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寶拉、沃谷《我如何學會開車》中的轉喻美學

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摘要

寶拉、沃谷獲得普立茲獎的劇作《我如何學會開車》，對回憶的呈現及希臘歌隊的設計均運用創意巧思，深入檢視女性及兒童的性暴力議題，成就扣人心弦、令人痛徹心霏的戲劇。沃谷的回憶在時間裡前後跳躍，為非線型、彈性、主觀、又創新的呈現。有異於傳統回憶劇中固定不變的記憶，《我如何學會開車》透過戲劇轉喻的方式展現回憶，對女主角小不點、劇場、觀眾及讀者皆有深遠的影響。劇中小不點的自我轉喻、攝影、及希臘歌隊的轉喻發人深省，引導觀眾與讀者質疑是誰正遭受性暴力？被攝影的女子是誰？而歌隊又為誰發聲？沃谷的多重戲劇轉喻激發觀眾與讀者共同參與聯想，並於過程中揭露、指控父權社會養成並縱容性暴力文化，且設定女性去迎合男性凝視的期待。

關鍵詞：轉喻、戲劇、攝影、希臘歌隊、小不點

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Paula Vogel's Metonymic Aesthetics in *How I Learned to Drive*

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Abstract

Paula Vogel's innovative representation of memory and ingenious deployment of the three Greek Chorus members in her Pulitzer-winning How I Learned to Drive (1997) make for compelling and poignant dramaturgy in dealing with sexual abuse against women and children. Memory, under Vogel's treatment, shifts back and forth in time and is non-linear, flexible, subjective, and creative. Unlike some traditional memory plays where memory is static and unchangeable, How I Learned to Drive presents memory as retold and reconstructed with dramaturgical metonymies which have far-reaching ramifications for Li'l Bit, the theater, the audience, and readers. Vogel's metonymies of Li'l Bit's self-representation, of photography, and of the Greek Chorus members prompt questions about who is being molested, who is the woman in the photo shoot, and for whom the chorus members speak. Vogel's metonymies involve the audience and readers in supplying the chain of substitutes and, in the process, expose and implicate society where patriarchal hegemony fosters as well as condones a culture of sexual predation and conditions women to fit the expectations of the male gaze.

Keywords: Metonymy, dramaturgy, memory, photograph, the Greek Chorus, Li'l Bit

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Paula Vogel's Metonymic Aesthetics in *How I Learned to Drive*

Paula Vogel's innovative representation of memory and ingenious deployment of the three Greek Chorus members in her Pulitzer-winning *How I Learned to Drive* (1997) make for compelling and poignant dramaturgy in dealing with sexual abuse against women and children. Memory, under Vogel's treatment, shifts back and forth in time and is non-linear, flexible, subjective, and creative.[1] This is very much in line with Julia Kristeva's idea of "women's time," where "the female subjectivity is divided between cyclical, natural time (repetition, gestation, the biological clock) and monumental time (eternity, myths of resurrection, the cult of maternity), [which modalities] . . . are set off against the time of linear history," a phallic stalwart of patriarchal time (Apter, 2010: 3). Vogel's treatment of memory, via Li'l Bit's journey back to her past of sexual abuse and subjective manipulation of trauma presentation in a warped time frame, has significant implications for the present and future. Li'l Bit, through re-telling and re-presenting her memory, searches for and obtains the keys to her present problems, meditates on lessons from her reminiscence, and attains some form of closure on her traumatic experience. As Friedrich Nietzsche states convincingly, "Only from the highest power of the present can you interpret the past" (1990: 99). In Vogel's rendition of memory, the past and present not only coexist,[2] but the past lacks lucidity if not comprehended from the present.

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[1] Anne Pellegrini calls this moving back and forth in time "an antichronology" (2007: 416).

[2] Gilles Deleuze has also theorized about the coexistence of the past and present and postulates that "Between the past as pre-existence in general and the present as infinitely contracted past there are [. . .] all the circles of the past constituting so many stretched or shrunk *regions, strata, and sheets*" (1989: 99). Both Vogel and Deleuze show conviction in the past's influence on the present.

Traditional memory plays, such as Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938) and Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1945), usually present memory as static and unchangeable. The past, in Wilder's interpretation, cannot be altered even if one is given an exceptional opportunity to revisit it with intent to correct former wrongs, as Emily attempts to do but to no avail.[3] In *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom Wingfield laments the family story with its entangled love and hatred without any self-interested adaptation. The past stays faithfully intact in both plays.

On the contrary, *How I Learned to Drive* presents memory as retold and reconstructed with dramaturgical metonymies which have far-reaching ramifications for Li'l Bit, the theater, the audience, and readers.[4] Vogel allows Li'l Bit, as both the narrator and a character, to control and manipulate how her memory is re-presented, like a dramaturge consciously making decisions and creating devices of narration. For instance, when Li'l Bit recounts her rendezvous with a high school boy on a bus trip, she relates that "dramaturgically speaking, after the faltering and slightly comical 'first act,' there was the very briefest of intermissions, and an extremely capable and forceful and *sustained* second act" (Vogel, 2004: 548, emphasis original).[5] Li'l Bit acts as both the dramaturge of her memory and a character recalling past events from a somewhat detached vantage point in the present, thereby revealing her split identity. Moreover, in disturbingly abusive scenes, Li'l Bit's speeches and actions are delivered by a metonymic presence which is set apart

[3] With the Stage Manager's consent, Emily's ghost is granted an incredible chance to relive her twelfth birthday, the happiest day of her life; yet, she finds out to her great disappointment how her family is still carelessly indifferent to each other's existence. As Joanna Mansbridge posits, Wilder gives us "a past populated by ghosts that signify a generational past returning to remind the living of what is being lost in time" (2012: 211).

[4] By reconstructed memory, I do not mean that Li'l Bit's memory is distorted or falsified but rather that the manner in which Vogel presents her memory is creatively crafted.

[5] All textual references are to the Pearson edition of 2004 and will be cited parenthetically.

from the narrator. By granting Li'l Bit such narratological agency, Vogel highlights Li'l Bit's increasing female control of discourse and autonomy.

Vogel's deployment of the Greek Chorus members to play multiple characters also reflects the concept of split identity and perpetuates metonymies. This is because Vogel has the same chorus member play several diverse characters who turn out to share a similar underlying patriarchal ideology, making the different characters metonymies of each other. Vogel's metonymic dramaturgy works like a relay where Li'l Bit and the Greek Chorus members hand over the metonymic association to the audience and readers and engage their imagination in mentally visualizing and reflecting on visceral sexual abuse in Li'l Bit's stead. As Emma Danielle Pasarow argues, "*How I Learned to Drive* asks the audience [and readers] to [. . .] investigate how their personal experiences and memories interact with what they watch [and read]" (2018: 36). Vogel's metonymies break the fourth wall and magnify the impact of Li'l Bit's sexual abuse on the audience and readers and enhance their social awareness.

By involving theater audience and readers to come up with substitutes for what they witness or visualize on stage and through direct address, Vogel's dramatic metonymies reach out to the audience and readers and violate the self-absorbed fictionality of the theater and the play text. For readers of the text, a play's breaking of the fourth wall is a personal experience as readers have to creatively visualize dramatic action in play and may develop a self-conscious relationship with characters, by stepping into their shoes. On the other hand, in the theater where the audience has the luxury of thespians' performance to prompt them, the experience of interaction with characters is communal. For both theater audiences and play readers, their metonymic interaction with

characters could engender trust, empathy or even inspire change. Furthermore, metonymy, as a strategy for representation and interpretation, works effectively for Vogel's play, which not only aims at addressing sexual abuse against women and children but at shifting ideological stereotypes by involving the audience and readers. By inviting the audience and readers to supply surrogates for Li'l Bit and other characters, Vogel's metonymies enable the audience and readers to tentatively experience the characters' life journeys, perhaps even Li'l Bit's sense of outrage, which could contribute to chipping away at prevalent patriarchal prejudices and violence against women and children. Metonymic dramaturgy can serve as a powerful tool for playwrights to address social problems and raise awareness exactly because of its engagement of the audience and readers' imagination. As Andrew Kimbrough says of the Oklahoma State University Theater Department performance of *How I Learned to Drive* in 2018, they hoped the play "will encourage people to open their hearts and minds to everyone" in the community and to stimulate "change in perspective in a thought-provoking way" (OSU Theater Presents, 2018).

Most scholarship on *How I Learned to Drive* to date explores the areas of psychology, survival, and sexual predation surrounding Li'l Bit's history of abuse.[6] There has not yet been any study on Vogel's unique metonymic dramaturgy which illustrates how social drama can effectuate its influence on the audience and readers viscerally. This paper explores Vogel's metonymic dramaturgy and aims to shed light on its implications on Li't Bit, the audience

[6] Ann Pelligrini argues in "Staging Sexual Injury: *How I Learned to Drive*" that remembering trauma and bearing witness finally helps Li'l Bit to recover from her trauma (2007: 426). Graley Herren (2010) focuses on Li'l Bit's healing process through her trauma memory in "Narrating, Witnessing, and Healing Trauma in Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive*. Jennifer Griffiths examines Paula Vogel's unusual sympathy for the child abuser, Uncle Peck, in "Sympathy for the Devil: Resiliency and Victim-Perpetrator Dynamics in Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive*" (2013: 12, 15). Andrew Kimbrough contends that it is Li'l Bit's recognition of her own pedophilic tendency that finally brings about her reconciliation with Uncle Peck and herself (2002: 61).

and readers, and metatheater. I contend that Vogel's metonymies of Li'l Bit's self-representation, photographs, and the Greek Chorus members involve the audience and readers in supplying the chain of substitutes and, in the process, expose and implicate society where patriarchal hegemony fosters as well as condones the culture of sexual predation and conditions women to fit the expectations of the male gaze.[7]

1. Metonymy

In *How I Learned to Drive*, we see metonymies of Li'l Bit, the Greek Chorus members, and photographs. Metonymy is a literary device in which "a part implicitly represents the whole, thus not constituting the 'thing' but rather hinting at it" (Ben-Horin, 2006: 233). In a chain of metonymies through relevant associations, "a context is constituted from which the central object is absent" (Ben-Horin, 2006: 237). For example, when Vogel has a metonymic void suffer Uncle Peck's molestation for Li'l Bit, the audience and readers are encouraged to put known sexual abuse victims in Li'l Bit's stead, creating a series of substitutes collectively. Vogel's dramatic metonymy enables multiple worlds to coexist: the actual world in which the audience and readers reside, the fictional world in which the characters exist, and the imaginative worlds which the audience and readers conjure up through creative association with the actors' performance or characters' action.[8]

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[7] Although I agree with Pelligrini and Griffiths that Vogels demonstrates unusual sympathy for the villain Uncle Peck and alters the conventional victim-perpetrator dynamics in the play, I think Vogel still places much more emphasis on portraying Li'l Bit's harrowing experiences and their expansive applicability to women and children in general, especially through her deployment of metonymy. Without melodramatically highlighting Li'l Bit's victimhood, Vogel still attempts to inspire the audience and readers' creative association of girls in similar plight.

[8] I am indebted to Jenn Stephenson for his inspiring postulation on metonymy and its effects in "Metatheater and Authentication through Metonymic Compression in John Mighton's 'Possible Worlds'" (2006: 73-93).

When metonymy works, what we have is, on a metatheatrical level, a layered structure within which these ontologically diverse worlds coexist through creative interaction between the stage and the audience, and between the play text and readers. As Stephenson states, "The relation of theatrical worlds to the actual world" and to the audience and readers' imaginative worlds is "in general metonymic" (2006: 92). Moreover, through authentication of the multiple worlds via similarity, connection, and exercise of imagination, the determination of actual, imaginative, and fictional existences is achieved and poised to inspire the audience and readers to "influence actual world events" (Stephenson, 2006: 80). Metonymy contributes to raising social awareness, especially for a social problem play like *How I Learned to Drive*, via the audience and readers' imaginative, sympathetic, and empathetic association with the victim/survivor.

Metonymy highlights the "connections between two terms without eliding or denying their difference" (Mzali, 2010: 87), so in a metonymic chain of substitutes there is both contiguity that marks the shared qualities between terms and metonymic slippage (differences) that "generates and channels meaning through a particular set of connotations" (Mzali, 2010: 87). What Vogel accomplishes in *How I Learned to Drive* with metonymy is to capitalize on the audience and readers' potential of imaginative association provoked by Li'l Bit's traumatic memory representation on stage. Research has shown that sexual abuse victims not infrequently talk about their traumatic memories from "an observer vantage point [. . .] where the event was recalled from the perspective of a detached spectator" (McIsaac and Eich, 2004: 248). This is an effective "avoidance strategy" often employed by the victim to "keep distressing memories" at bay (McIsaac and Eich, 2004: 248). When Vogel shows Li'l Bit recounting her traumatic memory with the similar avoidance

strategy and some theatrical stand-in who takes the sexual assault for her, the audience and readers are guided to search for likely candidates who underwent similar predicament from their own experiences and knowledge.

Through metonymical substitution of one abuse victim for another, which could be a metonym for yet another victim, crossovers between fictional, actual, and imaginative worlds generate "the effect of strangeness [. . .] which provides an avenue for the authentication" of metatheatrical worlds (Stephenson, 2006: 88). For example, "female audience members who suffered childhood abuse" have been known to be deeply affected by the play, while some even "completely broke down," saying "This is my story. It happened when I was 11, and I'm still living with it" (Henderson, 1997). As Sommer states, the play's "impact on the audience's emotions is thunderous and the hour and a half spent with its characters will niggle at the memory for a long time to come" (*CurtainUp*, 1997). Vogel's manipulations of memory representations engender metonymies that encourage more surrogate associations in comparable situations beyond the stage and text and deepen the play's impact on the audience and readers and social awareness for sexual abuse.

Via metonymic dramaturgy in traumatic memory representation, Vogel questions and invites the audience and readers to ask simultaneously who is being abused: Is it Li'l Bit or could it also be many other girls as well? Given the horrendous widespread sexual abuse of children among the clergy in the Catholic Church that has come to light, we might also want to apply Vogel's metonymic strategy to many boys who have suffered at the hands of their supposed spiritual guardians.[9] Moreover, in Li'l Bit's moment of forgiveness

[9] Vogel also broaches the issue of the sexual abuse of male children but leaves the subject undeveloped. In the scene where Peck takes his cousin Bobby fishing, Peck tries to lure Bobby to this secret tree

and regret over Peck's death, she wonders, in an attempt to find an exculpatory explanation for Peck's abuse of her, "Who did it to you, Uncle Peck?" (Vogel, 2004: 561). Uncle Peck's absence in this scene morphs him into a symbol of sexual predation and facilitates creative association from the audience and readers. At this juncture, Li'l Bit's question is directed not only at her Uncle Peck but more directly at the audience and readers beyond the stage and text, reaching out to their consciousness and making the fictional "you" exist in all actual, fictional, and imaginative worlds at once via metonymy. Uncle Peck is "a recognizable man from the neighborhood" indeed (*Oklahoma State University News*, 2018).

Jacques Lacan equates desire with metonymy because it "indicates the pursuit of a lost signified since the original object is replaced by a substitute which creates a metonymic chain of desire" (Monaco, 2018: 166). The countless metonymies in similar descriptions of sexual abuse which Li'l Bit suffers, Vogel implies, are propelled by a forceful, prevalent desire which resides in society, whose complacency about sexual abuse is exactly what makes the chain of metonymies of Li'l Bit and Uncle Peck possible. As Lawrence Bommer comments, "Peck's incestuous outrage, horrific harassment and opportunistic oppression were hardly confined to a half century ago" and "Li'l Bit's crises [. . .] are [still] common currency" today (*Theater Review*, 2019).

When the audience and readers are mobilized in supplying substitutes for the abused Li'l Bit, we have a metatheatrical world in which "ontologically paradoxical crossovers" (Stephenson, 2006: 88) between fictional and real worlds are made possible. The actors realize fictional communication through

house and coaxes him not to tell anyone (Vogel, 2004: 546), but there is no further elaboration on this line of inquiry. Vogel hints at but does not really pursue this theme.

their action and speech while the audience and readers' involvement in coming up with associated metonymies authenticates the fictional world (Stephenson, 2006: 88). "The sympathetic extrapolation of a provisional reality," as in a fictional world, following metonymic associations "as performed by the audience [and readers] is precisely the act that brings fictional worlds of drama into being" (Stephenson, 2006: 92). The metatheatrical effect achieved in Vogel's play, through her metonymic dramaturgy, makes it an especially poignant artistic creation in light of the heightened awareness for sexual abuse against women and children because of the opportunities the audience and readers have to authenticate Li'l Bit's devastating experience. As Pellegrini argues, "The challenge to spectators is not just to sit and watch a play [. . .]; rather, spectators [. . .] are in some fundamental sense taken in and transformed by what they watch" (2007: 428).

In the following, I will analyze Vogel's metonymy of Li'l Bit's self-representation, the metonymy of photography, and the metonymy of the Greek Chorus members. These different metonymies prompt questions about who is being molested, who is the woman in the photo shoot, and for whom the chorus members speak. The metonymies defer answers to these questions, delineate the salacious desires that permeate our society and culture in Vogel's portrayal, and implicate society in general for fostering a favorable environment for sexual abuse against women and children. Through metonymies, the singularity in Li'l Bit's personal experience is lost and replaced by universality and expansive applicability engendered through the audience and readers' responses and interpretations.[10]

[10] Here, I invoke Jacques Derrida's idea of iterability, in *Signature, Event, Context* (1988), where he postulates that genuine communication is only made possible when the singularity of a message is lost and becomes iterable even without its original context. That Li'l Bit's experience could apply to other metonymic substitutes exemplifies iterability.

2. Li'l Bit's Metonymies of Self-Representation

Li'l Bit's metonymies of self-representation in scenes of explicit sexual abuse not only protect her psychologically from secondary injury in trauma recollection, but also involve the audience and readers in mentally simulating what she goes through.[11] For Li'l Bit, the metonymies of self-representation work as a defense mechanism in addition to shielding the audience and readers from the potentially disturbing offence of witnessing or visualizing (albeit dramatized) sexual abuse on stage. In this sense, Vogel's metonymic representations of Li'l Bit work as practical, multiple-purpose solutions. Paradoxically, the metonymies also function as a deferral of the audience and readers' voyeuristic desire since Vogel prevents a realistic representation of sexual violation from happening. For the audience and readers, Li'l Bit's metonymies vacate the victim of abuse, which the dramatic context encourages the audience and readers to replace with eligible substitutes from their experiences and known records. In supplying substitutes for the abused Li'l Bit, the audience and readers vicariously experience her plight, authenticating her pain, suffering, helplessness, and exasperation.

The first scene where Li'l Bit deploys a metonymy to take Uncle Peck's physical violation is in the opening scene where the two of them are seated in a car and Uncle Peck begs to undo her brassiere and kiss her breasts. Vogel's stage directions tell us that "*the two sit facing directly front*" at the audience and "*they do not touch*" (Vogel, 2004: 539). After pantomiming unhooking Li'l Bit's brassiere, "*Peck makes gentle, concentric circles with his thumbs in the*

[11] In less traumatic scenes not involving physical violation, such as when Li'l Bit and Uncle Peck go out for dinner and drinks or during the photo shoot, Vogel lets Li'l Bit deal with Uncle Peck directly without invoking a double to take the assault for her.

air in front of him" (Vogel, 2004: 539). Later, "*Peck bozos his head as if praying* [. . . but is actually] *kissing her nipple*" while Li'l Bit, sitting next to him, "*closes her eyes, carefully keeps her voice calm* [. . . , and] *rears back her head on the leather Buick car seat*" (Vogel, 2004: 539). There is no direct physical contact in Li'l Bit's memory representation even though that does not mean Li'l Bit survives the molestation unscathed. In fact, one of the lasting consequences resulting from years of abuse at Peck's hands is that Li'l Bit still has "never known what it feels like to jog or dance. Anything that. . . 'jiggles'" (Vogel, 2004: 563).[12] Uncle Peck has tarnished Li'l Bit's bosom to such an extent that even she herself finds it odious and avoids remembering its existence.

Uncle Peck's concentric circles in front of him not only break the fourth wall but seem to reach for the audience and readers, provocatively putting them in Li'l Bit's vulnerable place. The void that is receiving Uncle Peck's molestation is a substitute for Li'l Bit as well as one to be replaced by many other metonymies that pop up in the audience and readers' mind at this moment. For instance, Bommer extolls Vogel's creation of "a you-are-there immediacy" with scenes like this and readily thinks of the victims of "a Harvey Weinstein, Kevin Spacy or Bill Cosby" who could find themselves in Lit'l Bit's shoes. Vogel's metonymic dramaturgy works so well that even Uncle Peck's surrogates are in no short supply in the audience and readers' imagination as we can see from Bommer's comment with quick association of celebrity sexual predators.

The other scene where Li'l Bit employs a metonymy in self-representation

[12] Given the trauma Li'l Bit has suffered from Peck's sexual abuse since she was eleven well into her thirties, it is incorrect and insensitive of Richard Hornby to posit that since the "initial molestation is not shown until the end of the play [. . .] their relationship seems harmless enough through most of the action" (1997: 475).

is one where Li'l Bit recounts her very first driving lesson with Peck in 1962 when she was only eleven and also when the sexual abuse began. "*The Teenage Greek Chorus member stands apart on stage*" and "*will speak all of Li'l Bit's lines*" while Li'l Bit "*sits beside Peck in the front seat* [. . .] *remembering*" (Vogel, 2004: 562). What follows is that Peck, under the pretext of teaching Li'l Bit how to drive, strokes the adult Li'l Bit's breasts, who is now sitting in Peck's lap and silently accepting his touch, while the Teenage Greek Chorus, standing apart, speaks as Li'l Bit and pleads: "Uncle Peck—what are you doing? [. . .] Uncle Peck—please don't do this—[. . .] This isn't happening" (Vogel, 2004: 562-3). While touching her breasts, Peck "*tenses against Li'l Bit* [. . . , and] *tenses more, sharply* [. . . ,] *buries his face in Li'l Bit's neck and moans softly*" (Vogel, 2004: 563). The adult Li'l Bit's body, quietly coerced in Peck's sexual abuse, works as a nameless, voiceless body that is being violated but with whom the eleven-year-old Li'l Bit does not identify. Therefore, in her memory representation Li'l Bit does not suffer the sexual abuse physically. That is why when the adult Li'l Bit resumes her narration, she confesses: "That day was the last day I lived in my body. I retreated above the neck and I've lived inside the 'fire' in my head ever since" (Vogel, 2004: 563). The injury is so severe that Li'l Bit is unwilling to even own the parts of her body that were violated.[13]

Vogel's technique of separating Li'l Bit's narrating voice from the physical victim of abuse strategically puts the teenaged Li'l Bit in the audience and readers' place, watching Uncle Peck abuse a teenaged girl together. During this communal voyeuristic gaze, Vogel's metonymic strategy prompts the

[13] Misako Koike, incomprehensibly, seems to have more sympathy for Peck than for Li'l Bit as she argues unconvincingly that Li'l Bit is "never punished in the course of the play" for her "sexually promiscuous life," whereas "Peck, on the other hand, brokenheartedly turns to alcohol and eventually dies" (2000: 101). Koike fails to see what serious consequences Peck's violation of Li'l Bit has had on her well into her thirties.

audience and readers to freely associate other substitutes with Li'l Bit. In addition, this design makes Uncle Peck a metonym for other molesters as well, and guides the audience and readers to ask imaginative abusers the same question—"what are you doing?" (Vogel, 2004: 562). The scene loses its specificity and obtains universality, inserting the audience and readers into a site of sexual abuse against women and children.

In both scenes, the deployment of metonymies mitigates the detrimental impact of trauma recollection on Li'l Bit. Her strategy of metonymy also works as dissociation, or distance from traumatic events, which defends the victim psychologically, as several critics have pointed out.[14] Dissociation describes "a failure in the normal integrative processes of mind, such as fugue states or dissociative identity, or it connotes a means of establishing emotional distance" (Haaken, 2010: 433). Furthermore, in terms of "memory and identity, dissociation refers to a fragmented, unintegrated sense of self and chronic amnesia (Haaken, 2010: 433). In Li'l Bit's case, she remembers these traumatic events as a fragmented self without physical presence, for she displays difficulty or resistance in recalling her own body suffering Peck's violations. Li'l Bit's voice in both scenes takes on the role of "an outside observer," a created "separate persona that coexists with the original personality [. . . and] assumes the emotional task of managing knowledge of the traumatic experience" (Haaken, 2010: 434). Although dissociation may seem to fragment Li'l Bit's subjectivity as she excludes her body from her voice/consciousness,

[14] For instance, Stefan Kanfer posits that when "Li'l Bit's responses are given by other members of the cast" it gives "the scene the quality of a dream happening to someone else" (1997: 22). Graley Herren argues that Li'l Bit's "dramaturgical manipulations appear to constitute a kind of coping mechanism" whereby "she tells the truth but tells it slant, editing out the li'l bits (and big bits) she finds most disturbing" (2010: 108). Anne Pelligrini observes that in the final scene of violation the Teenage Greek Chorus, now speaking all of Li'l Bit's lines, "watches and listens as her own story unfolds before her, as if it were happening to someone else" (2007: 425). David Savran also contends that Li'l Bit is split "into two—a body and a voice—in order to represent the radical alienation from self that results from having been molested by her Uncle Peck" (1998: 16).

her self-alienation proves to be her lifesaver in the end as her rejection of the sullied body contributes to keeping her remaining sense of self together. Even though this self may be incomplete, it has successfully protected what is left by excluding the violated body that endures devastating contamination and stigma after sexual abuse.[15]

While portraying her abuse, Li'l Bit also reverts the male gaze back at the audience and readers, challenging them to meditate on what they expect to witness and to interrogate who is suffering the violation. With the recipient of the affront vacated, the impact of the staged molestation is magnified in that the audience and readers' imagination is engaged to produce the substitutes. As Kimbrough states, "The actor playing Peck on stage is actually fondling a consenting adult, but the audience is very deftly and convincingly [. . .] creating the child abuse, being horrified at it, and condemning it" (2002: 61-2). Li'l Bit's manipulation works like the blank page that Laurence Stern famously inserts in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759) when the narrator is about to describe Widow Wadman's beauty but instead asks the reader to paint a gorgeous woman according to their own fancy in the empty leaf offered in the novel. Since everyone's definition of beauty differs to varying degrees, enlisting the reader's imagination suits Stern's purpose

[15] As Griffiths writes, "Uncle Peck's car contains her most terrible moments" (2013: 16) and some of her most empowering ones as well. However, Li'l Bit's exclusion of the abject self and molested body, diminishing metonymies of Peck, and compartmentalization of trauma experience is also crucial to her ability to regain power at the steering wheel, both practically and metaphorically. Jisook Shin also discusses Li'l Bit's fragmented self and posits that "Vogel invites her audience to the process of integrating a fragmented self into a whole" (2015: 219). Since Shin's article is written in Korean with an English abstract only, the author is not able to verify what Shin means by Li'l Bit's integration of a fragmented self or how she achieves wholeness. The author believes that Li'l Bit's new 'wholeness,' if there is one as Shin claims, is fragmentation as evidenced in her retreat above the neck and Peck's ghost in the back seat of the car in the concluding scene. Fragmentation is not necessarily bad or a compromise for Li'l Bit; it is, if anything, more like adaptation for survival. Vogel rebels against patriarchal insistence on wholeness or unity by presenting a sexual abuse survivor who has relied on a fragmented self and "lived inside the 'fire' in my head" ever since it all began (Vogel, 2004: 563).

ingeniously.

Vogel's metonymies of Li'l Bit's self-representation open up space for the audience and readers' imagination. Vogel's decision to grant Li'l Bit dramaturgical intervention shows that the character, rather than "a passive recipient," is "an active choreographer of her memories" (Herren, 2010: 106). The audience and readers are engaged in searching for substitutes who are being molested in these scenes of sexual violation. As Emma Danielle Pasarow observes, "Vogel is asking the audience to verify Li'l Bit's complicated reality as true, and perhaps, not so uncommon" (2018: 36-7).[16] The heightened impact of Vogel's metonymic dramaturgy on the audience and readers could perhaps be measured by, for instance, how massive the public response was in the #MeToo Movement of 2017 in the wake of sexual assault allegations against Harvey Weinstein.[17] The movement revealed, and continues to do so, the pervasiveness of sexual violence against women and children worldwide. Moreover, there is no shortage of sensationalized reportage and exploitation of sexual violence against women and children in the media, the Internet, and the gaming world. In the chain of metonymies for Li'l Bit thus generated among the audience and readers, social awareness is expanded to include many other victims of abuse while Li'l Bit's traumatic experience loses its singularity and becomes applicable to all possible victims. Li'l Bit's metonymies become a creative source for Vogel to involve the audience and readers' participation in establishing and verifying Li'l Bit's traumatic past.

Not only does Vogel have Li'l Bit deploy strategic metonymy in self-representations, Li'l Bit also thinks of her Uncle Peck in metonymic terms,

[16] Pasarow further comments, twenty years after the play's premiere, that "it's all the more heartbreaking to realize that Li'l Bit's story is as prevalent as ever" (2018: 40).
[17] Weinstein was found guilty on February 24, 2020 and sentenced to 23 years in prison.

from a surrogate father, to the flying Dutchman doomed to wander the sea till he finds a maiden who "will love him of her own free will" (Vogel, 2004: 561), and eventually to the ghost in the back seat of her car. Amongst these metonymies, Li'l Bit finally settles on a version of Peck as an ephemeral spirit in the back of her car, a much weakened and benign presence that she can drive off with at the denouement. Peck's ghost is seemingly innocuous since he is segregated from Li'l Bit in the car, but he is still Li'l Bit's transferences for poignant, personal memories. This is a Peck already purged by Li'l Bit's conscious decision to forgive both herself and Peck.[18] The metonymies of Peck effectively create reverberation among the audience and readers as well, for the play suggests that "The kind of men who pursue the young [. . .] may very well be the man next door, the uncle who dispenses driving lessons" (Kanfer, 1997: 22).

Li'l Bit's metonymies of both herself and Peck contribute to her forgiveness of herself and Peck as well as her move forward from a harrowing past. Li'l Bit's exclusion of sexualized breasts and violated body buttresses her autonomy and a new wholeness paradoxically, for this completeness is achieved through fragmentation. Contrary to the female cancer patients in Susan Miller's *My Left Breast* (1995), Maxine Bailey and Sharon M. Lewis's *Sistahs* (1998), and Margaret Edson's *Wit* (1999),[19] who feel a loss of autonomy because of their breast, ovary, and uterus cancers, Li'l Bit's

[18] Without condemning Peck totally for a long history of abuse against Li'l Bit, Vogel also shows how Li'l Bit learns independence and taking control from Peck's driving lessons. Vogel explains in her interview with Arthur Holmberg that without "denying or forgetting the original pain," she wants to dramatize "the gifts we receive from the people who hurt us" (Vogel, 2009).

[19] These plays also deal with the female body and inherit the concept of locating female subjectivity in the body, so when the characters' bodies suffer the ravages of disease, especially in the parts that symbolize femininity such as the breasts, ovaries, and uterus, the characters also feel a loss of femininity, subjectivity, and control. Vogel's treatment of Li'l Bit's molested body parts heads in the diagonally opposite direction from the aforementioned plays in that for Li'l Bit disowning her molested, contaminated body parts makes her 'whole' again.

autonomy is achieved through disowning the female body that is defiled by her Uncle Peck and patriarchal perception of women. Her violated and silenced body speaks through its suffering and gives a reciprocal gaze back at the male gaze, challenging patriarchal society's complacency about sexual violence against women and children.

3. The Metonymy of Photographs

Vogel's dramaturgical design of having metonymic images of women popping up simultaneously when Peck stages Li'l Bit for a photo shoot provocatively interrogates how women are perceived: who is really in the photoshoot and what does Li'l Bit turn out to be in Peck's frame? This scene exposes not only how images of women are manipulated in the media but also how women are instructed to appear in particular manners to please the male gaze. Uncle Peck's photo shoot, like the theater and society in general, "will always produce figures who are subjected to the scrutiny of voyeuristic spectators, [readers,] (or lascivious uncles)," and Li'l Bit, like many other women, is taught to act certain ways by a manipulative, exploitative uncle, who is himself "the product of a society that values women for their allure" (Savran, 1998: 18). Vogel suggests with the photo shoot that Uncle Peck's, the theater's, and society's frames in which women are expected to act erotically are actually doubles of one another. As Simone de Beauvoir posits, women are defined by the male gaze and patriarchal desire (1989: 647). Furthermore, John Berger states, "Men act and women appear. Women watch themselves being looked at. The surveyor of women in herself is male: the surveyed female" (2003: 38). Berger insightfully exposes how patriarchal society programs women to look the way they do and how the indoctrination can be so successful that it is

internalized and imperceptible to women themselves.

In the scene "You and the Reverse Gear" (Vogel, 2004: 554), Li'l Bit is thirteen years old in 1965. Peck prepares Li'l Bit for the photo shoot with music, special lighting, outfit adjustment, and posing instructions, such as "Listen to [. . . the music] with your body, [. . .] Sway, move just your torso or your head, [. . .] Lift your head up a bit more" (Vogel, 2004: 554). Vogel's stage directions tell us that "*Through-out the shoot, there can be a slide montage of actual shots of the actor playing Li'l Bit—interspersed with other models à la Playboy, Calvin Klein and Victoriana/Lewis Carrol's Alice Liddell*" (Vogel, 2004: 554). The photo montage provocatively suggests how Uncle Peck sees Li'l Bit replicates how female models are viewed commercially, how spectators expect to see actresses, and, more importantly, how society regards women. Indicating an overlapping and interchangeable quality between shots of Li'l Bit and *Playboy*, Calvin Klein models and others, Vogel's slide montage makes them metonymies of one another.

Beyond the stage, the photo montage initiates a chain of substitutes of female images from eroticized, to commercialized, prudish, and innocent representations of females, to which the audience and readers can add infinitely more from their own creative association. Given the ubiquitous sexualized female images that we encounter, such as the nearly naked female bodies in the fashion brand Abercrombie & Fitch's advertisements, Victoria's Secret's quasi-pornography-inspired photos and shows, and automobile showgirls, to name a few, society is geared to eroticized expectations of women's appeal, including from women themselves. As Savran comments, "it is in this scene that Li'l Bit most graphically becomes an object for Uncle Peck and, more, ominously, for herself as well" (1998: 19). The media, the Internet, and the gaming world are replete with representations of females that marry

eroticization, commercialization, and often, disturbingly, tender age. Although Li'l Bit is posing in the photo shoot, the missing referent in the chain of substitute photographs is still Li'l Bit because in this scene we do not discern who Li'l Bit really is but only perceive a self-less, doctored demonstration of Li'l Bit, whom Peck manipulates like a girl puppet doll. Her voyeuristic uncle, the audience and readers, the media, and society in general are all complicit in making Li'l Bit appear the way she does in the photo shoot. Vogel interrogates if the photo shoot works as an anatomical look at what being a woman is really about and as a how-to guide to marketable female sex appeal, and if female self-representation has to be informed by the male gaze.

Vogel's photographs link the sexualization of Li'l Bit and driving with the same Motown songs from previous scenes, which convey the same desire for the eroticized woman. During the photo shoot, Peck tells Li'l Bit that "I'm not here—just my voice" and that she can "Pretend you're in your room all alone on a Friday night with your mirror" (Vogel, 2004: 554), in order to dupe her into a false sense of security and privacy so that she can pose spontaneously and alluringly for him. Vogel also makes Peck deploy a metonymic strategy of replacing his presence with his voice. This vocal metonymy pressures and programs Li'l Bit to be a sexy woman. Peck's compliment to Li'l Bit after the photo shoot attests to society's collective urge to sexualize females: "you're a very beautiful young woman. Do you know that? [. . .] For a thirteen-year-old, you have a body a twenty-year-old woman would die for" (Vogel, 2004: 544). Peck sees Li'l Bit's body as a marketable product, but not her person, as his intent to "submit [his] work to *Playboy*" when she turns eighteen makes explicit (Vogel, 2004: 555). The aesthetic distance created through photograph metonymies puts the audience and readers in a participant and observer

position from which to generate more associated substitutes and to reconsider commercialized, patriarchal representations of women in images seen everywhere.

4. The Metonymy of Greek Chorus Members

In *How I Learned to Drive*, Vogel deploys a very special casting design of having the Male, Female, and Teenage Greek Chorus members play multiple characters, in spite of the risk of potential confusion for the audience and readers.[20] For example, the Teenage Greek Chorus plays the "Grandmother, High School Girls, and the voice of eleven-year-old Li'l Bit" (Vogel, 2004: 538). The age difference between the Grandmother and young girls may be difficult to show on stage if they are played by the same actor. Similarly, the Male Greek Chorus plays the "Grandfather, Waiter, and High School boys" (Vogel, 2004: 538).[21] Vogel's Greek Chorus members in various roles may be more challenging for the audience and readers to keep track of than the unified chorus in Greek tragedies since Vogel's different characters do not go with different faces.

However, under scrutiny, we will find that the multiple characters represented by the Greek Chorus members—Grandmother, Grandfather, High School Boys and Girls, Mother, and Aunt Mary, with the exception of the voice of eleven-year-old Li'l Bit, all share the same underlying patriarchal ideology in their perception of the female body and woman's values.[22] For instance, in

[20] Susan McDonald concurs that "There are moments when the use of the Greek Chorus becomes confusing" (Emotions Boil Over, 2018).

[21] By contrast, the chorus in the tradition of ancient Greek tragedy usually represents a majority view or common sense that converses with protagonists.

[22] Li'l Bit stands apart from this group because her abuse awakens her to disapprove patriarchal misogyny.

the scene "You and the Reverse Gear" 1966 (Vogel, 2004: 551), the boys and girls[23] at Li'l Bit's high school are obsessed with Li'l Bit's breasts and conspire to find out whether they are real or "foam rubber" (Vogel, 2004: 552) by suddenly grabbing her breast or by sneaking a peak at her in the shower room. The high school boys and girls only see Li'l Bit's breasts without regarding her as a friend, classmate, or person.

The Male Greek Chorus, despite the various roles he plays, articulates identical patriarchal perceptions of the female body and woman's values. Peck also shares mostly the same views. Even though Peck is gentle and sensitive with Li'l Bit, that is because he has ulterior motives for being kind to Li'l Bit since he wants sexual favors from her.

The Greek Chorus members articulate views informed by the same patriarchal ideology and thus function as metonymies of each other. Through these metonymies, Vogel showcases how ideological indoctrination infiltrates and conditions diverse members of society, regardless of gender, age, and generation. As Ben Brantley observes, "the characters seem at first so familiar, so [. . .] normal, that it's only by degrees that we sense the poison with the pastels" (2012).In addition, Nelson Pressley's comment that the Greek chorus members showcase "the ancient rut of gender stereotypes" (2018) attests to the metonymic nature of their existence. As Vogel's own sardonic reflection illustrates only too well, "it takes a whole village to molest a child" (2009). Collective social eroticization of women and children and complacency lead to derogatory treatment of the powerless such as Li'l Bit suffers.

The Greek Chorus members reflect views that that reductively consider woman as composites of sexual organs like breasts and genitalia, and that

[23] Here, all Male, Female, and Teenage Greek Chorus members play the high school boys and girls.

intimidate woman with her physical weaknesses and disadvantages. For example, the Grandfather, who has no qualms about making fun of Li'l Bit's breasts publicly and believes that Li'l Bit has "got all the credentials she'll need on her chest" (Vogel, 2004: 540) already without going to college, is really no different from Peck, who idolizes Li'l Bit's breasts and calls them "these celestial orbs" (Vogel, 2004: 539). The Grandfather and Peck both regard Li'l Bit as men's plaything. As Susan Abbotson argues, "rather than allow society to dictate what a woman's breasts should mean, Vogel could be suggesting that we allow each woman to decide for herself" (2010: 3). The Grandfather, Peck, and the High School Boys and Girls are metonymies of each other in their underhanded perception of the female body. As Brantley comments, "These are people for whom Li'l Bit's most salient characteristic (and weapon, and burden) is her chest size" (2012).

These chorus member metonymies, representing prevalent degrading views of women, serve as prompts that encourage the audience and readers to recall more similar opinions and thus maximize the impact of Vogel's implied critique of misogyny. With their belittling comments and condescending compliments based on Li'l Bit's physical appeal, the "Greek Chorus of secondary characters [. . .] shows how we are shaped by people who have hurt us in the past" (Annicone, 2018). Furthermore, their "dialogue [. . .] sounds so naturalistic that you think that it comes from your own remembrance of things past" (Brantly, 2012). These critics' comments attest to the effect of Vogel's metonymies, which contribute to de-programming the public's derogatory perception and expectation of women.

In addition, both the Grandfather and Grandmother use animalistic language in their discussion of women, literalizing the stereotype that defines woman as prey and man as predator. The Grandfather, for example, proudly

boasts to Li'l Bit that "I picked your grandmother out of that herd of sisters just like a lion chooses the gazelle—the plump, slow, flaky gazelle dawdling at the edge of the herd" (Vogel, 2004: 546), while the grandmother talks about sexual intercourse as so painful, unpleasant, and scary that "It's agony!" and "You bleed like a stuck pig!" (Vogel, 2004: 549). The Grandmother complains that the Grandfather uses her to gratify all his appetite, instinct, and desire, as she tells Li'l Bit that "Your grandfather only cares that I do two things: have the table set and the bed turned down" (Vogel, 2004: 547). Nevertheless, the Grandmother does not seem to have any second thoughts about her role or function in the family. She seems to accept her place as her crude husband defines it. This (mis)understanding of male-female relationship teaches that "Women's lot is suffering and passivity" (Griffiths, 2013: 9) and that "Assumptions of male entitlement" are to be taken for granted (DeShazer, 2002: 111). Not only are the Grandfather and Grandmother metonymies of each other in their discussion of women, they both substitute prey animals for women.

In the Female and Teenage Greek Chorus members' discussion of social drinking, men, women, and sex, their language intimidates Li'l Bit without illuminating the facts of life for her. The message from the Mother's advice on social drinking inculcates tremendous fear and insecurity in Li'l Bit and programs her to dread the consequences of female inebriation instead of learning to be in control. For instance, the Mother advises Li'l Bit not to "order anything with Voodoo or Vixen in the title or sexual position in the name like Dead Man Screw or the Missionary" because "they are lethal" and "you were conceived after one of those" (Vogel, 2004: 543). The Mother, certainly "an encyclopedia on the subject of boozing" (Kanfer, 1997: 22), unfortunately fails to educate Li'l Bit on the facts of sex and worst of all fails to alert her daughter

of sexual predation.

In the scene "On Men, Sex, and Women: Part I," the Grandmother, Mother, and Li'l Bit arrive at the conclusion of sex and orgasm as a myth. This (mis)understanding perpetuates women's trepidation and ignorance about both sex and their own bodies. For example, the Grandmother says that orgasm is just something her daughters "have made up" and "Men are bulls! Big bulls!" (Vogel, 2004: 547). And yet this fear also puts the blame on women if they are not careful or are injured by men. For instance, Aunt Mary observes the unusual relationship developing between her husband Peck and Li'l Bit, but she faults her niece for her husband's sexual predation without ever finding out what has actually transpired. Mary comments thus on Li'l Bit: "She's a sly one, that one is. She knows exactly what she's doing; she's twisted Peck around her little finger and thinks it's all a big secret" (Vogel, 2004: 556). Mary colludes with patriarchy in the practices of misogyny and scapegoating women. As Vogel says revealingly of the play, "We live in a misogynist world [. . .] and I want to look and see why not just men are the enemy but how I as a woman participate in the system" (Savran, 1998).

Another scene where the metonymy of the Greek Chorus members occurs is when Peck eagerly anticipates Li'l Bit's eighteenth birthday when she will come back from college. In the scene "Shifting Forward from Second to Third Gear," the Male, Female, and Teenage Greek Chorus members all participate in Peck's countdown to Li'l Bit's birthday and alternate speaking the lines from Peck's notes sent to Li'l Bit with presents from September 3, 22, 25, October 16, November 16, 18, and 23, 1969 (Vogel, 2004: 558). Excitedly announcing "Sixty-nine days," "Sixty-six days," "47," Sixteen days to go," "Only two weeks more!," and "nine days and counting" (Vogel, 2004: 558), Peck's notes and numbers palpably declare how near eruption his desire for Li'l Bit is,

although the numbers frighten and intimidate her "like some serial killer" (Vogel, 2004: 558).

The voices from the Greek Chorus members, who have played the Grandfather, Grandmother, Mother, Aunt Mary, High School Boys and Girls all chime in in Peck's crazed and obsessive countdown to Li'l Bit's eighteenth birthday. This scene implies that a cross section of society, regardless of gender and age, all pressures Li'l Bit to be sexually available as Li'l Bit's reminder to Peck that "statutory rape is not in effect when a young woman turns eighteen" makes clear (Vogel, 2004: 558). The Greek Chorus members' multiple voices suggest the dominance of patriarchal ideology in society that urges young women to succumb to male seduction, whereas Li'l Bit's voice is weak and single. As Mark Brokaw comments, "these deeply damaging relationships that are caused by behavior inflicted by trusted authority figures [are] able to continue for so long because there was a network of people that were enabling them" (Collins-Hughes, 2020). Even though Li'l Bit does reject Peck eventually, this only happens after years of molestation when she finally goes away from home to college. The metonymy of the Greek Chorus members who represent the same ideological conviction in seeing women as sexual objects for men channels Peck's as well as a patriarchal society's desire, seduction, and coercion of young women.

The metonymies of the Greek Chorus members create an intentionally confusing effect for the audience and readers because the same actor plays several different characters. However, the dizzying effect facilitates the audience and readers' recollection of similar misogynistic views about women from many unknown, blurry faces in their diverse lives in the real world. This *déjà vu* effect captures the spirit of metonymies and bridges the fictional, real,

and imaginative worlds. The aesthetic distance created via metonymies, with the Greek Chorus members characterizing several roles at the same time, initiates a chain of further metonymies among the audience and readers, erasing the singularity of the sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse against Li'l Bit and making her traumatic experience applicable to women and children in general. The metonymic distance elicits further substitutes by creative association from the audience and readers' various experiences and dominant misogynistic social practices witnessed and reported worldwide.

5. Conclusion

In *How I Learned to Drive*, Paula Vogel deploys metonymies throughout the play which work as a strategy of dissociation and defense mechanism for Li'l Bit, as an open source for the audience and readers' imagination and engagement in creating more metonymies, and as a dramaturgical device to showcase diverse manifestations of patriarchal perception of women. The narrative disruptions created along metonymies, rather than undercutting Li'l Bit's memory, make room for metonymic reverberations among the audience and readers. Vogel's metonymies of Li'l Bit's self-representation, photographs, and the Greek Chorus members penetrate the fourth wall to reach the audience and readers and elicit their supply in the chain of substitutes, animating a rich reflection and reconsideration of powerful misogynist views and practices in society. The play achieves great metatheatrical resonance in that the audience and readers, through involvement in metonymic associations, experience more profoundly than not the impact of traumatic memory, sexual abuse, and misogyny that unfortunately permeate both the fictional, real worlds, and beyond.

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