



Father and Daughter across Europe: The Journeys of Clara Wieck-Schumann and Artemisia Gentileschi in Fictionalised Biographies

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ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH

Fictionalised biographies of notable women artists have attained considerable popularity over the past fifteen years. The fictionalised biography constitutes an interesting hybrid genre, placed somewhat uncomfortably between historiography and the art of fiction, which permits it to disregard certain expectations raised by so-called “factual” biographies. As narratives that oscillate between two temporal levels, fictionalised biographies of historical women artists frequently make use of their narrative “privileges” to offer a distinct present-day view of the position of the protagonist as a ‘sexed’ subject located in the specific sex/gender system of her cultural and historical context.

This paper examines two novels, Janice Galloway’s *Clara* (2002) and Susan Vreeland’s *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002), which treat of the lives of nineteenth-century German pianist Clara Wieck-Schumann (1819–1896) and Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–c.1656). Both Schumann and Gentileschi were tutored by their fathers from an early age and made their mark as great European artists. Their art took them across the continent, where they met many famous historical figures.

This paper outlines the ways in which the two fictionalised biographies foreground gender aspects and make use of the narrative privileges of the genre to project contemporary feminist ideas onto historical characters and events. Furthermore, it explores the function of Schumann’s and Gentileschi’s journeys with regard to their personal development in the novels, highlighting how in the two narratives the various European locales feature as mirrors held up to the two women, changing their perception of their fathers and initiating, at the same time, a process of self-recognition.

ABSTRACT IN GERMAN

Fiktionale Biographien historischer Künstlerinnen erfuhren in den letzten fünfzehn Jahren einen erstaunlichen Popularitätsschub. Die fiktionale Biographie stellt ein interessantes Hybridgenre dar, das Elemente der literarischen Fiktion wie auch der Historiographie vereint und daher gewisse Privilegien gegenüber der „faktischen“ Biographie genießt. In Romanen über Künstlerinnen werden diese häufig dazu genutzt, eine moderne Kritik an der Position der Protagonistin als „sexed subject“ im jeweiligen Sex/Gender-System ihres kulturellen und historischen Kontextes vorzubringen.

Der vorliegende Aufsatz untersucht zwei Romane, Janice Galloways *Clara* (2002) und Susan Vreelands *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002), die das Leben der deutschen Pianistin Clara Wieck-Schumann (1819–1896) und der italienischen Barock-Malerin Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–ca.1656) erzählen. Beide Frauen wurden von klein auf von ihren Vätern unterrichtet und wurden später als bedeutsame Künstlerinnen in Europa bekannt. Durch ihre Kunst bereisten sie den europäischen Kontinent und trafen auf viele berühmte historische Persönlichkeiten.

Dieser Beitrag zeigt auf, wie die beiden fiktionalen Biographien Gender-Aspekte in den Vordergrund rücken und die narrativen Privilegien des Genres nutzen, um moderne feministische Ideen auf historische Figuren und Ereignisse zu projizieren. Darüber hinaus wird die Funktion der Reisen Wieck-Schumanns und Gentileschis hinsichtlich der persönlichen Entwicklung der Protagonistinnen untersucht, wobei die Darstellung europäischer Orte als Auslöser einer veränderten Selbstwahrnehmung der beiden Künstlerinnen besonders berücksichtigt wird.

Keywords: Clara Wieck-Schumann, Artemisia Gentileschi, biofiction, fictional biography, historical fiction, gender, Europe, travel

1. INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth-century German pianist Clara Wieck-Schumann (1819–1896) and Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–c.1656) were both tutored by their fathers from an early age and made their mark as great European artists. Their talent and art took them across the continent, where they met many famous historical figures. Their lives have not only been recorded in biographies but have also been retold in several novels – or “fictionalised biographies”.

Fictionalised biography constitutes an interesting hybrid genre, placed somewhat uncomfortably between historiography and the art of fiction, which permits it to disregard certain expectations raised by so-called

“factual” biographies. However, like its factual counterpart, it narrates historical characters and events from a present-day viewpoint, which means that it “oscillates between at least two temporal levels” and can thus be regarded as “a fictional medium for the narrative interpretation of temporal experience” (Nünning 1995, p. 107–9, my translation). With specific reference to fictionalised biographies of notable women artists, which have attained considerable popularity over the past fifteen years, this “double temporality” can be observed in the way that novels frequently offer a distinct present-day view of the position of the protagonist as a “sexed” subject located in the specific sex/gender system of her cultural and historical context.

Beginning with some general remarks on fictionalised biographies of “exemplary women”, this paper will then examine Janice Galloway’s *Clara* (2002) and Susan Vreeland’s *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002). Both novels capitalise on the complex father-daughter relationships that Clara Wieck-Schumann and Artemisia Gentileschi undoubtedly experienced and which offer ample ground for a critique of historical gender relations and hierarchies. The focus of the analysis will be on the heroines’ journeys in Europe and the function of these journeys as triggers of a changing perception of their fathers as well as themselves. The aim of this paper is thus twofold: it shall examine the ways in which two recent fictional rewritings of historical women artists’ lives foreground gender aspects and make use of the narrative privileges of fictionalised biography to project contemporary feminist ideas onto historical characters and events, and explore the function of the European locales featured in the novels with regard to the protagonists’ personal development.

2. FICTIONALISED BIOGRAPHY, BIOGRAPHICAL DESIRE, AND THE “EXEMPLARY WOMAN”

The notion of historiography and fiction as absolute opposites has long been called into question from both sides of this apparent divide: on the one hand, works of fiction may contain a wealth of meticulously researched historical “facts”. On the other hand, the view that a “factual” biography is “precisely referential of the person” the text aims to “reconstruct” has been derided as a “realist fallacy” (Stanley 1992, p. 8). Debates concerning the “narrativism” of historiography (as proposed, for instance, by Hayden White) and the postmodern doctrine of what Marie-Laure Ryan calls “panfictionality” (Ryan 1997, p. 165) have served to further blur the lines between historiography and fiction.

With reference to fictionalised biography, Annika J. Hagström draws attention to the similarities between biographers and writers of “serious

biofiction”, stating that both “aim at presenting their stories as plausible” and “interpret facts and sources” (Hagström 2009, p. 35). Furthermore, the relationship between fictional and “factual” biography as cultural practices can be viewed as reciprocal. While fictionalised biography often relies on the research of biographers, it also impacts back on “factual” biography. Readers of biofiction will often find their curiosity stimulated and may feel provoked to seek more “reliable knowledge” on the biographee, i.e. to “check on” the facts of a novel by consulting a more scholarly work and thereby giving new impetus also to the “factual” genre. Considering the similarities and close ties between fictional and “factual” biography, the two genres can be viewed as complimentary cultural practices within the domain of life-writing. This is also implied when Dennis Kersten cites fictionalisation and the “more overt use of novelistic techniques” as “the most significant developments in biography”. He notes that “innovations of this kind have contributed to the increased popularity of the genre, both with the general reading public and the academic world” (Kersten 2011, p. 19), thus treating biofiction as part of the overall practice of biography.

In her study on biofictions of Oscar Wilde, Lucia Krämer defines fictionalised biography (“*fiktionale Biographie*”¹) as a biographical work “whose contextual, paratextual, semantic, and textual elements on the whole suggest its classification as a fictional text, as they deviate from, and suspend, the conventions of scholarly biography” (p. 16, my translation). Thus, despite the affinities between historiography and fiction and the intertwined traditions of life-writing and novel-writing (Huber 1999, p. 94), “factual” and fictionalised biographies can be said to follow different conventions and raise different expectations in the reader. Scholarly biographies are said to be “inescapably wedded to a truth-telling programme” (Schlaeger 1995, p. 67), committed to verifiable documentation (Cohn 1990, p. 779) and the ideal of authorial objectivity and unambiguousness, and ideally contain no unmarked speculations (Krämer 2003, p. 49). As no such restrictions apply to fictionalised biography, the relationship between fact and fiction can thus be re-negotiated, following the author’s ideological inclination and the imaginative closure of historiographical gaps. Fiction writers can thus be said to enjoy greater freedom in representing, and appropriating, *their* subject, and it is not least the narrative privileges of fictionalised biographies which make them such a fascinating field of critical inquiry.

¹ The term “fictionalised biography” may principally encompass biographical novels and plays, like the term “biofictions”, defined by Martin Middeke as “fictional rewritings” (3). My use of the former follows Lucia Krämer’s conception of the genre as biographical works about historical persons written in the fictional mode (Krämer 2003, p. 16). However, while Krämer, like Ina Schabert (*In Quest of the Other Person*), speaks of “fiktionale Biographie”, I prefer the adjective “fictionalised”, as it signals more clearly a work’s allegiance to a historical person.

The noticeable popularity of biofiction in the English-speaking world (see, for example, Krämer 2003, p. 11) can be attributed not only to the pleasure of the “ontological scandal” caused by placing historical characters in fictional contexts (McHale 1987, p. 85), but also to a general “biographical desire essential to all human beings, the manifestation of an ineradicable subjectivity”, as Martin Middeke proposes, “especially in times when philosophy and the experience of the world around us suggest the death of the self” (Middeke 1999, p. 31–2). For Middeke, this biographical desire paradoxically underlies even the epistemologically destabilising tendencies of historiographic metafiction (p. 5). People’s fascination with the individual person, and particularly with the “exemplary” life, seems to have resisted postmodern attacks on the notion of consistent, verifiable personhood (see also Fetz 2009, p. 6). Biographer Hermione Lee even speaks of a “deep, almost religious passion for exemplary lives” (Lee 2006) in Anglo-American biography, which accounts for the undiminished popularity of the genre, thus highlighting its Plutarchian function of guidance.

In view of its exemplary function it is not surprising that biography has played a crucial role in twentieth-century feminist movements. Feminist biographers have been “restoring” women “to the record”, as Sara Alpern points out, bringing a new “gender consciousness” to a genre that was once a “men’s club”² (Alpern 1992, p. 5–7). With regard to biofiction specifically, Stephanie Kramer also sees an increased interest, on the part of writers, in the lives of women artists since the 1970s – particularly in Britain and the USA – as part of the feminist project of “reclaiming” neglected historical figures and thereby helping to establish a female line of tradition (Kramer 2000, p. 319, 332). Biographies – including fictionalised biographies – are thus envisioned as perlocutionary acts, with reference to Austin’s speech act theory: they do not only serve as instruments of canonisation, extending a person’s “afterlife” by adding them to a society’s cultural memory, but also constitute a social praxis that structures individual behaviour and generates “realities” (Dausien 1996, p. 4).³ They provide patterns of behaviour and models of female achievement (or failure) and thus have an impact on the construction of gender identity beyond the biographee’s life span (see also Zimmermann and Zimmermann 2005, p. 12). Accounts of the lives of women artists offer a particularly rich field of inquiry in this context as owing to the “exposed” social position of artists (Laferl and Tippner 2011, p. 7–8) and their reputation as pioneers of non-traditional lifestyles, such

² See also Marian and Ní Dhúill 2009 (p. 157), who note that the great majority of biographees *and* biographers are men. However, at a life-writing conference in 2007, biographer Claire Tomalin claimed that in fact the reverse is becoming true: that nowadays biography is increasingly perceived as “the thing women do” (qtd. in Fetz 2009, p. 158).

³ For a discussion of biography as a perlocutionary act, see also Fetz 2009, p. 33.

biographical narratives can offer a powerful conflict with historically specific ideals of femininity, as the following analysis shall demonstrate.

3. REWRITING CLARA AND FRIEDRICH WIECK

Schumann biographer Nancy B. Reich sums up Friedrich Wieck's role in the making of his daughter's outstanding career as follows:

Friedrich Wieck [...] was also the developer of her art and provider of the self-esteem that nourishes the artist. From the beginning, at a time when middle-class girls were expected to learn to tickle the piano keys prettily enough to amuse a husband but not to attract public attention, Wieck envisioned Clara as a musician – a great performer – and insisted that she could do anything a boy could do [...]. He quoted with pride Goethe's remark, "She plays with as much strength as six boys". (Reich 2001, p. 55)

Clara Wieck had played for Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1831 – when she was twelve years old – during her first international concert tour, which led her all the way from Leipzig to Paris. In Janice Galloway's novel *Clara*, the Paris tour underlines Wieck's vital role in fostering Clara's self-esteem:

He led her to pianos, his velvet-covered arm under hers solid as truth. And inside the cocoon of whispering snobbery, his voice had sounded good like the voice of God. *Artists are your own; be in awe of none. As for the rest? Remember that none of these sorts, no matter how much they think of themselves, not one of them can do what we can do.* (Galloway 2002, p. 95)

This passage demonstrates some of the privileges of fictionalised biographies vis-à-vis factual biographies: Galloway includes invented speech as well as invented thought in her novel. While Friedrich Wieck's speech can be said to at least reflect the style of the historical Wieck's letters, no source exists that would document Clara Wieck's thoughts. In the above passage, Clara's perception of her father and his authority – associating him with "truth" and "God" – serves to increase the height from which he will soon be falling in her esteem.

The use of the first-person plural – "what *we* can do" – indicates the stance Galloway's Wieck takes towards his daughter's talent: Clara is a project that he directs and controls. She is dependent on his management and constitutes his chief investment, a point which the novel drives home repeatedly. "He checked the top button of his daughter's coat to keep her warm, reminded her cancellations were costly"

(Galloway 2002, p. 132), the narrator notes when they tour northern Germany some time later.⁴ Even more strikingly, Galloway's Wieck later threatens to disinherit her when she intends to marry Robert Schumann, exclaiming, "[h]e will burden you with financial cares and ruin all *my* hopes!" (Galloway 2002, p. 145, my emphasis). The idea of Clara as an object of investment, as implied in Friedrich Wieck's imagined speech, distinctly echoes twentieth-century feminists' critique of patriarchal societies as denigrating women to the status of commodities. French philosopher and cultural theorist Luce Irigaray, for instance, postulates the absence of a female subject position in Western societies, claiming that women have always been associated with nature/unthinking matter and have been denied full subjectivity, featuring merely as mediators of male desire. In her influential work *This Sex Which Is Not One* she states that

the exchanges upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women, signs, commodities, and currency always pass from one man to another [...]. Woman exists only as an occasion for mediation, transaction, transition, transference, between man and his fellow man. (Irigaray 1985, p. 192–3)

In the above passages and later in the legal battle between Wieck and Schumann over Clara's fortune, Galloway's novel renders the asymmetrical gender relations of nineteenth-century Germany so conspicuous that it can be said to convey a critique of Clara's "objectification" in the spirit of late twentieth-century feminism.

Subsequently, the heroine's struggle to attain agency – i.e. to overcome her object-status – is emphasised. During the Paris tour, father and daughter are increasingly thrown upon each other for company due to their linguistic inadequacies and the nature of Parisian society, which they experience as snobbish and hostile. Despite Clara's reliance on Wieck's guidance and encouragement, the young girl begins to see her father in a different light in this foreign environment, as the following passage demonstrates:

He had told what he saw. But she had seen other things, things around the edges of his vision [...]. Many of them about Father himself. She had noticed his incredulity at the Paris protocols, his spluttering humiliation at being unable to afford the rate for the hotel found by Fechner [...]; the hateful

⁴ Reich notes, "most striking in Wieck's letters is his attitude towards Clara: she is discussed as though she were an object on display. He was concerned about her health – but largely because a canceled concert would cause great inconvenience" (p. 51).

French salons full of stuffed leopards and embroideries and paintings and peacock feathers and whispers that he never seemed to notice. She had heard the content of the whispers too, [...] And what they said! The father's infelicitous turns of speech, the passé colour of his coat, the not-quite fit of his yellow kid gloves. Lord, my dears, do you not pity her! Chopin thought him stupid, they said; Kalkbrenner thought him a buffoon and everyone in the world, it seemed, made fun. (Galloway 2002, p. 95)

Before setting out on their journey, Galloway's Friedrich Wieck refers to Paris as "the centre of the civilized world" (p. 81), which serves to underline, of course, the extent of Clara's achievement, and his own. During the Paris trip, Clara does not only develop a more critical view of her father, but she also begins to understand and appreciate this achievement and her own skills as an artist: "*Parisians*. The great, the good and the very rich indeed had looked her in the eye, and she had looked straight back, knowing she had something to give" (Galloway 2002, p. 97). Again, the fictionalised biography has to rely on conjecture when representing the heroine's consciousness, and this unmarked speculation – something which would not usually be found in "straight" biographies (see Krämer 2003, p. 49) – creates a vivid image of Clara's growing self-esteem.

Moreover, in the course of her concert tours, while Galloway's Friedrich Wieck is busy denigrating other European nations – passing judgment, for instance, on French morals and fashion, on Bohemian musical tastes and Viennese bureaucracy – Clara learns to enjoy her success. When she performs in Prague, Galloway's narrator notes that

she has never heard such Mozart or eaten such dumplings. She has never, never taken so many curtain calls. *More than Paganini*, her father crows, counting every one, *more than any man in this city!* [...] Now she learns something new. It lends power, this thing she can do. People *admire* it. (p. 143–4)

On her trip to Vienna in 1837, finally, Galloway's Clara observes that

applause in Dresden, in Berlin, even, is silence compared with this. They cheer, stamp their feet, raise their hands over their heads. [...] She focuses on individual faces, pairs of hands, the smiles tilted towards her. Then the noise is something else, something like warmth, like glory. She may stand under the snow of petals and laurel leaves, her white dress flickering in the limelight, and consent to be drowned in it. (Galloway 2002, p. 150)

The historical Clara's overwhelming success in Vienna also marked a turning point in one of the great romances of music history. After a secret courtship, composer Robert Schumann had asked Friedrich Wieck

for Clara's hand before the Vienna trip and had been rejected. During Clara's stay in Vienna, Nancy B. Reich notes,

a psychological separation from her father began to seem possible. [...] The Vienna press and public accorded her more recognition than she had ever received before; and though Wieck's letters still refer to "our concerts" and "our feelings," Clara was gaining an independent identity. (Reich 2001, p. 55–6)

In Janice Galloway's novel, the daughter's independence of mind is reflected in Clara's and Wieck's contrasting responses to her success in Vienna:

Poor Herr Wieck! He bawls like a baby and blasts his capacious nose into his handkerchief, has to sit for support. A foreigner, a Protestant, a *girl* – he had thought every fibre of Austrian tradition worked against it; yet there she is, Royal and Imperial Chamber Virtuosa to the Austrian Court, glittering with medals, and his own, entirely, wholly, legally and morally his own. (Galloway 2002, p. 154–5)

Clara Schumann's first biographer, Berthold Litzmann, notes that the honour bestowed upon Clara Wieck by the Austrian Court was truly exceptional considering the facts that she was (a) a foreigner, (b) a protestant, and (c) "too young" (Litzmann 1902, p. 191). "Too young" has thus been modified into "a girl" in Galloway's narrative, again adding a gender signal. Furthermore, the "bawling" Wieck's claim to ownership over his daughter is clearly ironised in the novel, which can again be regarded as a feminist comment. This modern critique of a nineteenth-century father-daughter relationship is advanced more forcefully here through the irony resonating from the figural discourse than could be achieved by a more "objective" narratorial statement as might be found in "factual" biographies such as Reich's.

The thoughts of Galloway's Clara, by contrast, are directed towards a future without her father, towards a life with Robert Schumann, which now seems within her reach:

In Vienna she could make 1000 *thalers* from only one concert a year. Further, the place is weighted down with showy pianos, a freshly minted bourgeoisie desperate to dose their daughters with elegant, home-enhancing skills. For him, a professorship at the conservatoire would bring in enough – she can organize it herself. [...] Her temperament, she decides, has become *Southern* and Vienna is *South*. (Galloway 2002, p. 155–6)

Thus, while Galloway's Wieck experiences his daughter's success in various European cities as a joint "German" triumph over other nations, for

Clara the favourable response of international audiences registers as a boost to her self-confidence that permits her to imagine a future independent of Friedrich Wieck and the masculine authority he embodies. Vienna marks the end of Clara's touring with her father.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the relationship between Friedrich and Clara Wieck was its simultaneous enacting and undermining of conventional gender relations, which finds an impressive reflection in Janice Galloway's novel. Friedrich Wieck encouraged his daughter to pursue a career as a performer that is decidedly "unwomanly" by the standards of his day. This is illustrated in the novel, for example, by the Wiecks' meeting with Professor Fischhof of the Vienna conservatoire, who gives his opinion on "Women of the Keyboard", ridiculing Austrian pianist Josepha Aurnhammer: "Fat as a cow and ugly as an udder. Haha. Pockmarked. For all that, Mozart himself was her encourager – and what ambition the woman had! Already unattractive, what did she care it put men off?" (Galloway 2002, p. 148). This misogynist comment underlines the ambiguity of Clara's position as a female concert pianist in the nineteenth century. It echoes Reich's statement that in Clara Schumann's day ambition and attracting public attention were regarded as undesirable in women (Reich 2001, p. 55), but the novel makes this point in cruder, more forceful terms through the speech of a character.

Galloway's Friedrich Wieck is shown to hold similar beliefs on the incompatibility of art and love for women, as can be seen from his response to a comment made by Felix Mendelssohn's fiancée: "Mlle Jeanrenaud laughed. [...] Lord, Felix! she said. Such a serious programme – and for a young woman! So much competence will only frighten young men away!" (Galloway 2002, p. 129), to which Wieck responds: "My daughter is an artist, Mademoiselle, not a woman of any sort. I tell you that you may remember. Pray that you do" (p. 130). Again, the novel strikes a modern feminist note here as Wieck pronounces "woman" and "artist" binary opposites.

In her influential essay "Sorties", feminist critic Hélène Cixous discusses the limiting effects of oppositional gender representations on women, pointing out how sexual difference has traditionally been conceived of as a set of hierarchical opposites:

Where is she?
 Activity/passivity
 Sun/Moon
 Culture/Nature
 Day/Night
 Father/Mother
 Head/Heart
 Intelligible/Palpable

Logos/Pathos

Form, convex, step, advance, semen, progress

Matter, concave, ground – where steps are taken, holding- and dumping-ground

Man.....

Woman (Cixous 1998, p. 578)

In this system of thought, woman is associated with passivity, nature, “the ground where steps are taken”. For Cixous, these binaries are therefore clearly hierarchized, creating unequal power structures that subordinate the feminine to the masculine, which is why she proposes to explode these dualisms in favour of a multiple, “bisexual” subject (p. 581).

From the above quoted dialogue between Galloway’s Friedrich Wieck and Mademoiselle Jeanrenaud, a further gendered opposition seems to emerge that Cixous does not directly mention: that of public and private. As a performing artist, Clara Wieck frequently displays her musical “competence” in public, which is apparently regarded as “unwomanly” by Mendelssohn’s fiancée,⁵ who implies that Clara Wieck’s disregard for normative feminine behaviour significantly mars her chances of finding a husband. Both Jeanrenaud’s exclamation and Friedrich Wieck’s response seem absurd when considered from a twenty-first century point of view. Thus Galloway’s narrative can be said to echo Cixous’s critique of dual hierarchical oppositions that relegate women to an inferior, passive position vis-à-vis their “active” male counterparts.

As Mademoiselle Jeanrenaud declares artistic competence and womanliness to be incompatible, Galloway’s Friedrich Wieck – although drawing the opposite conclusion – agrees with her indirectly. For him it follows that his daughter must suppress her “womanliness” in order to succeed as a pianist (“My daughter is an artist, Mademoiselle, not a woman of any sort”, Galloway 2002, p. 130). However, his role of sole decision-maker, his control of his daughter’s repertoire, her daily routines, her correspondence, and her income is founded not only on his status as a parent but also on her gender – on her socially and legally inferior status as a woman. In the novel, these complex gender dynamics emerge particularly during their journeys across Europe, which are set up as formative periods in Clara Wieck’s personal development.

⁵ Gender studies have thematised the complex relations of private and public life and of cultural production and less visible forms of work, pointing out how their socialization has traditionally engendered women’s understanding of themselves as relational beings and assigned their activities to the private sphere; see, for instance, Ní Dhúill 2009, p. 204.

4. REWRITING ARTEMISIA AND ORAZIO GENTILESCHI

While Clara Wieck-Schumann's life is relatively well recorded by surviving documents such as letters, diaries, and concert programmes, comparatively little is known about the movements of Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi. In a letter dated 3 July 1612, when Artemisia was about to turn nineteen, her father Orazio Gentileschi wrote to Dowager Grand Duchess Cristina di Lorena in Florence: "I find myself with a daughter and three sons, and this woman, it has pleased God, having been trained in the profession of painting, has in three years become so skilled that I can venture to say that today she has no peer" (Bissell 1999, p. 1). There are some conspicuous parallels between the lives of Artemisia Gentileschi and Clara Wieck-Schumann. Both women grew up among brothers, both were trained in their art from an early age by their fathers, and both managed to forge a successful, international career in a male-dominated field.

At the age of eighteen, Artemisia Gentileschi was raped by her father's colleague Agostino Tassi and became the subject of a famous rape trial in Rome, the records of which have survived. After the trial, in which Tassi was convicted but which also ruined Artemisia's reputation, her father married her off to a Florentine painter. The following decades saw Artemisia Gentileschi's development of an independent artistic identity. In 1638, presumably, she undertook the long journey from Naples to London, following the call of Charles I, who had repeatedly invited her to his court, and of her father, whose health was failing at the age of sixty-five. Orazio already worked as a court painter in the English capital and was in the middle of an ambitious project – decorating a ceiling in the Queen's House at Greenwich – for which he required his daughter's help. Historians assume that father and daughter had not seen each other for seventeen years before they worked shoulder to shoulder in London (Bissell 1999, p. 60). Orazio died in England in February 1639.

Little is known about the precise nature and extent of Orazio and Artemisia's collaboration in London, and thus Susan Vreeland's fictionalised biography *The Passion of Artemisia* takes considerable liberties to render their reunion on foreign soil. Vreeland's Artemisia has not forgiven her father for the public trial he exposed her to, nor for the fact that he befriended Agostino Tassi again once the trial was over. "Despite my fear of the passion that might boil up in me when I saw him, I felt pulled across the water by an invisible bloodline, a vein strong enough to tow the boat" (Vreeland 2002, p. 314), Artemisia notes on her way to England.

As can be seen, Vreeland's novel is written in first person,⁶ with the narrator Artemisia giving direct accounts of her thoughts and emotions. The way the novel narrates the events that gave rise to the bitterness Artemisia is feeling towards her father echoes Janice Galloway's critique of Clara Wieck's objectification. At the very beginning of the book, Artemisia notes,

The words of the indictment my father had sent to Pope Paul V rang in my ears: '*Agostino Tassi deflowered my daughter Artemisia and did carnal actions by force many times, acts that brought grave and enormous damage to me, Orazio Gentileschi, painter and citizen of Rome, the poor plaintiff, so that I could not sell her painting talent for so high a price*'. (Vreeland 2002, p. 1–2)

Artemisia's thoughts and speech in the novel are thus constructed to expose a patriarchal society's habit of treating women as the property of men, as objects that can be exchanged and "traded". An argument between Vreeland's Orazio and Artemisia on the subject of the trial makes this even clearer: "But it proves it, don't you see? The damages I claimed'. 'I am not a painting', I shouted. 'I'm a person! Your daughter'" (Vreeland 2002, p. 17). Vreeland's heroine is thus endowed with a rather modern feminist consciousness, unafraid of articulating and claiming subject status.

The England chapter in the novel emphasises the bewilderment Artemisia feels in the new and foreign surroundings once she has arrived:

'Is that the Queen's House?' I asked in the only language I knew. The steward stared at me, not comprehending. [...]
 I followed him down the gangplank and he showed the letter to a hackney driver, spilling out words I couldn't understand. [...]
 'Orazio Gentileschi? *Pittore italiano?*' I asked. He shook his head and directed the driver back to the brown palace near the river. [...]
 Somewhere in that wet stone building Father breathed and painted, but he could not see through walls. I could tell the driver to turn around. No one would know. I could go home, back to warmth and people I knew. (Vreeland 2002, p. 314–6)

Again, this internal point of view relies on imaginative speculation. The discomfort she experiences due to her incomprehension paves the way for a meeting of father and daughter that is very much framed in terms of a union of Southern Europeans in a hostile English environment:

⁶ Lucia Boldrini refers to fictionalised biographies in first person as "heterobiographies" (Boldrini 2004).

'The palace is so empty. Furniture and tapestries, but no people. Just a few servants and caretakers. You live here all the time so ... alone?'
 He closed his eyes, screwed up his face, lifted his chin.
 'What's the matter? Are you in pain?'
 'Just hearing Italian again.' He blew his nose on a rumpled handkerchief.
 (Vreeland 2002, p. 317)

What emerges from Vreeland's depiction of the reunion is Artemisia's feelings of pity for her father and his bleak existence, which seems to suggest that she perceives herself to be in a superior position. Subsequently, Orazio and Artemisia's shared language and nationality function to facilitate their reconciliation. When she inspects her father's project, Artemisia again notices the foreignness of the English palace, which "had none of the flourishes and ornamentation common in Roman or Florentine palaces" (p. 327). Orazio explains that "English taste is more conservative than ours" (p. 328), using the first person plural to lay claim to their shared identity. This union of two Italian painters against England culminates in a gesture of common rebellion against their patrons when they prime the canvases:

'Bene!' he shouted. 'Eccellente.' On the last canvas I painted an R.
 'Che meraviglia. There we have it! SPQR. The Senate and People of Rome.'
 Chuckling, he said, 'Under the English claim for Peace and the Arts is Rome, will always be Rome.'
 'The foundation,' I said.
 He kissed me on both cheeks. While we widened the letters until they filled in the canvas, he sang one of his Roman love songs. (Vreeland 2002, p. 333)

Eventually, the strong national tie between father and daughter leads Vreeland's Artemisia to recognize other similarities between them:

'There's been only painting, and Palmira. If I'd had a lover or a loving husband, there would have been something else – someone with whom to enjoy *la dolce vita*.'
 He bowed his head in thought. 'Only painting and a daughter,' he murmured.
 Like him, I suddenly realized. He'd had the same two. Only I had denied him the joy of one in a way Palmira had not denied me. We looked into each other's eyes at the same instant, both of us awash with sorrow and recognition, seeing each other face to face. I felt the cords of connection tighten.
 'I am my father's daughter'. (p. 330)

This passage demonstrates well the power of fictionalised biographies to lend emotional colouring to the lives of their subjects. It capitalizes on the dearth of historical documentation by adding imagined dialogues and

thoughts that create emotional tension. It is another fine example of the tendency of contemporary fictionalised biography to project twentieth-century sensibilities onto the depiction of historical figures: the above scene can easily be imagined as a climactic moment in a Hollywood-style dramatization of Artemisia's life. The novel thus confirms Ansgar Nünning's claim that historical fiction "oscillates between at least two temporal levels" (p. 107, my translation).

In the end, Vreeland's Artemisia finds it in herself to forgive her father. Significantly, this change of heart takes place after many years of avoiding Orazio. She first needed to develop an independent identity and profile as an artist, to dissociate herself from her father's artistic and familial authority, before she is finally able to come face to face with him on equal terms, as a famous artist in her own right. Her journey to England constitutes the culmination of her personal growth in terms of her shifting perception not only of Orazio but also of herself, prompted by the experience of their joint foreignness in England.

5. CONCLUSION

The lives of both Clara Wieck-Schumann and Artemisia Gentileschi were marked by extra-ordinary father-daughter relationships, which have found ample treatment in Janice Galloway's novel *Clara* and Susan Vreeland's *The Passion of Artemisia*. Both novels draw a multifaceted portrait of the father as nurturer and mentor, but also as a figure of masculine authority and domination. The two fictionalised biographies construct each artist's journeys across the European continent as significant turning points not only in their careers but also in their relationships with their fathers and their self-perception. While Galloway's Clara Wieck arrives at a more critical view of her father, gains a sense of her own worth as an artist in the face of her international success, and develops an increasing independence of mind, Vreeland's Artemisia defies her father's treatment of her as a commodity and launches an independent career. When she can finally meet him on equal terms in London, she experiences a bond of national unity between herself and Orazio which leads her to re-evaluate their relationship as well as her personal history. The two novels thus feature various European locales as mirrors held up to the two women, changing their perception of their fathers and initiating, at the same time, a process of self-recognition.

Like their factual counterparts, fictionalised biographies serve to add particular life stories to a society's cultural memory, extending the "after-life" of their subjects. While each artist was certainly a "child of her time", Clara Wieck-Schumann and Artemisia Gentileschi were also exceptional in terms of the artistic renown and prominence they attained as women in

their days. The lives of historical women artists such as Wieck-Schumann and Gentileschi are therefore often considered “exemplary”. Their biographies – “factual” and “fictional” – tell stories of extra-ordinary female achievements. This exceptional status is stressed by contemporary authors of biofiction when they use all the privileges the fictional mode affords them to highlight the gender norms and constraints that the biographees had to come up against in their respective male-dominated societies.

For the depiction of their heroines’ development Galloway and Vree-land exploit these privileges of the fictional mode, including, for instance, invented speech and thought and adding emotional colouring to the story. As has been demonstrated, these imaginative additions, as well as their choice of narrative perspective and their use of irony, frequently work towards articulating a feminist critique of patriarchal societies in history from a distinctly twenty-first-century point of view.

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