept her as she is. She also understands society's prejudice against her daughter, that "nobody cares what a good mother you are. All they care about is the other thing"(319) and urges Claire to accept the money she has brought but Claire refuses on the basis that "There are laws that would give them the power to bring us back"(319). Furthermore, Claire is determined to go through the court case to fight for her child in her own way:

CLAIRE: Look, once in court I can take that report apart and show it up for what it is.
JOYCE: (*agreeing*). I'm sure, I'm sure, and who will they believe? A lot rests on these people. No, look, it's taken me long enough to come round and I'm your mother so you're hardly going to persuade some Hooray Henry judge with a broom handle up his backside, to your way of thinking, not in an afternoon anyway.
CLAIRE: No, I won't give in. If there's one thing I've learnt from you it's stand my ground and fight.
JOYCE: And if there's one thing I didn't teach it was to sink. This time you're up to your neck in quicksand and wrenching your own head won't help. You need a hand - somebody else's. Before you say anything, Sybil said that.
CLAIRE: Typical Sybil line that is. It's not what I want.
JOYCE: I don't want it either but it seemed to me that only by letting go of the two of you could any sort of solution be found.
CLAIRE: Thank you, Mum, but I can't (320).

Joyce believes that to fight against a legal system that discriminates against homosexuality is to invite defeat: "only by letting go of the two

of you could any sort of solution be found"(320). However, Claire is determined to go through with the court case to convince the judge and the jurors that she is a capable mother with a good career and able to take care of her daughter like any 'normal' mother. Here, Daniels shows that lesbianism is unacceptable to patriarchal society and its law because it is a threat and a direct challenge to heterosexual family life.

Claire's close relationship with her daughter Poppy is also portrayed in some details by Daniels. Early in the play Claire is seen reading a bedtime story to Poppy, the Demeter-Persephone myth. Later, in Part Two, Scene One she has a heart-to-heart talk with her daughter regarding the struggle for custody. Claire tries to be as truthful as possible with Poppy and encourages her to make her own decision, contrary to Lawrence's accusation that she has "well and truly poisoned her[Poppy's] mind"(311). The fact that Lawrence tries to condemn Claire by calling her "a filthy pike"(301) makes Poppy reconsider their relationship: "I nearly forgot that I loved him"(301). Poppy is determined to stay with her mother because of her feelings of closeness to her, this is shown clearly in the following lines:

CLAIRE: And I left him when you were young and nobody ever asked you what you wanted.
POPPY: Huh, I was only a baby.
CLAIRE: Do you understand why all this happened?
POPPY: (*flatly*). No, I don't.
CLAIRE: (*smiles*). I mean what's happening?
POPPY: Dad is going to court because he wants me to live with him.
CLAIRE: Yes...
POPPY: But I've told everyone that I want to stay with you.
CLAIRE: And that's what I want - more than anything else - but other people are going to decide for us.
POPPY: Why? It's none of their blimming business.
CLAIRE: Because your Dad won't give in and neither will I.
POPPY: I don't know why they're bothering because I'm staying put. Nobody can make me go.
CLAIRE: What I'm trying to say is that we don't have the power to decide (302).

Here, Daniels illustrates the return to the preoedipal world. Poppy, who has loved her father, now renounces her connection with him completely and returns to her phallic mother, to the mother-daughter dyad exemplified in the Demeter-Persephone myth: "would ever claim her as his own"(239).

Towards the end of the play (Part Two, Scene Five) the outcome of the custody trial is announced to the audience: a "voice off" is heard declaring, "Custody, care and control are awarded to the natural father, Lawrence Anderson"(325), signifying Claire's loss of her daughter. But just after the audience hears of Claire's defeat, the final scene in the play reverses the sad ending: Val, in hospital, is given a note containing a telephone message from New York: "Poppy and Claire have arrived safely and Sybil sends her love"(327) and Joyce comes to take her home. The audience then sees and hears Lawrence, on another part of the stage, pounding on Claire's door and shouting: "For the last time, open this door, Claire"(328). This closing scene implies a happy ending for both daughters. Claire and Poppy have managed to escape from Lawrence, and Joyce and Val are shown leaving hand in hand, signifying that they are willing to reconnect as mother and daughter.

CONCLUSION

In "Neaptide" Daniels offers a positive future to her female protagonists: Val will recover from her 'hysteric condition' and Claire has to flee to the United States of America with her child to escape the custody order; both have been rescued by their mother, Joyce. Like Demeter, Joyce keeps her family together by delivering them from male domination: Val from her unhappy marriage with Colin, and Claire and Poppy from the devious and ruthless Lawrence. Daniels has improvised her version of the myth but as in the original, the daughter has to be temporarily separated from her mother in order to escape the oppressive patriarchal law. By revealing her sexuality Claire not only loses her custody case and her job; she also has to flee to another country in order to keep her daughter. Claire's coming out as a lesbian has entailed suffering and sacrifice. However, it is clear that Joyce has made the right decision to help both her daughters in her own way.

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