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Joicy Silva Ferreira

The Construction of Identity of Women Artists in Contemporary Narratives: A Study of Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* and Sara Baume's *A Line Made by Walking*

Belo Horizonte

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Dissertação intitulada *A construção da identidade de mulheres artistas em narrativas contemporâneas: Um estudo sobre How to Be Both, de Ali Smith, e A Line Made by Walking, de Sara Baume*, de autoria da Mestranda JOICY SILVA FERREIRA, apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras: Estudos Literários da Faculdade de Letras da UFMG, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Mestre em Letras: Estudos Literários.

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To João and Suely

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the construction of women artists' identities in contemporary artist narratives written by women through a comparative analysis of the novels *How to Be Both*, by Ali Smith, and *A Line Made by Walking*, by Sara Baume. Considering that both artist-protagonists are experimenting with photography, I argue that it plays a central role in the construction of their identities because of its ability to influence and shape the ways of perceiving the world. To do so, this study departs from an intermedial perspective and relies mainly on the notions of the subject as something fluid and changeable, as defended by Stuart Hall, Donald E. Hall and Judith Butler, on the concepts of the subjective aspects of photography, as pointed out by Susan Sontag and Liliane Louvel, on Virginia Woolf's and Linda Huf's thoughts on the woman artist and her depiction in literature, on the characteristics of artist narratives, explained by Izabela B. Lago and Eliane T. A. Campello, and on the presence and the roles of Art in artist narratives, based on Irina O. Rajewsky, Claus Clüver and Sophie Bertho. This thesis starts with a contextualization of these novels' literary genre, based on the study of artist narratives and their roots in the *Künstlerroman* tradition, then it focuses on photography and the specificities of this art form, especially the subjectivity intrinsic in it, and it ends analysing the identity of women artists and how it is portrayed in the narratives of *How to Be Both* and *A Line Made by Walking.*

Keywords: Women artists. Artist narratives. Photography. Ali Smith. Sara Baume.

Resumo

A presente dissertação discute a construção da identidade de artistas mulheres em narrativas de artista contemporâneas escritas por mulheres, através de uma análise comparativa dos romances *How to Be Both*, de Ali Smith, e *A Line Made by Walking*, de Sara Baume. Considerando que ambas as artistas-protagonistas exploram a fotografia, defendo que ela desempenha um papel central na construção da identidade dessas personagens, devido a sua capacidade de influenciar e moldar formas de perceber o mundo. Para isso, esta pesquisa se desenvolve a partir dos estudos da Intermidialidade e se baseia principalmente nas noções do sujeito como algo fluido e mutável, como defendido por Stuart Hall, Donald E. Hall and Judith Butler, dos aspectos subjetivos da fotografia, como apontado por Susan Sontag e Liliane Louvel, nos pensamentos de Virginia Woolf e Linda Huf sobre a mulher artista e sua representação na literatura, nas características específicas das narrativas de artista, explicadas por Izabela B. Lago e Eliane T. A. Campello, e no estudo da presença e das funções que a Arte desempenha em narrativas de artista, baseado em Irina O. Rajewsky, Claus Clüver e Sophie Bertho. Sendo assim, esta dissertação começa com uma contextualização do gênero literário ao qual estes romances pertencem, através de um panorama sobre narrativas de artista e suas raízes na tradição do *Künstlerroman*, depois se concentra na fotografia e em suas especificidades, principalmente na subjetividade intrínseca a ela, e termina analisando a identidade de mulheres artistas e como ela é retratada nas narrativas de *How to Be Both* e *A Line Made by Walking*.

Palavras-chave: Mulheres artistas. Narrativas de artista. Fotografia. Ali Smith. Sara Baume.

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Introduction

> I mean, what is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know. I do not believe that anybody can know until she has expressed herself in all the arts and professions open to human skill.
>
> Virginia Woolf, *Professions for Women*

It is a well-known fact that artists are one of the most controversial characters in literature, usually associated with stereotypical terms such as the heavenly gifted, the bohemian, the genius, and so on. Their lives, struggles and artistic productions are at the core of the *Künstlerroman* tradition, that is, of artist novels. Also, they are at the centre of this research. The main focus of this work, however, is on a figure that only recently started to be the protagonist in these narratives: the woman artist.

Following Virginia Woolf's advice that one can only attempt to comprehend the woman by looking at her from her own perspective, the literary objects analysed in this thesis are written by women: Ali Smith and Sara Baume. As Rachel B. DuPlessis claims, in writing the artist heroine the woman author defies the traditional notions of the genre linked to the image of the romantic artist. By inserting a gendered subject as the protagonist, she opens the narrative to the struggles the woman artist faces when she enters the art world, including the difficulty in being acknowledged as an artist, or in establishing an identity for herself in a traditionally male space.

Thus, Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* and Sara Baume's *A Line Made by Walking* appear as examples of a contemporary approach to these narratives, in which the artist-protagonists

are women, at different stages in life, struggling to establish a career in the Arts, while searching for an identity through artistic experimentation. According to the newspaper *New Statesman America*, both Smith and Baume are recognized for inserting elements from visual arts into their fiction, exploring the pluralism characteristic of the contemporary period. Before entering the theoretical aspects of this thesis, let me introduce the authors and the novels chosen for the present analysis.

Ali Smith was born in Inverness, Scotland, but she currently lives in Cambridge, England. She holds a degree in English Language and Literature from Aberdeen University, and an unfinished doctorate in American and Irish Modernism, from Cambridge University. Smith has published several novels and short-story collections over the years, including *Public Library,* in 2015, *Girl Meets Boy: The Myth of Iphis,* in 2007, and *Hotel World,* in 2001. *How to Be Both,* published in 2014, is her fifth novel and it has received the Goldsmiths' Prize in 2014, and the Baileys Women's Prize in 2015. It was also shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2014 and the Folio Prize in 2015.

The novel is divided into two chapters, both entitled "One" and illustrated with an icon of a surveillance camera or St. Lucy's eyes. Although interconnected, these chapters are interchangeable, so the readers may choose which story they prefer to read first or read them in the printed order, which also varies depending on the edition. The chapter with the icon of a surveillance camera narrates the story of George, an English teenager who has just lost her mother and is struggling to come to terms with her grief and figure out how to live taking care of herself, her younger brother, and her now alcoholic mourning father. It alternates between scenes from the present, her counselling sessions with the school's psychologist and her friendship with Helena, often referred to as H, and memories from a trip she took to Italy with her mother and brother, to see the frescoes in the *Palazzo Schifanoia,* in Ferrara. The other chapter, with the icon of St. Lucy's eyes, is narrated in first-person by the ghost of the

Italian painter Francescho del Cossa, one of the artists responsible for the frescoes at the *Palazzo*. It is also divided into scenes from the present, in which del Cossa is following George in the contemporary world, analysing the girl's life and the evolution of the processes of creating images, and scenes from the past, when she narrates how she became a painter and the fact that she was born a woman, but had to disguise herself as a man to pursue a career in the Art world.

Sara Baume was born in Lancashire, England, but grew up in County Cork, Ireland, and currently lives and works in West Cork, Ireland. She graduated in Fine Arts at Dun Laoghaire College of Art and Design and in Creative Writing at Trinity College. *Spill Simmer Falter Wither,* her first literary work, was published in 2015 and it received great attention from the critics and the public. *A Line Made by Walking,* her second novel, was first published in 2017 by independent publisher Tramp Press. It was later released in Britain by Penguin Books, and in the United States by HMH Books. It was shortlisted for the Goldsmiths' Prize, in 2017, and nominated for the International Dublin Literary Award, in the same year. Since then, Baume published *handiwork* in 2020, a non-fictional short narrative, and *Seven Steeples,* her third full-length novel, in 2022.

A Line Made by Walking narrates the story of Frankie, an artist in her mid-twenties, who decides to self-isolate in her late grandmother's bungalow in rural Ireland, to recover from a nervous breakdown. There, she begins a photographic series on animal corpses, "a series about how everything is being slowly killed" (Baume 2), as a final attempt to reconnect with and succeed in her artistic career. Her photographs are reproduced in the book, placed at the exact moment when Frankie first encounters the animals so that the readers actively experience the discovery.

It is worth mentioning that the entire narrative of *A Line Made by Walking* is structured around this series of photographs of animal corpses taken by the protagonist. The

actual photos were taken by Baume herself prior to the novel being written. They were displayed along with little creature figurines carved out of balsa wood in an exhibition called *iD*, which took place in a disused orphanage in Górzow Wielkopolski, Western Poland, in June 2009. According to Baume, the aim of the exhibition was to "address the issue of artistic identity ... as it is influenced both consciously and subconsciously by a wide range of factors including social, economic and political context; climate, family, media, location, nationality, religion" ("Visual Artists" 21). In addition, during an interview with the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Baume explains that the composition of *A Line Made By Walking*, the curatorship of artworks to be presented and the arrangement of photographs and citations followed the same principles of the making of an art installation, in which each sentence is one object fitting precisely where it is placed.

Although recently published, these works have already been analysed through different lenses, such as Maria Coppola's view on gender metamorphoses in *How to Be Both* and *Girl Meets Boy*, and Mikaela Wretman Lundgren's comparison of gender-bending artists in *How to Be Both* and *Orlando*, by Virginia Woolf. The intertextual structure of the novel is discussed in Carla Cingolani's essay, based on Gerard Genette's concept of transtextuality. From an intermedial perspective, Claus Clüver studies the enargeic effect of the ekphrastic passages inspired by del Cossa's *St. Vincent Ferrer* and Miriam de Paiva Vieira examines the role of the ekphrases inspired by del Cossa's frescoes in the narrative[1]. As for *A Line Made by Walking*, it has already been analysed by Maria Olalla Santos Barral, in the light of ecocriticism and ecofeminism studies, focusing on the relation between the protagonist and the environment surrounding her, and by V. Suganya and B. Padmanabhan, who focus on the interpolation of memory and the nonlinearity of the narrative.

[1] Manuscript submitted to an essay collection on transcodification. The paper, entitled "*How to be Both* through Overlapping Ekphrastic Layers", is an updated version of the book chapter "Sobreposições ecfrásticas em *Como ser as duas coisas*, de Ali Smith" (2021)

My first contact with them happened through my adviser during my undergraduate course. There, I carried out an undergraduate research project about *How to Be Both*.[2] It aimed at studying the ways through which the novel borrows elements from other arts and media to propel the narrative, especially del Cossa's frescoes. Also, in my undergraduate final paper entitled *Art that Lasts Forever: The Presence of Photography in A Line Made by Walking, by Sara Baume*,[3] I analysed how photography was made present in the narrative, beyond the reproductions of the photos. These two works culminated in a co-authored paper entitled "From Brushes to Lenses: An Ekphrastic Stroll in *A Line Made by Walking* by Sara Baume," published in 2020, and a co-authored book chapter entitled "Sobreposições ecfrásticas em *Como ser as duas coisas*, de Ali Smith," published in 2021.

These works made it clear that, despite the differences in the contexts, the women protagonists of the novels, George and Frankie, build and explore their identities and subjectivities through photographic series, while struggling with grief and personal issues. Therefore, this thesis aims at discussing the role played by photography in the construction of the identity of women protagonists as artists. It also illustrates how photography shapes George's and Frankie's identities and represents the means by which they express their subjectivity.

To do so, this work presents a comparative analysis of the novels *A Line Made by Walking* and *How to Be Both*, developed under the light of Intermedial Studies. In order to cover most of the aspects that influence the way these characters' identities are constructed in the narratives, this thesis is divided into three chapters and each chapter discusses the main theoretical concepts necessary to comprehend specific aspects of the narratives and is illustrated with examples and analyses of the novels.

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[2] The project, entitled "A presença das artes e mídias no romance *How to be Both*, de Ali Smith", was developed under the supervision of Professor Miriam de Paiva Vieira between 2018 and 2019, at the Federal University of São João del-Rei, and it was funded by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Minas Gerais (FAPEMIG).

[3] The undergraduate final paper was also advised by Professor Miriam de Paiva Vieira, in 2019.

Chapter I, entitled "'Where Is the Art?': Reframing Artist Narratives," contextualizes the genre of artist narratives, to which these novels belong. It presents an overview of the origins of these narratives, their roots in the *Künstlerroman* tradition and the specific traits that characterize them. For this part of the discussion, I rely mostly on the works of Izabela B. Lago, Eliane T. A. Campello, and Solange R. Oliveira. This chapter also opens the discussion about the representation of women artists in these narratives, supported by Rachel B. DuPlessis, Virginia Woolf and Michele Perrot, and the presence of other arts and media in them, based on Irina Rajewsky, Claus Clüver, Miriam de P. Vieira and Liliane Louvel, as well as the functions art and specific artworks operate in the novels, based on Sophie Bertho's proposal.

In Chapter II, entitled "'Art Is the Only Thing I Am Able for': Through the Lenses of a Camera", the study of the role of art, in general, is narrowed to the relevance of photography to these narratives. The subjectivity entailed in photography is explored, as well as the subjective point of view of the photographer. At this point, the theoretical background comes mainly from the works of Susan Sontag, Arlindo Machado, Liliane Louvel, Lars Elleström, Linda Hutcheon and Roland Barthes. These notions enable me to argue that photography, and its many specificities, deeply influence the way George and Frankie see the world and themselves.

Finally, Chapter III, entitled "But This Girl is an Artist!": The Figure of the Woman Artist," examines the notion of the contemporary subject and the matter of identity and subjectivity. Based on the studies of Donald E. Hall, Stuart Hall, Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler, the chapter uncovers the need to observe the countless elements that take part in the constitution of an individual's subjectivity. Bearing that in mind, I turn my attention to the subjectivity of women artists, relying on Mary Eagleton, Kristen Frederickson, and Linda Huf, and to the study of the construction of Frankie's and George's identities.

The conclusion, entitled "'Art Is Everywhere': Final Remarks," summarizes what has been discussed so far and reflects upon the depiction of these characters' identities, taking into consideration the main similarities and differences involved in the processes.

Overall, this research may contribute to a better understanding of the ways the identity of women artists is portrayed in contemporary narratives, especially considering the relevance of photography in the construction of the representation of the self. It may also add to the study of how literature takes advantage of aspects from different arts and media in its constitution and how these elements appear in the narratives to describe the construction of identity and subjectivity of the characters.

Chapter I

"Where Is the Art?": Reframing Artist Narratives

> If neurotic is wanting two mutually exclusive things at one and the same time, then I'm neurotic as hell. I'll be flying back and forth between one mutually exclusive thing and another for the rest of my days.
>
> Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

The present chapter focuses on one of the major forms of the interrelation between literature and the other arts – that of artist narratives. Considering that this work departs from the reading of *How to Be Both* and *A Line Made by Walking* as artist narratives, it is relevant to understand the genre and its main characteristics, so a historical overview since its roots in the *Künstlerroman* tradition is presented, based on the studies of Solange R. de Oliveira, Eliane T. A. Campello and Izabela B. do Lago. Then, it concentrates on the representation of women in this kind of fiction, focusing on the figure of the woman artist. This section is mainly supported by Rachel B. DuPlessis's and Michelle Perrot's discussions on the representation of women in fiction, and Virginia Woolf's notes on the woman artist. Finally, it examines the role Art plays in these narratives, considering the ways through which it is present in the text and the different functions it might have in the narrative structure. Here, the concept of intermedial references coined by Irina O. Rajewsky, the notion of ekphrasis as proposed by Claus Clüver and Miriam de P. Vieira, and the functions of painting, by Sophie Bertho provide the framework necessary to identify an artwork transposed into a narrative and to comprehend the implications of its presence.

1.1 Understanding Contemporary Artist Narratives

The representation of artists in literature is intrinsically connected to the German tradition of *Künstlerroman,* commonly translated as an artist novel. These novels "appear as a response to the enthusiasm surrounding the theme of Art that intensified in the 18th century, associated with the increasing popularization of the romance as a genre, which dominated the literary scenery in the 19th century" (Lago 10)[4]. The *Künstlerroman* is defined by Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira as "any narrative in which the figure of an artist or a work of art (real or fictitious) plays an essential structuring role, and, by extension, literary works in which one searches for a stylistic equivalent based on other arts" (5)[5]. Oliveira bases her definition on the one proposed by Ulrich Weisstein, to whom the *Künstlerroman* is a narrative that presents, at its core, technical and aesthetical problems which are characteristic of one form of art, so that by solving the issues related to the artistic creation itself, the artist-protagonists also find a solution to problems in their own lives (Weisstein 9). Both definitions centre the classification of a *Künstlerroman* on thematic aspects so that the presence of an artist or the work of art structuring the narrative is enough to consider a novel as part of this tradition.

The origins of the term and its definition, however, are rather controversial. Izabela B. Lago identifies two possibilities: the first one claims that artist novels are born with Wilhelm Heinse's *Ardinghello und Die Glückseligen Inseln*, published in 1787; the second one places the *Künstlerroman* as a response to the *Bildungsroman*, the so-called novels of formation, which depicts the growth and coming of age of a protagonist. A *Bildungsroman* is classified,

[4] In the original: "surge como um reflexo do entusiasmo pelo tema da arte que se evidenciou no século XVIII, aliado à crescente popularização do romance enquanto gênero, que tomou conta do cenário literário do século XIX" (Lago 10). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

[5] In the original: "inclui qualquer narrativa onde uma figura de artista ou uma obra de arte (real ou fictícia) desempenhe uma função estruturadora essencial, e, por extensão, obras literárias onde se procure um equivalente estilístico calcado em outras artes." (Oliveira 5)

according to Karl Morgenstern – the philosopher who first defined the term in a lecture in 1819 – "on account of its content, because it represents the development of the hero in its beginning and progress to a certain stage of completion, but also, second, because this depiction promotes the development of the reader to a greater extent than any other kind of novel." (654-55) Thus, Morgenstern insists on the formational character of these narratives, emphasizing that they somehow teach something to both the character and the readers. Following this line, then, the distinction between the *Bildungsroman* and the *Künstlerroman* lies in the fact that, in the former, there is necessarily a strong educational concern that is not the focus of the latter, which, in turn, concentrates on the lives and works of artists.

Nevertheless, despite the controversy between the terms, in her book *O Künstlerroman de autoria feminina: a poética da artista em Atwood, Tyler, Piñon e Valenzuela*, Eliane T. A. Campello emphasizes that contemporary narratives embrace characteristics of both the *Künstlerroman* and the *Bildungsroman* by representing the formation of artist-protagonists, their growth, the development of their creative processes, and the construction of their artistic identities (32). The representation of a journey, whether the protagonist's internal search or an actual trip, one of the main themes identified by Campello as distinctive in artist novels, for instance, is inherited from the *Bildungsroman.* For the author, it is highly important that these novels depict the artist following the paths of creativity and expressing him/herself through art. Thereby, Campello approximates a trace of *Bildungsroman* to an artist novel and endorses Oliveira's claim about the structural role of art in these narratives by defining that the outcome of the artist's journey must be in the form of art. Thus, Campello notes that the way artists represent themselves and their perception of the world in their artworks reveals elements of the conflict between art and life (33)[6], a recurrent theme in the *Künstlerromane.* She explains that it is in the process of solving this issue, when

[6] In the original: "A representação do/a artista e a descrição de como ele/a se projeta e projeta o mundo, em sua obra, são os elementos reveladores do conflito entre arte e vida." (Campello 33)

the artist-character searches for answers to his/her art problem, that the literary text broadens its boundaries and approaches itself to other themes and areas of knowledge such as Art, morals, ethics, and ideology.

In an attempt to solve the problems concerning the origins and the multiple conflicting definitions of *Künstlerroman*, Lago proposes the term artist narratives, a category derivative from the Germanic tradition. The updated term comprises narratives in which the life of an artist-protagonist is necessarily in the foreground, setting the tone and the basis to develop the entire narrative. By opting for this terminology, which I adopt in this work, Lago removes the former restriction of these narratives to romances, opening it to other literary genres, such as short stories, novellas, and representations in other media[7] as examples of these narratives. Her proposal also provides a clear definition of the formal and structural aspects that are characteristic of this kind of narrative, which are valuable to build a consistent analysis and understanding of artist narratives, reason why it is essential to this thesis.

From these aspects, it is important to highlight the exploration, in the thematic *topoï*, of the myth of the artist, the problem of artistic creation and the opposition between art and life, often representing a source of conflict to the artist-protagonist. The representation of certain typical scenes related to the artist, such as an exhibition, the atelier and the creative process, and the expressive presence of the pictorial, which emphasizes the intersection between these narratives and the arts and media represented in them, are also stressed by the author. The depiction of such scenes is justified by the symbolism embedded in space-temporal frames that are deeply related to the themes represented in the narrative, the historical context, and the artist-protagonist's subjectivity. Thus, seeing the artists at work in their own environment brings to light details about the way they interact with different stages

[7] In this work, I understand "media" as defined by Rainer Bohn, Eggo Müller e Rainer Ruppert, in 1988, "to whom "medium" as "that which mediates for and between humans a (meaningful) sign (or a combination of signs) with the aid of suitable transmitters across temporal and/or spatial distances." (Cf. Clüver, Claus. "Intermediality and Interarts Studies", 2007)

of artistic creation, from the selection of a subject to aesthetic choices made to achieve a certain final result.

Another specific trait relevant to this work is the fact that the characters, whether adjuvants or opponents are usually either involved in the art world or form an opposing system to the figure of the artist, representing the concrete reality from which they usually deviate. Lago also highlights the use of *mise en abyme*, through which the writer may use painting as an allegory to writing, and the critical dimension and didactic functions of these narratives, a point in which artist narratives come closer to other areas of study, such as art history, philosophy and art criticism, and rescue their connection to the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* and its focus on the formation of both characters and readers.

Regarding the myth of the artist, it is relevant to note that the most common image of the artist is that of "an unusual man, different from the others, marked by the creative genius, an unstable temper, alternating between moments of enthusiasm and discouragement related to the obsession with his creation, and who needs to self-isolate to create" (Lago 133)[8]. According to the author, the artist is depicted as being "displaced, tormented and absorbed into an unending pursuit of his own definition, his social status and the accomplishment of his work," (89)[9] and he is also commonly associated with the image of a bohemian and isolated genius. Besides that, it is also possible to add to this list Alison Bain's description of the artist outsider, the genius who can create masterpieces regardless of not having a formal education in the arts and belonging to marginalized groups (29).

Even so, most of these characteristics are used to describe artist narratives written by male authors about male artists. Campello explains that "the *Künstlerroman* is characterized as a genre dominated by the masculine, from the part that creates it to the one that

[8] In the original: "... um homem incomum, diferente dos demais, marcado pelo gênio criativo, por um temperamento instável, alternando momentos de entusiasmo e desânimo pela obsessão com sua obra, e que possui necessidade de se isolar para produzir." (Lago 133)

[9] In the original: "... deslocado, atormentado e envolvido na busca incessante de sua definição, de seu status social e da realização de seu trabalho..." (Lago 89)

conceptualizes and analyses it" (32)[10]. She continues clarifying that this vision persisted in literary criticism until the 1960s, when Feminist Literary Criticism emerges and proposes a revision of history, in search of the voices that were silenced. Campello underlines that contradicting traditional criticism, the first artist narratives in English Literature were, in fact, written by women, since works such as Frances Moore Brooke's *The Excursion* (1777) and Helen Maria William's *Julia* (1790) were published before Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-96), one of the novels considered the prototype of the genre.

These novels by women, "by focusing on the position of the heroine-artist, both in the family and in social contexts, and by questioning the identity of the woman and the artist, established a tradition with its own values to the *Künstlerroman* of female authorship" (Campello 75)[11]. In addition, they favour "a re-reading of dominant forms of the hegemonic culture and incorporate the presence of a social subject, differentiated and gendered" (Campello 66)[12], a subject that comes from a space influenced by multiple and contradictory discourses, positions, and significations.

In resonance with Campello, Rachel B. DuPlessis, in her "To 'bear my mother's name': *Künstlerromane* by Women Writers", justifies that

> Using the female artist as a literary motif dramatizes and heightens the already-present contradiction in bourgeois ideology between the ideals of striving, improvement, and visible public works, and the feminine version of that formula: passivity, "accomplishments," and invisible acts. (DuPlessis 84)

[10] In the original: "o *Künstlerroman* se caracteriza como um gênero de domínio do masculino, tanto por parte de quem o produziu, quanto por parte de quem o conceituou ou analisou." (Campello 32)
[11] In the original: "... ao enfocar a posição da heroína-artista, tanto no âmbito familiar quanto no social, e ao questionar a identidade da mulher e da artista, estabelecem uma tradição com valores próprios para o *Künstlerroman* de autoria feminina." (Campello 75)
[12] In the original: "... favorece uma releitura das formas dominantes da cultura hegemônica e inscreve a presença de um sujeito social, diferenciado e gendrado." (Campello 66)

That is because, according to her, placing the female character as the genius artist defies both the traditional notions of womanhood and genius, since the term used to be restricted to describe exceptionally gifted men, not women.

Artist narratives written by women, then, often depict and reflect upon the struggles the woman artist faces once she enters the art world, a traditionally male space. DuPlessis presents a more detailed account of recurrent themes depicted in these narratives. According to her, during the 19th century, works with female artist-protagonists usually privileged the woman over the artist, often representing conflicts between femininity and ambition. These conflicts are moved by a relation either/or, in which the woman ends up sacrificing her artistic drive in the name of family, heterosexual love and marriage. As for 20th-century novels, the romance plot is "replaced by a triangular plot of nurturance offered to an emergent daughter by a parental couple" (DuPlessis 91). In these cases, the protagonist ends up usually being depicted as "a 'thwarted mother' type of artist," (91) or even the muse[13] to her daughter, who becomes an artist "to extend, reveal, and elaborate her mother's often thwarted talents." (93) In a certain way, these daughters attempt to give voice to their silenced mothers and visibility to their artworks. DuPlessis also sheds light on the fact that, at this point, the number of successful women artists increases considerably in artist narratives written by women, mostly because of changes in the conflict between role and vocation. In 20th-century novels, more often than not marriage and motherhood are no longer the main concern, they are replaced by the will to fulfil the parent's task/dream.

However, DuPlessis points out that the mother-daughter relationship may also indicate a generational displacement. Sometimes the mother is not exactly a muse, and it is not uncommon, as she indicates, the depiction of the mother's death in these narratives, as it might be "the writer's way of solving one form of the conflict between role and vocation,

[13] Muse, in this case, is used by DuPlessis in the sense of an inspiration strong enough to motivate daughters to give life to the mother's thwarted talents.

between the mutual costs, in Jane Flax's terms, of maternal nurturance and filial autonomy" (DuPlessis 99). It is in the breaking of the bond with the mother that the daughter encounters her own path and space in the artistic creation. This mother-daughter bond and its implications, for instance, permeates the novel *How to Be Both*, given that George only actively engages with photography after Carol passes away and she begins to monitor Lisa the same way they believed the woman spied on Carol. However, she does not attempt to fulfil any of Carol's dreams. George's motivation is clear: "In honour of her mother's eyes she will use her own. She will let whoever's watching know she's watching" (Smith 157-58). She is, in some ways, trying to avenge her mother and make sure she would not be forgotten. Carol only becomes the girl's muse in her absence, and it is with her words in mind, "*Consider for a moment this moral conundrum. Imagine it. You're an artist."* (Smith 157, author's emphasis), that George takes her first picture.

Concerning contemporary artist narratives, Campello draws attention to the emphasis given to the courage required for women to develop themselves into independent and creative artists. The conflicts between art and life are still present and are intrinsically related to the social roles women are expected to fulfil, the difference lies in the actual possibility of not having to sacrifice their artistic impulse. Despite their cyclic structure, both Smith's and Baume's novels share an open ending that leaves up to readers' imagination the fate of the artist-protagonists. Even so, the tone set at the end indicates that although their futures are uncertain, they remain attached to Art. Frankie ends the narrative with a quiz about Oak Trees and then states that Art and sadness would last forever, which somehow ties her future to Art, suffering and the promise of growing. As for *How to Be Both*, right before Francescho is taken back to the past, she tells the readers that George and Helena are painting eyes on the wall across the street, in front of Lisa's house. It subtly implies that George would no longer go there every day, but she would continue to use her eyes as her mother wanted her to.

From what has been presented thus far, it is possible to note that Sara Baume's *A Line Made by Walking* fits precisely within what is considered a typical artist narrative. Frankie, the artist-protagonist, finds herself in the middle of a creative crisis, constantly feeling like she has failed her career. The distance from her artistic creation during the time she was working in an art gallery painting the walls between exhibitions leads her to a life crisis, to the point that she feels like she is slowly disappearing from the world. The conflict between life and art permeates the novel as she reflects upon her life and her creative process while working on a photographic series on animal corpses.

Although there are other characters that are part of the artistic world, such as her colleagues from college and work in Dublin, the ones that appear more frequently – her mother, father and Jink, a neighbour at Turbine Hill – represent the exact opposite of the artist-protagonist. All of them are grounded in reality and share a practical perspective on life. None of them seems to understand what disturbs Frankie so much, even though their reactions to the protagonist's behaviour are different. Her mother tries not to judge or criticize Frankie too much, but at the same time, she often demonstrates her concern with the way the protagonist chooses to deal with depression and tells her more than once to consult with a doctor and accept medication. Accepting medical treatment is, actually, one of the conditions her mother imposes to let Frankie move to the bungalow. Her father, in turn, is described as a taciturn worker, someone who is distant and does not talk much but who seems to give in to Frankie's wishes. Jink might represent the main adjuvant in the story, as he tries to convince Frankie to seek the answers she needs in religion, rather than in Art. Despite the influence of these characters, Frankie maintains her resolution of staying isolated in the bungalow to reconnect with her artistic vein while rummaging through old memories and art history.

In contrast to Baume's novel, Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* presents a contemporary approach to these narratives, exploring duality from its title to its core: it is divided into two independent but interconnected chapters, which overlap, describing moments from the past and the present, and it depicts two women artists as protagonists. Their stories are intrinsically interwoven as George and Francescho enter the art world after the loss of their mothers at a young age. Both of them share a romantic interest in their best friends and it is through the eyes of one – the painter – that the entrance of the other – George – into the Art world is narrated. In addition, real and fictitious artworks are the backbone of the narrative, the line that sews their stories, and, at the same time, they assume a didactic function by revealing the trajectory of women artists through history.

It should also be observed that both the moments of creation and reception of the work are depicted in the narrative. The ghost del Cossa narrates the process of confection of the frescoes in the *Salone dei Mesi*, their reception at the time they were made, and the reception of her *St. Vincent Ferrer* in the 21st century. She is also responsible for narrating George's process of photographing the house, her final photos and the making of a collage. Even George registers the reception of del Cossa's artwork through time, by detailing her impressions about the frescoes and some of her panels that she finds in an online search. The reception of del Cossa's work is also verbalized by Carol, who is an economist, political activist, art historian and specialist in women's studies. It is through her analyses that the technical aspects of the panels, as well as the cultural and historical backgrounds, are presented, while George's readings represent the reception of artworks in terms of the feelings aroused by them.

The main counterpoint grounding George and Francescho in reality is centred on the paternal figure. George's father, Nathan, represents an opposing figure even to Carol, as he refuses to go watch a meteor shower with her because he is "Up at six, Carol" (Smith 17), or

to take part in the trip to Italy because he cannot leave work. After Carol's death, he seems even more incapable of connecting with George and Henry, as he develops an addiction to alcohol that forces George to assume responsibility for her brother and the house. Still, it is Nathan who restricts George from entering Carol's studio and points out that the girl's wish to witness "all the unfair and wrong things that happen to people all the time" (Smith 33) is appalling. And it is from Nathan's eyes that George hides a leak in her bedroom's roof, and her little escapes to London, to visit the National Gallery. As for Francescho, while her father is the one who comes up with the idea of dressing her as a boy so that she could have a formal apprenticeship in the arts, he is also the one who, out of concern, constantly refrains her from fully experiencing the world and warns her not to let anyone discover her identity.

While it is true that *How to be Both* stands at the intersection between an artist narrative and a *Bildungsroman*, one cannot deny that Art is not present in the novel merely as a motif to teach something to the readers. It represents, instead, the form through which George finds a way to come to terms with the loss of her mother, which approximates the novel to Weisstein's claim that Art and the search for answers to an artistic problem might help the artist-protagonist of a *Künstlerroman* to find a solution to real-life matters. When George's relation to Art is associated with Lago's condition that the life of the artist-protagonist must be in the foreground of the narrative, then it becomes undeniable that the novel may be read as an artist narrative.

Furthermore, while the entire novel focuses on George's life and journey, even in del Cossa's chapter, it is also permeated by the unfolding of the bond between mother and daughter, pointed out by Campello and DuPlessis, in which the daughter dives into artistic creation trying to give voice to the mother, or, in this case, sight. In the narrative, it is clearly stated that George wants to prove her mother's sanity and avenge her, at the same time. She wants to inflict the same invasion of privacy she believes her mother suffered. Carol

represents the muse guiding George's steps, even in her absence. After her death, George embraces even the little things such as the daily dance routine to old songs Carol used to do, and she often catches herself thinking about how her mother would know exactly how to behave in certain situations.

Although del Cossa's memories and details from her life in the 15th century are relevant to the development of the plot, they might also be seen as a point of reference to establish a parallel between her and George's lives. From her memories, it is possible to apprehend pieces of information about the struggles women artists faced when trying to pursue a professional career in the arts during the Renaissance. In addition, these memories might be contrasted with the struggles George faces in contemporary England while making her entrance into the Art world. It is the representation of the lives of these women artists in the literature that this chapter addresses from now on.

1.2 Representation of Women Artists

Despite the considerable popularity of artist narratives, it is important to notice that the number of publications in which the artist-protagonist is a woman remains low. In the vast majority, according to Lago, the artists depicted in these narratives are male painters. Usually, in such narratives, the female characters

> were relegated to secondary roles, represented as muses-models or partners-wives of these artist-protagonists, passive subjects in the creative activity, when they do not represent a source of conflict, an obstacle to the artist's work, many times playing a maleficent role, as antagonists. (Lago 89-90)[14]

[14] In the original: "foram relegadas a papéis secundários, representadas como as musas-modelos ou companheiras-esposas desses artistas protagonistas, sujeitos passivos na atividade de criação, quando não se

Lago also indicates a connection between the absence of women in active roles and the moral and social conventions of the 19th century, which restrained women's access to education and the subversive spaces commonly depicted in artist narratives. In '*Mon' Histoire des Femmes*, Michelle Perrot details the extent of the contact women were allowed to have with Art: they "could paint for themselves, draw children's portraits, sketch bouquets or landscapes. Play Schubert or Mozart on the piano for a friendly or social evening" (Histoire 129-130)[15]. In other words, they could create their own works or reproduce others as long as they did it in private spheres or for private matters. Perrot also explains that women could enjoy Art, and even teach drawing or piano, manufacture small objects, or copy the great masters in the museums, if necessary; however, they could not and should not attempt to do it professionally. On the same topic, Virginia Woolf explains that any woman in the sixteenth century who attempted to explore a great gift for poetry, and for other arts as well, "would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at," since she "would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty" (Woolf 37). As a consequence, formal education or a professional career in the Arts was not accessible to them, especially if they wanted to avoid publicity, as pointed out by Woolf. Their alternative, according to the author, was publishing works unsigned or using male names, which accounts for the often supposed absence of women from these narratives and stories. The desire for anonymity, Woolf claims, "runs in their blood" (37).

Even so, in *Les Femmes ou Les Silences de l'Histoire*, Perrot explains that, because of this restriction to private spheres, women were given little space in the traditional historical

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apresentam como uma fonte de conflitos, um entrave ao trabalho do artista, muitas vezes desempenhando um papel maléfico, como antagonistas." (Lago 89-90)

[15] In the original: "…peuvent peindre pour les leurs, crayonner les portraits des enfants, esquisser des bouquets de fleurs ou des paysages. Jouer au piano Schubert ou Mozart pour une soirée amicale ou mondaine." (Perrot 129)

narrative as well. The author states that most of the records about these women and their creations are found in diaries, correspondences, files, and photographic albums, that is, in the files and "the secrets from the attics" (Les femmes 35). Yet, besides the attics, the lives of average Elizabethan women, Woolf explains, might be found somewhere, spread in "parish registers and account books," (34) waiting to be registered and transposed into a book. This erasure from historical narratives, along with the exclusion of women writers from the canon, collaborates to the *Künstlerroman* being "characterized as a genre dominated by the masculine" (Campello 32)[16], as explained before.

At this point, it is interesting to draw attention to the character Francescho del Cossa in *How to Be Both*, even though the painter is not the main focus of this project. The way Smith portrays her evokes this debate concerning women's authorship of artworks signed by men and the long tradition of crossdressing artists. In the narrative, Francescho – with an extra H on the name possibly added by the author to differentiate the character from the historical figure – is a girl, who, after the death of her mother, is convinced by her father to disguise herself and live like a man to pursue a career as an artist. The need for a disguise comes precisely from the fact that during the Renaissance the only socially acceptable way for a *common* woman to become a professional painter was by entering a nunnery. The emphasis on common is needed since the situation could be slightly different if the woman in question belonged to a traditional family or if she was taken under the tutorage of a great male master. Nevertheless, these women were still restrained from the ateliers and public spaces that composed the artistic scenery and would most often paint portraits in their own houses. Such public spaces were not suitable for the ideal of chastity and purity that, according to Woolf, were imposed on them and had a "religious importance in a woman's life" (37). This is probably one among many other reasons why countless women artists would

[16] In the original: "o *Künstlerroman* se caracteriza como um gênero de domínio do masculino" (Campello 32).

prefer to sign their works under a male pseudonym, to significantly increase their acceptance by the artistic community.

This discussion is openly summarized in the novel when George asks her mother if any of the frescoes painted in the *Salone dei Mesi* in *Palazzo Schifanoia*[17] could have been made by a woman. Carol tells George how

> there are a few renaissance painters they know about who happen to have been women, but not very many, a negligible percentage. She tells her about one called Catherine who was brought up by the court here, in the castle right there, because she was the daughter of a nobleman and one of the women of the Estense court took her under her wing and made sure she had a superb education. Then Catherine had gone into a nunnery, which was a good place to go if you were a woman and wanted to paint, …
>
> But other than something like that happening? her mother says. No. It's pretty unlikely that women worked on much that's extant, certainly on anything we saw today. (Smith 95)

Carol then goes on to explain that she could make a reasonable argument defending that the painter behind del Cossa's panels was originally a woman, based on the shapes and "constant sexual and gender ambiguities running through the whole work" (Smith 96), but ends the subject by stating that chances were rather slim.

The topic is subtly evoked again in del Cossa's chapter when the painter arrives in contemporary London and observes George in the National Gallery. At first, Francescho notices her painting of St. Vincent Ferrer, however, when she turns around to look at the rest of the room, she realises that there are four paintings by Còsimo Tura and only one of hers. At first, the proportion is slightly disturbing: "Please God dear God send me right now back

[17] For more information and pictures of the *Salone*, see.: www.artecultura.fe.it/378/il-salone-dei-mesi.

to oblivion : Jesus and the Virgin and all the saints and angels and archangels obscurate me as fast as possible please cause I am not worthy &c and if Cosmo's here, if the world's all Cosmo same as it ever was–" (Smith 166-67). Then, she takes comfort in the superiority of her saint due to its capacity of capturing George's attention: "And, just saying, but whose saint is it anyway that that boy with his back to me's spending all his time" (167). Thus, not only does the novel question the erasure of women artists in a particular period of history, but also hints at the unbalance between the number of men and women artists exhibiting their works in museums. del Cossa's observation implies that even if women succeed in becoming artists, their recognition by the specialized community is not granted. Although the same concern is not explicitly reflected in *A Line Made by Walking*, as Frankie does not dedicate much thought to general topics in art criticism, it becomes evident through the fact that she only remembers 14 artworks produced by women, two of them being from the same artist – Mona Hatoum –, during the 75 self-imposed quizzes about artworks.

It is relevant to note that this absence of women artists in museums, in comparison to men artists, is the result of a combination of factors, such as the fact that "even in the nineteenth century a woman was not encouraged to be an artist. On the contrary, she was snubbed, slapped, lectured and exhorted" (Woolf 41), not to mention the fact that "art making traditionally has demanded the learning of specific techniques and skills, in a certain sequence, in an institutional setting outside the home, as well as becoming familiar with a specific vocabulary of iconography and motifs" (Nochlin 163), an instruction that was highly inaccessible to them. Even nowadays, in the painting collection at London's National Gallery, the one George frequently visits, only 21 of the 2,300 paintings are signed by women artists,

primarily by famous names such as Artemisia Gentileschi, Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Rachel Ruysch and Rosa Bonheur.[18]

It is not surprising, then, that when the woman artist figures as the protagonist of an artist narrative, as is the case of the novels analysed here, her learning process follows a different pattern from that of male artists. Campello explains that when the traditional artist narratives focus on the development of the artist-heroine from a young age, it usually draws on the limitations of her origins, the social context in which she is inserted, issues related to relationships, self-education, alienation, and on the search for an artistic realization and an independent life. However, when artist narratives written by women attempt to redefine notions of gender, they usually narrate the development of the artist from adulthood, in which the heroine's expectations about the future are related to marriage and motherhood rather than to artistic creation, and "the possibility of integrating herself into the social context as an artist is almost null" (Campello 69)[19]. It is this impossibility of integration that, according to Campello, frequently sets death, madness, physical or emotional mutilation or alienation as the artist-heroine's fate and gives rise to the figure of an "*artiste manquée"* (69, author's emphasis), whose creative potential is somehow trimmed by society or the social institutions of the Art world.

1.3 The Role of Art

As has been demonstrated thus far, an artist narrative is not simply a story that follows the development and growth of an artist. At this point, Weisstein, Oliveira, Campello and Lago agree that the presence of Art in these narratives exceeds a mere form of illustrating the

[18] For more information about the collection, see www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/women-in-our-collection.
[19] In the original: "esta possibilidade de integrar-se na qualidade de artista ao meio social é quase nula" (Campello 69)

artist's creations. To Weisstein, since an artist narrative is a kind of narrative in which answers to artistic issues guide the way the protagonists solve problems in their lives, art plays an active and significant role in the way artists think and interact with the world. Oliveira, departing from Weisstein's definition, extends the discussion and declares that this presence adds layers of meaning not only in moments when the artist-protagonists are creating a piece but also in their readings of other artworks. To the author, "the struggle of reading – one's artwork or someone else's – might also indicate the search for knowledge, the elaboration of the world by one's mind" (Oliveira 9)[20] and

> In some cases, the artist places oneself in front of an artwork as if he is facing an empty or broken mirror, the mirror of modern art. It exemplifies, then, the paradoxical principle that, in art, deformation might be a condition to representation. In others, the knowledge sought is the one of the work itself. The pictorial language converts into metalanguage. Or, conversely, the work of art becomes a metaphor of the novel. (Oliveira 10)[21]

This integration between the work of art represented in the narrative through pictorial language, the reading made by the characters and the way their readings reflect how they apprehend the world is, perhaps, one of the main reasons why Oliveira defends that the study of *Kunstlerromane* profits from a combination of the *ut pictura poesis* tradition and some principles from Semiotics. This type of investigation is currently developed in the light of Intermedial Studies, an area that investigates "all those phenomena that (as indicated by the prefix *inter*) in some way take place *between* media. 'Intermedial' therefore designates those

[20] In the original: "...o esforço da leitura – da própria obra ou da alheia – pode indicar também a busca do conhecimento, a elaboração do mundo pela mente" (Oliveira 9)

[21] In the original: "Em alguns casos, o artista se coloca diante da obra como de um espelho vazio ou partido, o espelho da arte moderna. Exemplifica então o princípio paradoxal de que, na arte, a deformação pode ser condição para a representação. Em outros, o conhecimento almejado é o da própria obra. A linguagem pictórica se converte em metalinguagem. Ou, alternativamente, a obra de arte transforma-se em metáfora do romance." (Oliveira 10)

configurations which have to do with a crossing of borders between media" (Rajewsky 46, author's emphasis). That is to say, roughly, that Intermedial Studies concentrate on the investigation of the multiple processes through which different media interact and influence each other.

When defining her literary conception of Intermediality, Irina O. Rajewsky categorizes the representations of one type of media configuration into another in three main phenomena: a) media combination, when both media types are visibly present, as in comic books; b) intermedial transposition, when one medium is transformed into another, as in film adaptations; c) intermedial references, when one medium cites, alludes, makes reference or pays homage to another, but only one of them is materially present. In the case of intermedial references, Rajewsky draws attention to the fact that they are to be perceived as strategies used to create or add meaning to the work, reinforcing the notion that nothing in a narrative should be taken for granted.

For instance, in Baume's novel, the title *A Line Made by Walking* is a reference to a photograph taken in 1967 by British artist Richard Long, currently on exhibition at Tate Museum.[22] Even though sharing the same title already indicates the strong connection between the works, Baume reaffirms, in an article written to the *Irish Times*, that "A Line Made by Walking (the artwork) has a particular resonance with the novel because it is about searching, and about repetition. About where we are going, and what we leave behind" ("Sara Baume on Writing"). Her sentence echoes Long's definition of the photograph. In his words: "My first work made by walking, in 1967, was a straight line in a grass field, which was also my own path, going 'nowhere' … my intention was to make a new art which was also a new way of walking: walking as art" (Long qtd. in Tufnell 39). Also, about his work, Long tells in an interview with Charlotte Higgins, from *The Guardian*, that the significance of walking is

[22] For a reproduction of the photograph, see.: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-a-line-made-by-walking-ar00142.

that he can incorporate space, in terms of distance, and time into his art, so that "a work of art can be a journey" (Higgins).

In this way, considering Rajewsky's claim that when a work makes use of intermedial references, "the given product thus constitutes itself partly or wholly *in relation* to the work, system, or subsystem to which it refers" (53, author's emphasis), it is possible to find traces of the influence of Long's works in Frankie's. She creates her photographs through walking, while also looking for her own path – both in her personal life and in her artistic career. Their connection is evoked again when Frankie suddenly remembers her animals and realises: "After I find them for the first time, I never notice them again. How magnanimous of my killed creatures, to simply disappear" (Baume 282-83). All that remains, from Long's sculptures and Frankie's animals, is a photograph, in the most concrete way of testifying an existence.

Apart from Frankie's photographs, which are reproduced in the book, all of the other artworks transposed and referenced in *A Line Made by Walking* and in *How to Be Both* are present in the narratives through ekphrastic passages.[23] The term ekphrasis is defined by Claus Clüver as

> an enargetic representation of non-kinetic visual configurations as semiotic objects. It verbalizes a real or fictive viewer's perceptions of, or reactions to, characteristic features of configurations that actually exist, or suggests the perceived existence of such configurations in virtual, or fictive, reality. (Clüver 252)

The author also reinforces that ekphrases must create "a mental image of configurations in a non-kinetic visual medium, making them *anschaulich* without literally showing anything" (252). A successful ekphrasis, then, has to create in the readers' minds a vivid image, a

[23] For a detailed study about the ekphrases inspired by del Cossa's frescoes present in *How to Be Both*, see Vieira and Ferreira, 2021.

feeling of *déjà vu* and it only materialises when "in a mental process, the evocation of [the] visual image is triggered from its verbalisation, by means of a text read or listened to" (Vieira 50-51)[24]. Clüver emphasizes that an ekphrasis also "implies a viewer's gaze at these objects; if they are the product of an encounter with the phenomenal world, it suggests the producer's way of representing that world according to the semiotic and cultural conventions of the age" (252), which designates to the viewer/reader a central role in the construction of this mental image.

An example of ekphrasis is the one inspired by Long's photograph, recalled by Frankie in one of her quizzes:

> Works about Lower, Slower Views, I test myself: Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967. *A short, straight track worn by footsteps back and forth through an expanse of grass.* Long doesn't like to interfere with the landscapes through which he walks, but sometimes he builds sculptures from materials supplied by chance. Then he leaves them behind to fall apart. He specialises in *barely-there art*. *Pieces which take up as little space in the world as possible.* And which do as little damage. (Baume 261-62, emphasis added)

The condensed description, emphasized in the quotation, highlighting the path made by literal walking, reflects the minimalism of Long's photograph, which, in turn, condenses the aesthetic of his works: the "barely-there art."

However, more relevant than identifying an ekphrasis is to fully comprehend the roles the transposed image plays in the narrative structure. According to Sophie Bertho, there are two main cases in which a pictorial reference is made in literature: in the first one, when the writer uses commentaries on paintings to talk about Literature, as in the famous *Salons*, by

[24] In the original: "em um processo mental, a evocação de uma imagem visual é desencadeada a partir de sua verbalização, por intermédio de um texto lido ou escutado." (Vieira 50-51)

Denis Diderot; and in the second one, when it appears as an integrating part of the narrative, which is the case of artist narratives, for instance. To better comprehend this second case, Bertho proposes four types of functions the pictorial might operate in a narrative, namely the psychological, the rhetorical, the structural and the ontological functions. Additionally, she claims that these functions might appear either on the reader level, during the reception of the work, or on the narrative level, concerning its internal structures.

In the psychological function, the pictorial reference is still on the level of the character and it "substitutes or reinforces the narrative voice, acting as an element of characterization of a character or a particular space" (Bertho 111)[25]. It is used as a means to avoid monologues and long descriptions about places or elements from a character's personality, by approximating art and reality. These direct references also add new layers of meaning to the narrative through connections between the character and the cultural background of these works. An example of this psychological function might be identified in *How to Be Both* when George receives a photograph of the French singers Sylvie Vartan and Françoise Hardy[26] as a gift from Helena:

> George opens it. Inside there's a photograph on thick paper. It's summer in the picture. Two women (both young, both between girl and woman) are walking along a road together past some shops in a very sunny-looking place. Is it now or is it in the past? One of them is yellow-haired and one of them is darker. The yellow-haired one, the smaller of the two, is looking at something off camera, off to her left. She's wearing a gold and orange top. The dark-haired taller girl is wearing a short blue dress with a stripe round the edging of it. She is in the middle of turning to look at the other. There's a breeze, so her hand has gone up to hold her hair back off her face. The

[25] In Portuguese: "substitui ou reforça a voz narrativa, atuando como elemento de caracterização de uma personagem ou de um determinado meio." (Bertho 111)
[26] For a reproduction of the photograph, see: https://www.photo12.com/en/image/jmp06276_028.

> yellow-haired one looks preoccupied, intent. The dark one looks as if something that's been said has struck her and she's about to say a yes. (Smith 71-72)

Her reading indicates that George is short, with short blond hair, and it also reveals the girl's sensibility to photography's specificities when she points out that one of the girls is looking at something that is outside of the frame, or that she was captured in the middle of an action. This careful attention to the media-specific characteristics is explored throughout the entire narrative, even in the ekphrases inspired by del Cossa's paintings.

Yet, there is another aspect of this photograph that needs to be considered. Sylvie Vartan, the blonde singer whom George resembles, is widely acknowledged as a pop icon and as a representative of the Ye-ye's generation, in the 1960s, along with Françoise Hardy, France Gall, Jacques Dutronc, Johnny Halliday and Claude François. According to French newspapers such as *Le Monde* and *Le Parisien*, aside from being a phenomenon and an icon to youngsters, Vartan is also considered an icon to the queer community; the reasons listed by the articles range from Vartan's fashion style to the content of her lyrics. Such cultural background is relevant to the narrative since it is because of Helena, the one who gives George the photograph, that she begins to question her sexuality. In several moments, when George is thinking about Helena, she "thinks about the picture of the two French singers on her desk. She thinks about how she might be said to resemble a French girl singer from the 1960s" (Smith 77), which makes her think that Helena is the first person who tried to understand her and talk to her in her own language. It is not for granted, then, that it is with Helena that George laughs for the first time after her mother died. With this, Vartan's songs are included in George's playlists, as the girl begins to turn to them when she is upset or annoyed. What attracts her to Vartan's voice "is that there's almost no way it can be made gentle, or made to lie. Also, although it was recorded decades ago, her voice is always, the moment you hear it, rough with its own aliveness. It is like being pleasurably sandpapered. It

lets you know you're alive" (Smith 145), and it is exactly the reminder of being alive that connects George, Helena and Vartan.

When the pictorial reference plays a rhetorical role in the narrative, according to Bertho, it surpasses the mere revealing of information, instead, it causes a persuasive or affective effect on the characters that motivates them to transform or adapt certain behaviours. It happens, for instance, when George claims that

> In this case the art in this room has already made something happen – *the literal cheering-up of her mother,* who happened last week to see a stray photo in an art magazine of one of the pictures from here, a blue-coloured picture of a man standing dressed in ripped white clothes and wearing an old rope as a belt, *at the seeing and liking so much of which her mother literally stopped being sad* (she has been in a bad mood for weeks now because of her friend Lisa Goliard disappearing) then announced to the family over breakfast three days ago that *they were all going to see that picture for real next week and that she'd booked a hotel*. (Smith 42, emphasis added)

Here, the presence of the pictorial – the reproduction of a fragment of del Cossa's frescoes at the Hall of the Months – rescues Carol from her lethargy, as demonstrated in the sentences emphasized. This same picture also sets the course of the following events, since it is during the trip that George becomes familiar with del Cossa's work and gets to know more about Carol and Lisa's relationship, which later culminates in her photographic series.

Differently from the first two functions, the structural, pointed out by Bertho as the one most employed by novelists, is characterized as a reflexive function. It refers to a *mise en abyme,* in which the pictorial reference condenses certain aspects of the story, predicting the plot's further development. These types of references usually appear at the beginning of the narrative, and they are not restricted to paintings, including everyday objects and other art forms as well. For instance, it is through a reference to a newspaper photograph of an

uncontacted tribe found in the Amazon rainforest that Baume sets the context in which Frankie finds herself, in the very first paragraph of the novel:

> Today, in the newspaper, a photograph of tribesmen in the Amazon rainforest. The picture taken from a low-flying aircraft. The men naked but for painted faces, lobbing spears into the air as high as they can lob them, trying to attack the largest and most horrifying sky-beast they've ever encountered, ever imagined. The caption says they are believed to be from the last 'uncontacted' tribe.
>
> *What a thing, I think, that there are still. People. Out there*. (Baume 1, emphasis added)

With the sudden remark that there are people "out there," which she immediately forgets, Frankie extends the feeling of isolation created by the ekphrastic description to her context. She is in such an isolated space, not only in terms of geographical location, that she cannot be bothered to even consider the existence of others.

The same tribespeople are mentioned again, at the end of the story, reinforcing their connection to the protagonist. As they leave the forest to receive medical treatment, "a path has been channelled by their emergence, a line made by walking… Waddling, stumbling, waddling. Casting off the uncontainable vastness, stepping into the known world" (Baume 301). They come out into the world at the same time that she is leaving Ireland's countryside and going to England. The pictorial reference of the tribespeople, then, might be seen as a condensation of the artist-protagonist movement from isolation to life in society.

Lastly, the ontological function refers to the point in which the pictorial reference is presented as "a *description* that symbolizes the meaning of the work itself" (Bertho 121, author's emphasis)[27], a condensation of the meaning of the entire work, instead of just certain aspects of the narrative, as is the case of the structural function. In cases where the

[27] In Portuguese: "uma descrição que simboliza o sentido da própria obra."

ontological function is operating, writers make use of descriptions of paintings to discuss literature itself and the poetic creation, so that the pictorial reference acts as a metaphor, an analogy, to the meaning of the literary work itself. In *How to Be Both,* the reference to del Cossa's panel, "the figure of the effeminate boy, the boyish girl" (Smith 96), perfectly illustrates this function at work as it summarizes the duality at the core of the narrative: the possibilities of being both, rather than one or another. This figure is also related to another main element in the narrative, the theme of the representation of women artists, since it provides Carol with enough substance to argue that del Cossa might have been a woman.

Still, in Smith's novel, del Cossa's readings of photographs and the process of creating images are also intrinsically related to the ontological function. At first, the painter refers to George's photographs and the photos of Carol displayed on the girl's bedroom wall as "small studies," which would be much better if they were bigger, such as the frescoes in the *Salone dei Mesi*. Then, when talking about the photograph of Vartan and Hardy, del Cossa acknowledges it as a "picture by a great artist" (Smith 244), due to "its patchwork of light, dark, determination, gentleness," (244) its the careful composition. The same composition work is later noticed in George's photographs, which makes del Cossa finally acknowledge the girl as an artist. The ontological function, then, operates in the fact that it is literature, through ekphrasis, representing and reflecting on an issue related to art criticism: the status of photography as art. In addition, there is, in *How to Be Both,* almost an embodiment of Barthes' claim that "Photography has been, and is still, tormented by the ghost of Painting" (30) since the entire development of photography happens under the sharp, critical and suspicious eyes of painting. Furthermore, this entire discussion about photography revolves back to literature as it is used in the construction of George and is intrinsic to the girl's subjectivity.

What is relevant to grasp from Bertho's proposal is that these four functions are not exhaustible in themselves, they often superimpose each other and overlap, so that the same pictorial reference operates distinct functions at different stages of the narrative. The author systematizes an aspect that is already briefly mentioned in Oliveira's discussions about the work of art in a *Künstlerroman* when she draws attention to the fact that a character's reading of a visual work might reveal elements from his/her personality, or about the narrative itself and the way it is constructed.

While it is true that Bertho departs from an analysis of the functions of paintings mostly in French novels, she claims that her categories might be extended to the study of the presence of other artworks in narratives, such as photographs, art installations and sculptures. One of the closest – and most important to this study – parallels to be drawn here to expand these categories is the one between painting and photography, given the widely acknowledged proximity between both media. From an archaeological perspective, such as the one adopted by Walter Moser in his essay "As relações entre as artes: por uma arqueologia da intermidialidade," photography is said to have been developed from the parameters of painting itself. A position similar to Moser's is found in Jay David Bolter's and Richard Grusin's study of *remediation* – from the Latin *remederi*, to "heal" –, that is, the process through which a new medium heals the so-believed weakened aspects of previous media, by updating or reformulating them. For the authors, photography might be seen as an update of painting in the same way that cinema takes advantage of and reformulate photography, painting, and theatre at the same time.

Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that, since they are two distinct media, the specific traits that characterize photography might influence the way it exists and operates inside a narrative, distancing it from paintings. On the one hand, since its beginning, photography has been recognized for its straight connection to reality. In his notorious

Camera Lucida, Barthes defends that photography always carries within itself its referent, as it is a register of its luminous information. For the author, photography is a certificate of presence that attests that the photographed object existed in that specific space and time, even if it is no longer there. On the other hand, philosophers such as Arlindo Machado defend that more than just the referent, photography requires a mechanical device, since the luminous information suffers several transformations after entering the camera and before it becomes the image registered into the film negative. The camera, then, is seen as being responsible for most of the final result of a photograph, while in paintings the artist is the one in charge of that.

The same exercise might be done to extend Bertho's categories to other art forms. Such expansion is needed since both novels analysed here make reference to a wide range of works in their structure, mainly photography, frescoes, oil paintings, art installations, performances recorded on video, and sculptures. In *A Line Made by Walking* alone, 75 artworks are transposed into the narrative, during Frankie's self-imposed quizzes. She gives the readers her perception of these works, marked both by her commentaries and the specific word under which she assigns each of them. These tests are always introduced by the motif "Works about" associated with a random word related to what she is thinking at that moment, so there are tests about falling, validation, birds, trees, and many others. After she identifies a specific artwork in her repertoire, she briefly describes and comments about it in relation to herself or her works. For instance, Frankie interprets Mona Hatoum's *Recollection* (1995)[28] as a register of the artist's desire to collect her fallen hair strands so that she might feel like they still belong to her and explains: "I want to believe this because I want to believe I have things in common with great artists, and that this must mean I might one day be a great artist too" (Baume 66). Still, at some points, Frankie needs to take a moment to question "where is

[28] For a photograph of the installation, see: https://vleeshal.nl/en/collection/recollection-1995.

the art?" (Baume 160) in some artworks, to which she concludes that art is the appropriation, the manipulation and that it is everywhere.

In addition, as a reinforcement of the fact that the tests present someone's reading of such pieces, Baume ends the novel with an author's note followed by a list of all the artists and artworks cited:

> IN THESE PAGES, many works of visual art from many different artists and eras have been named and outlined. I want to make clear that these are described as the narrator remembers and perceives them; they are interpreted according to Frankie. I urge readers to seek out, perceive and interpret these artworks for themselves. (Baume 303)

During the launching of the French translation of the novel, Baume emphasizes that each artist and artwork was carefully chosen to be mentioned in a specific moment of the narrative so that it is intrinsically related to the context where it is placed.[29] Hence, they are not detachable parts of the narrative and should not be disregarded.

As for George, her readings emphasize the way her young age still drives the way she observes the world, even though she is expected to act like an adult. It is not uncommon, in her descriptions, for her eyes to be attracted to obscene figures or contours in details in the background plane of del Cossa's paintings, e.g., when she and Helena are analysing a photograph of the painter's *Portrait of a Man with a Ring* (1472 - 1477)[30]:

> She points to the rock formations in the background, behind the man's head, where *an outcrop of rock shaped a bit like a penis is pointing directly at a rocky bank opposite*

[29] For the full interview, see https://youtu.be/i0WfypHv0G0.
[30] For a reproduction of the painting, see www.museothyssen.org/en/collection/artists/cossa-francesco/portrait-man-ring.

> – across a small bay and on the other side of the handsome man's head – *which has an open cave set back in it. …*
>
> It is both blatant and invisible. It is subtle and at the same time the most unsubtle thing in the world, so unsubtle it's subtle. Once you've seen it, you can't not see. It makes the handsome man's intention completely clear. (Smith 122, emphasis added)

It is important to note that even in her juvenile comments, highlighted in the quotation, there is a strong sensibility to the artworks and the techniques employed in their confection. She observes from the construction in layers of the frescoes to the different tonalities of certain colours used in the confection of the *Salone dei Mesi* to indicate each season, the shades of black on St. Vincent Ferrer's cloak, the composition of the background and the way each element interferes on the reception, such as the rock formations.

While Frankie's readings demonstrate a mature, conscious, analytical person, who has a clear, formal, and solid knowledge about what she is analysing, George demonstrates her immature side as well as her process of making sense of the painter's works – by approximating them to her reality, as when she compares the frescoes in the *Palazzo Schifanoia* to a giant comic strip.

Despite the differences in George's and Frankie's personalities and contexts highlighted by their readings, it is essential to acknowledge that it is only because these artworks are present in the narrative that such nuances could be added to the general meaning of the novels and the construction of the characters. Through the examples presented throughout this chapter, it becomes clear that the relevance of art in artist narratives is not centred only on the protagonist's artworks, instead, it spreads to the structure of the novels, the characterization of the protagonists and the meanings constructed in dialogue with other artists' works.

This chapter, then, discusses the notion of artist narratives and their relation to the *Künstlerroman* tradition, while presenting and analysing excerpts from the novels *A Line Made by Walking* and *How to Be Both.* It aims at demonstrating that, despite their specificities, and how similar yet different they are, both novels might be considered examples of contemporary artist narratives written by women. While Baume's novel follows the traditional structure of an artist narrative, Smith's plays with the form of the genre and of the novel itself, dividing the story into two independent chapters about the same two artists. The main elements, however, remain present in both of them as the readers follow the development of the artist-protagonists' artistic activity, their struggles and oscillations facing the conflict between life and art, their thoughts about specific artworks or art history in general, and, probably the most important of them, art being a safe space in which they could explore their feelings, their grief and their subjectivities without being judged or condemned by others and even by themselves.

Based on the assumption that artworks operate specific functions inside narratives, the analysis in this chapter also looks into the role played by Art in these novels, by grasping a general view of the way both artist-protagonists perceive artworks other than their own and how their readings often become a reflection of their selves. Frankie's and George's artistic creations are explored in the next chapter, as it delves into the Art form they have chosen to express themselves: photography.

Chapter II

"Art Is the Only Thing I Am Able for": Through the Lenses of a Camera

> A picture is most times just a picture : but sometimes a picture is more…
>
> Ali Smith, *How to Be Both*

As the previous chapter explains, when Art is present in a narrative, it certainly operates a function, whether structurally in relation to the characters themselves and their actions, or externally, revealing information to the readers. Given that, when narratives, such as the objects of this study, centre on one specific Art form, it is bound to permeate the entire novel, on a much more intrinsic level than when a specific artwork appears in crucial moments. Departing from the notion that art plays different roles in narratives, this chapter concentrates on understanding the presence of photography in *A Line Made by Walking* and *How to Be Both*, especially considering how it is related to subjectivity and how this subjectivity is inherent to the artist-protagonists' works and in the way they interact with the world. To do so, I first investigate the relations between photography and reality, the photographer and the subject photographed, and artist and machine, supported by Arlindo Machado, Susan Sontag, Pierre Bourdieu, Walter Benjamin, and Lars Elleström. Then, I move on to explore how these themes are evoked in literature, especially how the subjectivity embedded in photographs may cross over to their representations in literary texts. In this section, I also ground my discussion on Linda Hutcheon's and Liliane Louvel's observations about the relations established between photography and the artist. Finally, I present a comparative analysis of the way Frankie and George, the female protagonists in the novels analysed, engage with photography, contrasting how each of them takes advantage of this Art

form to support their search for an identity, for closure, for the means to come to terms with grief and depression.

2.1 From Mechanical Devices: Understanding Perspective and Subjectivity in Photography

Thinking about the development of photography, as briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, implies going back to its roots in the *camera obscura*, an optical device widely used by painters during the Renaissance to achieve a more precise and realistic effect in figurative paintings. The device makes use of light rays and reflective objects to create an inverted image that needs to be fixed on canvas by painters.[31] At that time, the widespread perspective behind the principle of the *camera obscura* "aimed at suppressing – or at least repressing – representation itself, as the *analogon* they sought should have sufficient thickness and density to pass for the 'real' itself" (Machado 31-32, author's emphasis)[32]. So, the more faithful to reality an image was, the better.

Besides the *camera obscura*, there are a few other techniques that are remarkable in the development of photography. One of them is the daguerreotype, invented in 1839 by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, which depended on pieces of copper plated with silver, polished, and exposed to iodine vapours to create an image. It is described by Ian H. Smith as the most popular photographic process for twenty years at that time (191). Another one, which anticipated the industrialization of photography (I. Smith 192), is the calotype, invented by Henry Fox Talbot, in 1841. The process here is faster and cheaper than the daguerreotype, but the images are not so clear. Then photography's development passes

[31] See Machado and Fainguelernt for detailed information on the history and functioning of *camera obscura.*
[32] In the original: "visava suprimir – ou ao menos reprimir – a própria representação, à medida que esse *analogon* buscado deveria ter espessura e densidade suficientes para se fazer passar pelo próprio 'real'." (Machado 31-32, author's emphasis)

through the discovery of albumin paper, colloidal silver, and the first analogical cameras, until it reaches what is currently known as a digital camera. The point here is that these discoveries propelled technology to evolve in order to fulfil this yearning to achieve faithful reproductions of the real.

Regarding analogical and digital cameras, it is relevant to notice that one of their strongest features is that of instantly capturing an image – the reflex of the subject's luminous information – and registering it in the negative film or on a memory card. Such characteristic is the main reason why photography is often referenced by Barthes as a "certificate of presence" (87), a concrete proof that the subject photographed existed in that specific context when the photo was taken. Hence, to Barthes, because of the process imposed by the device, photography could not be distinguished from its referent, as the presence and even the existence of the subject is never metaphorical.

When Susan Sontag, in her renowned *On Photography*, defines photography as a material vestige, directly engraved by the real, she subscribes to this traditional perspective on photography, even though she later begins to regard as *naïve* the attempt to establish a direct connection between the real and an image. Lars Elleström, in turn, acknowledges that "the automatic registering of light in the production of photographs is presumed to guarantee a strong indexical reality" (165), when explaining that photography is often considered a form of writing with the light, thus partially agreeing with Barthes and Sontag.

Therefore, because of the circumstances in which photographic devices were developed and the processes involved in the making of a photo, photography was and remains commonly associated with the idea of reality, most often seen as a faithful reproduction of it. While it is true that the mechanical device favours this conception, since it registers an actual subject's luminous information, the odds and the artist behind the camera cannot be excluded from the discussion. It is vital to remember that "nothing is more

subjective than the photographic lenses, since their role is to embody the eye of the subject of representation" (Machado 44, author's emphasis)[33]. So, the mechanical device captures, within its possibilities, what the artist chooses to represent and depict. Even within what French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson calls the "decisive moment," (46) the precise moment when the subject is mostly charged with meaning, what the device records is one random hundredth of a second between the click and the registration of the luminous information. Similarly, John Szarkowski explains that "all photographs are time exposures, of shorter or longer duration, and each describes a discrete parcel of time." (209) His thought reinforces Machado's and draws attention to another aspect that influences the levels of unpredictability in registering an image: the time of exposure determined by the shutter speed and the aperture of modern cameras. Thus, the final result varies depending on how the artist programs the camera's features.

Besides that, it is relevant to consider Machado's argument that the real is not something ready or predestined. On the contrary, it is a truth that demands to be sensed and produced. According to the author, "we would not be able to register a reality if we could not, at the same time, create it, destroy it, deform it, modify it: human action is active, thus our representations assume the form of both reflection and refraction" (Machado 48)[34]. As a consequence, photography cannot be a simple registering of an object's immanence, "as a human product, it also creates with this luminous information a reality that does not exist outside of itself, nor before itself, but precisely in itself" (48)[35]. Therefore, the role of the photographer is as important as that of the device, since it is the artist who identifies the

[33] In the original: "nada é mais *subjetivo* do que as objetivas fotográficas, porque seu papel é personificar o olho do sujeito da representação." (Machado 44, author's emphasis)
[34] In the original: "Nós seríamos incapazes de registrar uma realidade se não pudéssemos ao mesmo tempo cria-la, destruí-la, deformá-la, modificá-la: a ação humana é ativa e por isso nossas representações tomam a forma ao mesmo tempo de reflexo e refração." (Machado 48)
[35] In the original: "como um produto humano, ela cria também com esses dados luminosos uma realidade que não existe fora dela, nem antes dela, mas precisamente nela." (Machado 48)

decisive moment guided by whatever meaning the final photograph should convey, creating a reality that only exists in itself.

As cameras became significantly smaller and lighter, faster in capturing images and easier to manipulate, because of automatic modes – in which the device itself adjusts its configurations to capture the best image –, they consequently became much more accessible, up to the point that most people carry them around in their smartphones. This is one of the reasons why Liliane Louvel affirms that nowadays "everyone is potentially a photographer." (34) What distinguishes the person who occasionally takes photographs from an artist might include elements such as intention, motivation, aesthetic arrangements, the artistic background of the photographer, an acknowledgement of the work as an art product, and so on. This widespread access to cameras collaborates with traditional photographs being part of what Pierre Bourdieu calls a "domestic cult," (19) a ritual to consecrate family ties, notably on special occasions. Sontag associates this rite of recording family life with the changes happening in the family structure during the industrializing period in Europe and America. She indicates that "photography came along to memorialize, to restate symbolically, the imperilled continuity and vanishing extendedness of family life. Those ghostly traces, photographs, supply the token presence of the dispersed relatives" (Sontag 6). Yet, there is still something rather personal and subjective in registering the moments one finds the most memorable, the ones that are worthy of being captured and kept in memorabilia.

On the act of photographing, Sontag argues that it is an event in itself, in which the photographer is embedded with the right to interfere, invade or ignore what is happening, in order to create a photograph. Still, she defends that "photographing is essentially an act of non-intervention … The person who intervenes cannot record; the person who is recording cannot intervene" (8). This reinforces that photographers are supposed to participate in events by recording them, minimizing their interference. She endorses that

> To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are**,** in the status quo remaining unchanged (at least for as long as it takes to get a "good" picture), to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing — including, when that is the interest, another person's pain or misfortune. (Sontag 8-9)

Even so, it is central to underline that Sontag first acknowledges that "although the camera is an observation station, the act of photographing is more than passive observing … it is a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging whatever is going on to keep on happening." (8) She implies that even when photographers opt not to actively disturb the event they are recording, they interfere. Their presence, and more specifically the presence of a camera, might encourage or inhibit something from happening, or even influence it so that it happens differently. To make it clearer, it is possible to add Machado's critique to this exact positioning of Sontag's, when he counterarguments that "the camera is never passive in face of its object; it imposes an arrangement, creates a configuration of things by the force of its mere presence." (65) [36] Consequently, "the option of the photographer is also an unquestionable act of political intervention" (67)[37], even in its form of non-intervention.

Such intrusive and disturbing quality of photography, Machado argues, is the reason why there is not a fixed reality, capable of remaining intact when facing a camera. Instead "everything is altered, everything is arranged, everything concurs to the ideal order of the monument." (64)[38] In the same way that Barthes narrates that he immediately starts to pose when he notices lenses directed at him, Machado exemplifies this case by observing that the presence of a photographer in an institution affects the routine of the place and suddenly a considerable number of employees appear cleaning the place, rearranging objects, placing

[36] In the original: "A câmera não é nunca passiva diante de seu objeto; ela impõe um arranjo, produz uma configuração das coisas pela força de sua simples presença." (Machado 65)
[37] In the original: "a opção do fotógrafo é também um ato de intervenção política indubitável" (Machado 67)
[38] In the original: "tudo se altera, tudo se arranja, tudo concorre para a ordem ideal do monumento" (Machado 64)

flowers where there was none. Thus, it returns to the fact that the reality depicted in a photograph exists only within itself.

What is relevant to grasp here might be summarized in Machado's conclusion in *A ilusão especular: uma teoria da fotografia*: although photography needs an actual referent to be in front of the camera, the final photograph is the result of refractions and codifications, which, in turn, depend on perspective, framing, inclination of the camera, point of view, and several other technical and aesthetical aspects (180). In other words, the supposed reality represented in a photograph is highly subjective. It carries multiple layers of meaning which are created every time the artist makes a choice that interferes with the image. These different ways through which the artists recreate reality are explored hereafter, bearing in mind their motivations, their references – artistic or not –, and their creative processes.

2.2 Behind the Cameras: Revealing the Artists' Relation to Photography

Considering that artist narratives are intrinsically connected to the art forms they depict, it is important to observe that not only reproductions of photographs or ekphrastic passages inspired by them are present in the text. As explained by Lago, the narrative might, as well, explore and thematize the Art form, to the extent that its historical development or common beliefs related to it permeates the entire structure. When it comes to photography, it is not uncommon the exploration of its connection to reality, the discussion on whether photography might be considered Art or not, and even its association with the figure of the flaneur, who captures images from the flow of life while wandering around, in the case of street photography.

Smith and Baume recall and bring to light the indexical quality of photographs in the narratives of *How to Be Both* and *A Line Made by Walking*, often associating them with other

elements. It is used, for instance, to compose the ekphrastic passages about the photographs, adding elements to mark the time and signal the distance from where the protagonists are to the moment the photos were taken. In both novels, such indexicality is evoked especially when the artist-protagonists are dealing with photographs of their deceased beloved ones. In a way, the concrete evidence of their existence is intrinsically related to the protagonists' attempt to freeze their memories about these people into the frames. Perhaps, even as a form of maintaining them alive in their memory.

In one of these moments, Frankie casually encounters an old photograph of her grandmother, when she is forced to reorganize some old boxes her mother wants to pick up from the bungalow. It is remarking that she can define precisely when the photo was taken departing only from indexes such as her grandmother's smile and hairstyle, the black and white print and the uniform recurrent in photos from the Second World War:

> The last photograph is easy; *I know which box it belongs in as soon as I turn it over*. My grandmother from the breastbone up, a jaunty regimental hat pinned at an angle to her sensible hairdo.
>
> Here is London at the start of the Second World War; the day she entered the Women's Royal Naval Service. She is nineteen and still smiles with her teeth showing. By the end of the war, most of the ones in the front rows had been knocked out: not by a bomb but a car accident – an ambulance which crashed into a crater. This is a fact that has proved helpful to me in the sorting of the muddled photographs. Some of those without a date scribbled on the back can be dated by whether or not my grandmother has opened her mouth to smile.
>
> …
>
> I place the photo in its place. I pause for a moment of silent appreciation: my grandmother's radiant yet under-celebrated life. (Baume 252)

Not surprisingly, this is one of the few direct references to the grandmother that is not entirely based on the way Frankie remembers her. And it is only when she pauses to appreciate her grandmother's life and finishes organising the boxes with these old photographs that Frankie begins to slowly react and "To fix things" (Baume 252).

George also resorts to old photographs as a means to maintain a vivid image of her mother. Instead of boxes, however, she keeps a collection of photographs stuck on her bedroom wall and "she has arranged them so that there is no chronology" (Smith 41). She refuses to let Henry touch the photographs or disorganise them exactly because the arrangement is relevant to her. In case she was to organise them in chronological order, she would eventually arrive at a point where there would be no more photographs because the subject no longer exists to sit in front of the camera. She would be forced to face Carol's absence, which she is not ready for "Because how can someone just vanish?" (58)

From a distance, del Cossa describes George's bedroom wall as follows:

> Behind the head of the bed the whole east wall here is all pictures, lots of pictures, of yet another woman : it is the same woman in all the pictures with the same laughing eyes : there is love in their arrangement, they are an overwhelm in this arrangement, they fall almost into and over each other : but the woman in these pictures is not the woman from the picture palace : no, this is a dark and different lady who has this warm demeanour and a finesse too about her clothes and her body in them which I admire : there are many portraits of her and at different ages like the spill of a life straight on to a wall : there are some done in greys of a small child I also take to be her. (Smith 244)

Just by observing the way George arranges the pictures on the wall and her attitude towards them, as "she sometimes looks at for many minutes and sometimes cannot" (Smith 291), del Cossa understands that the girl is grieving the loss of her mother and that "in

instance the picture means death : cause pictures can be both life and death at once and cross the border between the two." (291)

In these cases, the photographs mean both life and death to George and Frankie. The images, as filled as they are with indexical markers, acquire different meanings since the subjects photographed are no longer alive. The reality created in the photos, which exists only there, changes into a reminder. These images become frozen memories of a loved one, or even part of memorials to celebrate their lives, whether on a private level in Frankie's case or in an openly declared way such as George's exhibition on Carol. They are both a testimony of their existence and non-existence.

Other topics generally related to photography thematized in the narratives include, for example, the one of the mechanical reproducibility of art discussed by Walter Benjamin. This topic might be inferred from del Cossa's reaction to George and Helena forgetting a cup of hot beverage on top of the photographs:

> ruination !
>
> They have put their too-hot cups on the surface of the picture-wall and the cups have spilled a bit when the table got knocked : these cups are stuck to some of the pictures of – what are they of, again? – so much that to pick a cup up by a handle is also to pick up the whole wall.
>
> Both girls peel the picture-wall off the cups : the studies the cups stuck to are marked from the heat and the spill with 2 perfect circles from the shapes of the bases of the cups. (Smith 309)

The fact that the girls look appalled for a moment, but then burst out laughing when Helena simply detaches the photos from the cups, surprises the painter. From where del Cossa stands, the photographs are ruined. Although it does not openly represent Benjamin's discussion, it is possible to comprehend that, to a painter, anything that damages a work of art

after its completion implies that it is, most of the times, completely destroyed. Easily replacing the ruined photos with their reprinted copies is something unimaginable to a person whose perspective of an artwork is still grounded on the belief of its sacredness, or, as Benjamin would call it, its aura.

In a closer reading, these themes are reinforced by specific references to photography that, according to Louvel, appear with the incorporation of some of the technical vocabulary of photography in the text, including typical elements from the photographic practice, "such as 'the fixing,' 'the developing,' 'negatives,' 'the black box,' 'pressed the button,'" (34-35) as well as references to lenses, screens, framings, digital software dedicated to treating images such as Photoshop, and their specific functions such as controlling contrast, brightness and colour. To the author, these references to the pictorial collaborate to create a text that is, at multiple degrees, saturated with images rather than sacred.

Beyond the lexis, photography's influence may be also characterized by the borrowing of specific procedures to be used in the narrative, whether to describe the creative process of an artist or to characterize the artist himself. It happens, as described in the previous chapter, through the process of exploring intermedial references to create meaning. For instance, the photographer's second sight, indicated by Barthes (47), is widely used in the characterization of the protagonists in Smith's and Baume's novels, represented in the way they witness an event and capture beyond what the eye can see within the decisive moment.

In *How to be Both*, this notion of capturing beyond what is instantly visible is extended to embrace the fact that a photograph creates a reality that exists only in itself. When del Cossa mentions George's photographs, she roughly describes them as small studies of a house, "– the windows, a door, a gate, a high bush, the front façade –" (Smith 245), or she narrates the moments George is taking them, such as this one, when the girl is approached by Lisa and:

> … *quick as a magic trick* she took out her *tablet* and *made a study* of the woman with it : the woman put her hands up over her face : she did not want a *study* made : she turned like that and went back inside the house : a minute later though the woman stood looking out her window at the girl across the road : at which the girl held up her *tablet* again and *took a study* of the woman in the window : the woman drew a curtain down : then the girl *took a study* of her doing this too, and then one of the blinded window… (Smith 274, emphasis added)

While it seems like George is randomly taking pictures, it is the reality created in them that matters to the girl. The reasons behind each photograph, unknown to the painter, are grounded on George's main motivation to capture them: she wanted Lisa to know she was doing to her what she believed the woman did to Carol. Hence, the reality captured from Lisa's routine reflects Carol's. It is a projection of the mother and her life experiences that George sees frozen in these images.

A parenthesis should be made to indicate that the highlighted words in the excerpt above might be considered part of a photographic vocabulary when taking into consideration the fact that it is a Renaissance painter talking about a procedure she is witnessing for the first time. She does not know photography as it is, so she can only describe it by approximating it to elements she understands. Thus, "tablet" refers to a smartphone, and "quick as a magic trick" indicates the way the final image appears instantly on the screen. The very first moment del Cossa watches a photograph being taken is similarly described:

> He holds [the holy votive tablet] in the air : he is maybe saying a prayer.
>
> Ah! I see : cause a little image of the house and its door has appeared in the tablet : which makes these votive tablets perhaps similar to the box the great Alberti had and which he displayed in Florence (I once saw) whereby the eye looks through the tiniest of holes and sees a full distant landscape formed small and held inside it. (Smith 195)

The smartphone is described as a holy votive tablet and the whole process is compared to none other than the one of the *camera obscura*. Here, the historical background of photography is evoked, not only in the black box but also in the mention of Alberti, one of the great masters of the Renaissance. Leon Battisti Alberti was the one who elaborated the *Perspectiva Artificialis,* one of the principles used in the *camera obscura.* It comprises a "system of geometrical projections destined to represent tridimensional relations in a bidimensional surface, - only it did it by organising the lines perpendicular to the plane of the representation around one specific point, named *vanishing point*" (Machado 37-38, author's emphasis).[39] Such perspective is still used today, as Machado points out, in pinhole cameras.

The same photographic eyesight associated with the decisive moment is represented, in *A Line Made by Walking*, in the scenes in which Frankie narrates the process of finding her animals and photographing them. To illustrate, she encounters her badge during a bus stop, on her way to catch the boat to leave Ireland:

> The *sun setting. Rush-hour traffic thundering along the motorway*, as if there might be a hurricane or typhoon or rogue wave closing in behind. I linger at the edge of the car park, waiting for the almighty wind or water to appear. *And here is a badger curled on the hard shoulder.* Of course. *I put down my paper bag and cup. I take out my camera and lie in the road.*

[39] In the original: "consistia num sistema de projeções geométricas destinadas a representar relações tridimensionais no plano bidimensional, - só que ela o fazia organizando todas as linhas perpendiculares ao plano da representação em torno de um único ponto, chamado *ponto de fuga*" (Machado 37-38).

Fig. 1. The Badger. *A Line Made by Walking*, Kindle edition, ch.10, p.297.

> *Black blood bubbles elegantly from its nostrils*; it must be only newly dead. Cars pass so fast, their wind blows my eyelashes back to the sockets. It causes the badger's *dense, monochrome fur* to divide and swirl. It is of such *great size and heft* that it must have felt, to the driver who hit it, like knocking down a small child.
>
> *It is so utterly the end of summer*. Back down the motorway in the direction from which I have travelled, *there is a small tree standing solo on the horizon*, and *it waves* its branches weakly against the *whited-out sky.*
>
> The badger is magnificent, and so I lie beside it, cheek against tarmac, the smell of oil and dust and beast**.** *I take picture after picture*. A final showdown of concern for a creature other than myself. Until the bus driver sticks his head out the window to shout at me. (Baume 296-97, emphasis added)

Even though Frankie is not expecting to find any animals there, she has the camera ready just in case she runs into something worth being captured and included in her project. The words and sentences emphasized reinforce the casualness of the moment, and, at the same time, terminologies related to photography are employed to create the image also

through words, even when the actual photograph is amid the text, as reproduced in the quotation.

These are only a few examples of the way photographs appear, are evoked, alluded to, and reproduced, in the narratives of *How to be Both* and *A Line Made by Walking.* It is central to note that there is one single line connecting all these references, as diverse as they are in each novel: they are always linked, on some level, to Frankie and George. Sometimes, these references give new information about the protagonists by indicating what the photographs mean to them. On other occasions, they explain aspects of their creative processes, the moments of making decisions in favour of a specific effect, and so forth. Based on what has been discussed so far, the next section explores how George and Frankie take advantage of the Art form, contrasting the ways they relate to photography and the ways it influences their actions.

2.3 Multiple Ways of Seeing: Frankie's and George's Relation to Photography

Reflecting upon the reasons which lead these artists who are in the middle of a crisis to recur to photography as a means to express themselves, it seems difficult not to recall Sontag's allegation that "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and, therefore, like power." (3) It is possible to go even further and consider that "as photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure." (8) This feeling of power that comes from the act of taking a photograph of a reality that seems to be out of control or fading away begins to clarify the preference for photography over other Art forms in the narratives analysed here.

What photography provides George and Frankie "is not only a record of the past but a new way of dealing with the present" (Sontag 130), since the camera mediates their contact with reality, adding some distance so that they are able to process their feelings. It is possible because "photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible; of making it stand still. Or they enlarge a reality that is felt to be shrunk, hollowed out, perishable, remote" (Sontag 127). Photography gains even more relevance when taking into account that if "one can't possess reality, one can possess (and be possessed by) images." (128) Considering this, then, the protagonists' connection with photography might be perceived as an attempt to possess something that can confirm someone's presence in the world. While to Frankie her photographs testify her own existence in a world that feels to be falling apart, to George they represent a testimony of her mother's life and a possible way to maintain her image alive. This aspect, associated with the presumed strong connection with reality, indicates that the protagonists perceive photography as an ideal Art form to express their struggles because it condenses their search for reconnection with the world surrounding them while preserving elements from the past that is precious to them.

That being said, it becomes unquestionable that photography is central to the constitution of these characters. Also, it is relevant to pinpoint that photography still figures as "one of the major forms of discourse through which we are seen and see ourselves" (Hutcheon 41). Moreover, as Louvel explains, "photography seems to be directly linked to the subject, to the photographer, and to the spectator's history and experience of the world" (32), which means that photography can connect the artists to their experiences in a straightforward way. For instance, by photographing dead creatures, Frankie is forced to face her fear of dying, which is a recurrent reference in most of the narrative. What strikes the most about Frankie's project itself is the grotesque aspect present in the act of photographing animal corpses and her lack of an emotional reaction to them. However, this aspect is already

implied in her first description of it: “a series about how everything is being slowly killed” (Baume 2). Sontag associates this fascination with the bizarre and grotesque with Art’s tendency to suppress, or at least to reduce, moral and sensorial queasiness. To the author,

> Much of modern art is devoted to lowering the threshold of what is terrible. By getting us used to what, formerly, we could not bear to see or hear, because it was too shocking, painful, or embarrassing, art changes morals … But our ability to stomach this rising grotesqueness in images (moving and still) and in print has a stiff price. In the long run, it works out not as a liberation of but as a subtraction from the self: a pseudo-familiarity with the horrible reinforces alienation, making one less able to react in real life. (Sontag 32)

It is possible to perceive, in Frankie’s behaviour, that she is already unable to properly react in “real life” situations, such as maintaining a conversation with her neighbour or her hairdresser. For instance, when Frankie is at the hair salon she feels like a disappointment to the hairdresser because she cannot properly answer the woman’s questions, which leads her to react:

> ‘Don’t you ever get sick of asking all that stuff?’
>
> I say, very quietly. I see, in the mirror, a raised eyebrow. She doesn’t reply, keeps snipping.
>
> ‘Do you get up every morning,’ I say, ‘and do that to your hair? Do you undo it at night and then, the next morning, do you get up and do it all over again?’
>
> …
>
> ‘Doesn’t that leach at your soul?’ I whisper. ‘Even a little bit, even at all?’ (Baume 122)

However, snapping at the hairdresser only makes Frankie feel more upset as the entire situation reinforces her lack of ability to talk to people. After this, she concludes that "People don't like it when you say real things," (123) and only by the end of the narrative she acknowledges that it was her own behaviour that was rude.

Still, Frankie is drawn to a practice that might collaborate to alienate her even more. Despite that, the constant – and yet distant – contact with death helps her in overcoming her fear of dying. Throughout the narrative, while she works on her project, Frankie slowly moves from a feeling of impotence "Why do I feel as if I'm being killed when it's the season of renewal?" (Baume 3), in the beginning, to a feeling of hope "I will be good and grateful from now on. I will stop with all this dying" (244) and, finally, to "For the first time, I acknowledge the possibility that nothing will die, or change, or even happen" (268) by the end. Not surprisingly, her final quiz – about trees – is about Joseph Beuys' *7000 Oaks*[40], an intervention where the artist decided, in 1982, to plant seven thousand oaks with a basalt standing stone, "A symbolic beginning, predetermined to continue through time, across continents. … The oaks which grow. The stones which don't." (Baume 302-03) She remembers a symbolic beginning of a long journey to accompany and represent her own.

In a slightly similar way, it is also a death that drives George to photography. In her case, it is especially worth noticing that one "characteristic of the nature of photography as image, and thus as witness of an event, consists in the presence/absence of characters or objects" (Louvel 42) to understand the reason why it is a photographic series that provides George with the strength to live in a world without Carol.

In the absence of the mother, she remembers that Carol believed that Lisa was monitoring her, which instigates her to start stalking the woman. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is openly declared in the narrative that she would use her eyes in honour

[40] For pictures and more information about Beuys' project, see: www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/beuys-7000-oak-trees-ar00745 and web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/cookebeuys.pdf.

of her mother's, during the first time she follows Lisa through London and takes the first photograph. By repeatedly photographing Lisa, she manages to make her mother present, even in her absence. This is only possible, considering that George is an amateur photographer, because Art has always been present in her life, representing a significant part of her upbringing and her subjectivity. From what may be perceived of Carol through George's memories, she treasured Art as a form of expression, and constantly encouraged her children to question everything, to take time to actively interpret artworks and to always be curious about what they see.

Despite sharing the same starting point concerning photography, the depiction of Frankie's and George's creative process is perhaps the point in which both novels contrast the most. Frankie deliberates several times about the specific ways she wants her photographic series to be. She sets rules to delimit what kind of animals could be included in the collection, narrates some of her aesthetic choices and the post-treatment of the images. The first-person narrative allows the readers to follow the artist at work from inside her mind, which makes it easier to understand her creative process, the reasons why she photographs some animals and dismisses others, and to even identify when she makes decisions out of her pure instincts rather than based on concrete reasons.

The nuances behind her aesthetic choices are noticeable from the moment Frankie decides which animals she is going to photograph:

> All week after the bank holiday, it rains. Frogs come out into the wet. I find one on the road early in the morning. Thin skin grated off, legs vastly distended, organs buttered across the tarmac. Still I am able to see how small it originally was; it must be a new-season frog. It's too annihilated and would barely show up in a photograph. I can only hope there'll be another, intact. A frog that died of cancer, perhaps, or cardiac arrest. (Baume 199)

A small, annihilated frog does not fit the concept she had planned, so it is not worthy of a photograph. When she finally finds her perfect frog, however, she does not measure her efforts to get a photograph:

> This morning, the perfect frog. *Miles from turbine hill*. I have forgotten my camera. *The surface of the laneway is more moss than road. Gorse presses in from either side, closing it to a dark and prickly passage*. *I cycle all the way back and turn around again*. My knuckles numb into a handlebar claw. I'm afraid a car will have passed by the time I get back again, split and pulped my frog, or a song thrush swiped and scoffed it. But no, it's still here. I drop my bicycle to the ditch and kneel. *I have to shake the feeling back into my fingers before I am able to press the button*.

Fig. 2. The Frog. *A Line Made by Walking*, Kindle edition, ch.7, p.201.

(Baume 200, emphasis added)

To achieve the perfect picture, she is willing to cycle miles under bad conditions, as emphasized in the excerpt. Other than the moments when Frankie is taking a photograph, it is also possible to see her aesthetic concern when she edits her photographs.

> I plug my camera into my laptop and download the photos I took today. My robin looks angry, much angrier in reproduction than it appeared in life. Perhaps the Native Americans are right; perhaps the camera stole its spirit. I open my robin in Photoshop. I select Brightness/Contrast. I restore the vibrancy lost along with its spirit. (Baume 17)

Similar to the small frog, an angry robin also does not fit into the concept she had previously created for her series and her animal guardian. At this moment, Frankie has a clear reason to make alterations in the photograph. The technical vocabulary related to photography is present in the excerpt, marking the elements necessary to manipulate a photograph, the laptop, the editing software, and its functions of controlling the image's brightness and contrast.

The same conscious interference does not happen when Frankie edits the picture of the rook. She says: "I feel compelled to adulterate the colour balance in Photoshop. I fiddle with the contrast until his feathers are unrealistically blue. Why must I blue my crow, I wonder. What does a blue crow mean?" (Baume 143). She follows her instinct and alters the colour balance without fully understanding the reasons why she is doing so. Both photographs – like all of the others –, however, are reproduced in black and white in the novel (see fig. 3 and fig. 4 below).

Fig. 3. The Robin. *A Line Made by Walking*, Kindle edition, ch.1, p.2.

Fig. 4. The Rook. *A Line Made by Walking*, Kindle edition, ch.5, p.139.

Regardless of doing it consciously or not, what is striking about Frankie's creative process is that, although she does not interfere much with the animals before taking the photograph, she frequently alters the final products by editing the images until they reach the level of the visual impact she expects them to have. There are only two other moments when Frankie exerts her right, as a photographer, to interfere in the scene before photographing it: a) when she consciously waits for the rook to die so that she does not break the rule that prevents her from killing animals to include in her series. Here, she interferes by non-interfering, by not attempting to save the bird; b) when she removes a tin can from the head of a fox so that it does not affect the aesthetics of her photo, actively interfering with the subject photographed.

In contrast, since the development of George into an artist is narrated in the "Eyes" chapter, hence through del Cossa's voice, it is difficult to affirm whether she is consciously

aware of her every decision concerning the photographs or not, especially considering the circumstances in which she creates the series. However, presuming that George's thought might lay primarily on her wish to avenge her mother, it is possible to assume that aesthetics might not have been much of a concern at first.

It is only after the photos are printed and arranged on her walls that some aesthetic concern with the way they are displayed begins to appear. At first, del Cossa explains:

> We have done this visit many days now : so many that the north wall of the room she sleeps in is covered in these small tablet studies : each study is the size of a hand and the girl has arranged them in the shape of a star, going towards its points the lighter of the pictures and the darker ones going to the centre.
>
> The pictures are all of the house, or of the woman coming and going from it, or of other people who come and go : they are all from the same view, from in front of the poorly made wall : there are differences in the hedge leaves and tree leaves and as the season has shifted she has caught the differences in light and weather in the street from day to day. (Smith 275)

Despite her motivation to do so, by opting to photograph from the exact same position every time, George captures nuances of each season and the characteristics connected to the ordinary passage of time, which contrasts with the disturbance her presence causes in the everyday life of Lisa's house. The fact remains that, after these photos are printed, George not only notices these details but also takes advantage of them in their arrangement to create a star.

Later on in the narrative, George's artistic impulse is acknowledged by the painter after she dismantles the star and uses the photographs, together with the ones from their recent trips, to create a collage in the shape of a brick wall. In del Cossa's words:

> But the girl is an artist! Cause she has peeled down off her north wall all the many pictures of the house we sit and wait outside so often, and she has, on a table in the room, been making a new work out of them and I cannot help but feel I have hit the target with her cause the new work is in the shape of – a brick wall.
>
> As if each of the little studies is a brick in this wall, she has lined them up with the right irregularity and she has drawn and shaded with lead the mortar lines round and between each and cut some pictures short for each alternating brickline at the ends of her wall! She's an artisan and can very well make good things : the picture wall is very long and falls and curls off the table on to the floor and part of the way across the room as if the room is a divided territory in which (Smith 292)

At this point, it becomes evident that the process of creating the brick wall is carefully planned by George, as she draws and shades mortar lines, and cuts the photographs to better fit into their places. It is worth mentioning that other than what she does in her collages, there is no indication whatsoever of the way George edits her photos. She seems to prefer examining her creative possibilities departing from the printed photograph, instead of editing them on a computer or exploring the subject from different angles or perspectives.

Thus, it is precisely here the point in which both novels distance themselves from each other. In *How to be Both*, Smith explores the first steps a teenager takes into exploring photography, relying mostly on the automatic mode of the device to create patterns, while Baume delves into deeper levels of understanding of the Art form, by depicting a graduated artist who is, in most cases, quite ahead of an apprentice. George, unlike Frankie, is not exactly concerned with creating Art, or with an artistic career yet, she is simply experiencing the urge she has to create something that might alleviate the weight on her chest. Given the artistic background she has from her upbringing, it is not surprising that the outcome of her search comes in the form of artwork.

What this chapter has delineated thus far is that photography is not detachable from these characters' identities. The moment they opt for this specific Art form to express themselves, they reveal traces of what they are looking for and what they need to be able to deal with the reality in front of their eyes. Photography allows Frankie to explore her feelings and her artistic perceptions both as a final attempt to succeed as an artist and as a way to come to terms with her depression. She is an artist in crisis, struggling with the pressure to create great masterpieces and, although she is not completely confident, by the end of the narrative she appears to have a more optimistic view concerning her career prospects. Meanwhile, photography approximates George to a side of her mother she did not exactly understand while Carol was alive. It does not magically erase her grief, but it does indicate a path through which she can break through the cycle of pain, represented in the cathartic moment when George and Helena surround themselves with the wall of photographs and end up tearing it apart.

Therefore, these two novels demonstrate that artists and their instruments – the cameras in this case – are intrinsically connected. One becomes the extension of the other and the camera dictates and influences how the artists interact with their surroundings, and mostly how they actually see the world. Then, departing from this understanding of the subtle, and also not-so-subtle, ways the art form impacts the artist, I move on to explore the constitution of George's and Frankie's subjectivities to fully comprehend in which ways the pieces presented this far come together to create the overall picture of the artist-protagonists and the way the artist narratives here analysed are constructed.

Chapter III

"But The Girl is an Artist!": The Figure of the Woman Artist

> Who has not asked himself at some time or other: am I a monster or is this what it means to be a person?
>
> Clarice Lispector, *Hour of the Star*

Departing from the understanding of the specificities of artist narratives concerning the figure of the artist and the ways through which photography influences the artists and their perception of the world, discussed in the previous chapters, this chapter focuses on exploring how these elements collaborate to the construction of the artist-protagonists in *A Line Made by Walking* and *How to Be Both*. To better understand the role each element play in Smith's and Baume's artist-protagonists search for an identity, it is necessary to comprehend what is entailed in the process of constructing an identity. So, first I present a theoretical background on the matter of identity and the notion of subjectivity, as proposed by Donald E. Hall, as well as on the different perceptions of the subject, as discussed by Stuart Hall, Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler. Then, I investigate the main elements often associated with the subjectivity of women, and more specifically of women artists, especially the traits that might shape the way they are represented in fiction. This section is mainly supported by the studies of Alison Bain, Virginia Woolf, Mary Eagleton, Kristen Frederickson, and Linda Huf, among others. Lastly, based on what has been presented thus far, I delve into the construction of George's and Frankie's identities and subjectivities.

3.1 Who am I?: On the Matter of Identity in Contemporary Narratives

Who am I? the question that opens this chapter, has been at the centre of a heated debate for centuries, and, even so, there is still no consensus on the proper way to answer it. That is, probably, because it touches on a rather controversial topic in theory: that of the subject and its identity. Roughly, identity, in the Oxford Advanced American Dictionary, is defined as "who or what someone or something is," "the characteristics, feelings, or beliefs that distinguish people from others" or even "the state or feeling of being very similar to and able to understand someone or something." Similarly, to the Cambridge Dictionary, identity is "who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others." These definitions are intrinsically related to the well-spread notion that identity is something objective, inherent to a unitary subject.

The understanding of what a subject is, however, shifts over time, reflecting the socio-political context of the period. A consequence of these changes, Donald E. Hall explains, "was a palpably increasing awareness of the self as something that was not divinely formed and statically placed, but rather changeable and possibly cultivatable through one's own concerted activity" (D. Hall 17). Thus, it might be shaped or even constructed. Along this line of thought, it is relevant to draw attention to Julia Kristeva's attempt to disrupt Sigmund Freud's notion of a unitary subject by considering subjectivity as "a constant making and remaking" (Kristeva 159), meaning an ongoing process. Her definition resonates with Judith Butler's argument about human subjectivity being always already "variable" (Butler 181). In turn, both notions dialogue with that of the post-modern subject, defined by Stuart Hall, to whom identity is never fixed, essential or permanent; it is rather fluid, contradictory, and fragmented, shaped, and influenced by the forms one is represented and interpolated in different cultural systems.

Here, it is necessary to make a parenthesis to pinpoint that the shift in the concept that gives rise to the post-modern subject reflects the changes happening in Western society after

the Industrial Revolution. The debate around the notion of identity, for S. Hall, needs to be situated

> within all those historically specific developments and practices which have disturbed the relatively 'settled' character of many populations and cultures, above all in relation to the processes of globalization, which I would argue are coterminous with modernity (Hall, 1996) and the processes of forced and 'free' migration which have become a global phenomenon of the so-called 'post-colonial' world. (S. Hall 4)

Therefore, because identities arise and are transformed by historical moments, according to S. Hall, they are "constituted within, not outside representation." (4) However, Butler draws attention to the misleading conception that "that to be *constituted* by discourse is to be *determined* by discourse, where determination forecloses the possibility of agency" (182, author's emphasis). She explains that considering the subject as something constituted usually implies understanding it as a result of "rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity" (185) and that "the subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules" (185, author's emphasis). Hence, there is the possibility for a degree of agency in this process of repetition that creates variation.

Addressing the representation of the self in contemporary narratives involves thinking about it in terms of subjectivities since the term embraces both the social constructs and the consciousness of identity. Subjectivity, D. Hall explains, "invites us to consider the question of how and from where identity arises, to what extent it is understandable, and to what degree it is something over which we have any measure of influence or control" (D. Hall 3-4). This is relevant because

> one's identity can be thought of as that particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances that, in short – or long-term ways, gives one a consistent personality and mode of social being, while subjectivity implies always a degree of thought and self-consciousness about identity, at the same time allowing a myriad of limitations and often unknowable, unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend identity. (D. Hall 3)

Therefore, thinking about the self encompasses understanding the social, cultural, and political elements that take part in one's constitution, influencing and shaping identities. In addition, studying the representation of the self is also "an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of the self, in the present and in the past" (Hutcheon 7).

When it comes to women's subjectivity, what is commonly addressed is the fact that it is often built and discussed in relation to men's subjectivity. As noted by Toril Moi, it is difficult to ponder women's subjectivity and not to recall Simone de Beauvoir's thesis, in *The Second Sex*, that "throughout history, … "woman" has been constructed as man's Other, denied the right to her own subjectivity and to responsibility for her own actions" (Moi 92), and the well-known statement that: "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (Beauvoir 273). While her argument may be criticised for being too constructivist, it remains relevant to grasp the implications of society's norms and ideologies in the constitution of the woman subject.

Other theoreticians such as Kristeva, Butler and Catherine Belsey prefer to underline the possibilities for change in the construction of the woman subject, thus, adding a degree of agency in the process. These authors, according to D. Hall, claim that this possibility is embedded in the conception of the subject as something that is always in the process of building itself, therefore, susceptible to changes and transformations. It is worth noting that

women are especially traversed by contradictory discourses, as Belsey indicates. According to her: “we participate in both the liberal-humanist discourse of freedom, self-determination and rationality and at the same time the specifically feminine discourse offered by society of submission, relative inadequacy and irrational intuition.” (597-98) What might be inferred from this is that women’s subjectivity, then, is built through a state of tension, in the clashing of different and often contradictory discourses.

3.2 “So What is an Artist?”: The Subjectivity of Women Artists

It might be said that when the subject in question is an artist, the matter of identity and its representation becomes even more fluid. Alison Bain attributes such fluidity to the fact that artistic creation is a solitary activity, mostly performed in private spheres, so artists may not experience that much pressure to label themselves as one thing or another (26). On the figure of the artist, Mary Eagleton explains that, to Pierre Bourdieu, the “true aesthete assumes a position of ‘detachment, disinterestedness, indifference’ far removed from the ‘vulgar surrender to easy seduction and collective enthusiasm’ of the uninitiated” (44). She points out that the artist benefits from assuming this “interest in disinterestedness” (44), as it represents a lack of interest in taking the artistic production seriously, at the same time that it separates ordinary elements of everyday life from the ones worthy of the aesthetes’ attention.

Bain also mentions that, despite that, elements such as the myth of the artistic genius, and the outsider without formal education also influence artists’ identities (28-29). According to Lago, other notions currently associated with artists’ identities include the myth of unstable personalities, a current need for isolation, a divine artistic talent, and the existence of internal struggles leading the artist towards art, among others. All these characteristics are

intrinsically related to the image of the romantic genius, the eccentric figure that devotes his entire life to art making.

However, it is relevant to emphasize that this generic concept of "artist" most often refers to a male artist. While he is free to experience his art without having his identity questioned, the process of constructing an identity as a woman artist is a gendered one, hence a much more complex one. The woman author, Eagleton affirms, "is embroiled in problems about genre, literary form and language and solving these problems is important in maintaining her independence and her autonomy as an author," (76) a position rather similar to that of the woman artist. As mentioned in previous chapters, Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own*, stresses that in the nineteenth-century women were still battling a discourse that settled them as inferior even to the worst man. These women were often lectured whenever they manifested a desire to be an artist.

Although being a woman artist represented a herculean task in itself, as seen in chapter 1, establishing an identity as a woman artist is even harder, as she has to first find a balance between being a woman and being an artist. In pending towards the woman, she needs to face the extensive set of cultural aspects that dictates her role in society and the proper way for her to play it. These aspects, however, leave minimal to no space at all for artistic creation. Instead, in pending towards the artist, her subjectivity is bound to be influenced and instigated by all the myths, symbols, and characteristics entailed in the figure of the artist. The artist, then, "is torn not only between life and art but, more specifically between her role as a woman, demanding selfless devotion to others, and her aspirations as an artist, requiring exclusive commitment to work" (Huf 5). This is probably one of the main reasons why the woman artist needs to "defy the cultural definition of an artist or of woman if she is to remain artist and woman," (Stewart 14) otherwise she is destined to be constantly struggling in search for a balance that allows her to be both.

Even though women are no longer openly restrained from entering the art world, their current conflicts still reflect the traces of their search for an identity. About that, Katarzyna Kosmala, based on Parker and Pollock, reinforces that the identity of the female artist even now remains haunted by male-inspired myths of the "great maestro" and the romantic genius (38). It becomes a bigger issue if taken into consideration that insisting "on describing women artists in terms of linkages to the male artists who were their teachers or who influenced them in other ways undermines any vision of the female artist as independent" (Frederickson 14). Kristen Frederickson explains that

> What Linda Nochlin has referred to as the "art historical apparatus" has placed the work of women artists in a linguistically and sociologically gendered space, separate (if only implicitly so) from that occupied by their male counterparts. It is this implicit separation that Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock refer to in their statement that "the phrase 'woman artist' does not describe an artist of the female sex, but a kind of artist that is distinct and clearly different from the great artist." The term 'woman,' superficially a label for one of the two sexes, becomes synonymous with the social and psychological structures of femininity. (Frederickson 15)

The very concept of femininity, Griselda Pollock reinforces, is not the natural condition of women. "It is a historically variable ideological construction of meanings for a sign W*O*M*A*N which is produced by and for another social group which derives its identity and imagined superiority by manufacturing the spectre of this fantastic Other" (Pollock 101). It should be comprehended "as the ideological form of regulation of female sexuality within a familial, heterosexual domesticity which is ultimately organized by the law" (111-12). Thus, describing women artists in terms of linkage ends up reinforcing the social constraints that regulate these women's access to the public space and, consequently, to any cultural production.

As women started to be represented as protagonists in artist narratives in a rather recent past, their images were still linked to that of male artists. Linda Huf, in drawing a rough outline of the image of the woman artist, based on Maurice Beebe's study of artist novels, explains that "whereas the artist hero, as Beebe has shown, inclines to be passive, sensitive, and shy (that is, to have conventionally "feminine" traits), the artist heroine tends to be stalwart, spirited, and fearless (or, to have traditionally "masculine" attributes)" (4). Therefore, even when they are artist-protagonists in the stories, their identities are built based on masculine traits.

Besides that, it is not without reason that most of the women artist-protagonists represented in artist narratives are painters. In addition to the existence of "an art historical system that privileges painting over all other media" (Frederickson 14-15), there have been, historically, more women painters because "easel and paints might easily be set up unobtrusively in a bourgeois domestic setting, to be whisked away according to the demands of social or domestic life." (15) The situation is not the same for women who aspired to become sculptors, photographers, or architects, Frederickson states, since their artistry demanded interactions in "a public realm that did not welcome women." (15) Therefore, the arts of these women artists used to only be acknowledged if they remained restrained in the private realm and the artist herself is frequently depicted in masculine terms.

About the conflicts these women artists face, especially in the literature written by women, Huf identifies three recurrent images used in the way they are represented in artist narratives:

> First, images of monsters are common, suggesting that the woman artist sees her refusal to conform to a traditional role as making her a freak, an aberration of her sex. Second, images of entrapment abound – cages, jars, and glass bells – suggesting that the female artist sees herself as caught in a trap, not simply in the trap of the feminine

> role but also in a more complicated kind of double bind. Finally, images of flight appear, indicating that the woman artist conceives her escape from her prison in Icarian terms. … But in the woman's *Künstlerroman* one finds primarily images of failed flight – of birds falling and planes crashing – for until recently it was rare for women writers to permit their artist heroines, in flying from their prisons, to succeed like Daedalus in reaching land rather than fall lie Icarus into the devouring sea. (Huf 12)

Although Huf's text was published in 1985, and some elements have changed significantly, it is relevant to note that a few of these images remain closely attached to the woman artist. In contemporary narratives, as explained by Campello, it is more common for these heroines to experience open endings, rather than frustrated flights (16). Even so, images of entrapment, of being cornered between what is socially expected from them and the freedom to be whomever they want, are not strange to contemporary women artists.

Moreover, there is one last central point in the process of constructing an identity as a woman artist that needs to be considered: the fact that even the choice of the type of art through which they wish to express and explore their subjectivities has an impact on the way these artists perceive their selves. Whether the material they are working with is words, canvas and brushes, oil paints, drawings, cameras and lenses, or marbles, among others, it carries nuances into the forms they represent the world and themselves. Taking photography for instance, as thoroughly explored in chapter 2, it can mediate the artist's interaction with the world, by adding a distance between the object photographed and the subject behind the camera, or by revealing aspects of reality that have passed unnoticed. Also, photography, Louvel indicates, "seems to be directly linked to the subject, to the photographer, and to the spectator's history and experience of the world," (32) as it is related to both past – a

registering of the past – and the present, that is, the moment when it is observed and commented upon.

Photography, then, relates to the subject, especially in its ability to shape "ways of seeing and of representing the visual" (Louvel 34). In addition, it should be considered that "photography is fiction-inventive due to its capacity to generate stories. In its disconnection from the real, it offers to the gaze a concentration of experience asking to be verbalized and fictionalized" (Louvel 45), so it favours the representation in fiction of women's perspectives on their experiences in dealing with reality, with their pasts and presents and, perhaps most importantly, with the representation of themselves in it. And, it is this representation that is addressed next.

3.3 Crossing Paths: George's and Frankie's Subjectivities

As mentioned in the previous chapters, George and Frankie have different approaches to artistic creation and different relations to art itself. Thus, the construction of their identities also follows different, yet similar, paths. Before tracing the points where the construction of their subjectivities intersect, it seems fitting to address each of them separately first.

3.3.1. Adolescence

George is a teenager and, as such, she is experiencing a critical phase when everything is scrutinized and provides fuel to comparisons. She is almost the representation of a typical "Gen Z," a person who was born in the digital age, "too young to know the political importance of choosing to be called Ms anything" (Smith 18) and "a migrant of [her] own existence" (36), in Carol's words, when she sees George watching the same programme on

the TV and her laptop while searching for photobombs on her smartphone. She could have stayed on this specific sort of automatic track if it was not for the passing of her mother and the turbulence that comes with grieving.

After Carol's death, George is thrown into a state of apathy in which she loses interest in everything she used to like. Even her obsession with grammar, and the proper ways of saying things, is not relevant enough to make her say something. At the same time, she decides to take on her mother's hobbies as a way to keep her memory alive, so she includes the morning dance routine into her daily life, even though she cannot find the exact song Carol used to dance to, as well as the fixation with art and New Year's rituals.

A remarkable point about George is that she grows up surrounded and supported by strong women characters, and this fact exerts a great influence on her behaviour. Carol is described as an "*Economist Journalist Internet Guerrilla Interventionist*," a "*renaissance woman*" (Smith 20, author's emphasis), in addition to the fact that "(her mother did an art history degree once)," "(and a women's studies degree)" (Smith 96). She is described as impetuous enough to take her children on a spread-of-the-moment trip to another country just to visit a museum, free enough in exploring her sexuality, conscious enough in maintaining open dialogues with her children and husband. George, then, is educated to question and talk back at the things she does not agree with – "Savvy, yes, her mother says. Always be savvy please. I'd need that from any daughter of mine" (Smith 37) – as well as to train her eyes to grasp and understand the subtleties of seeing, to look at artworks first, instead of at the artists behind them. These are only a few examples of the influence Carol had on George when she was alive, whether from direct teaching or from setting an example.

In her absence, George gets closer to Helena, another strong figure, so much that "most people in the school were pretty respectful of Helena Fisker" (Smith 65). H is the girl who "has a mother who is French" and a father who "is from Karachi and Copenhagen," and

who smashes a classmate's phone for calling her "an ethnic cow" (66). H, who also has an aptitude for art and is as impetuous as Carol, is the one who defies and instigates George until she consciously breaks from the apathy that trapped her after her mother's death.

Therefore, even if George's subjectivity is to be seen as merely constructed in relation to or influenced by someone else's, it is in relation to other women. The few male characters – Nathan, her father, and Henry, the little brother – are not expressive enough in the narrative, up to the point that Nathan has no authority at all over the teenager. He does not even notice when George starts skipping school to go to London, neither is he capable of convincing her to stop watching a porn film portraying the abuse of a young girl. Her attitude towards the film, as appalling as it was to Nathan, might be seen as a reflection of her understanding that seeing is rarely simple, as she explains "to her father that she had formerly watched, and intended again to watch, this film of this girl every day to remind herself not to forget the thing that happened to this person," so that "she was doing it in witness, by extension, of all the unfair and wrong things that happen to people all the time" (Smith 33). Nathan misses the main point of her motivation and simply complains about how other people's children have normal neuroses, "like always having to have the same spoon to eat with or just not eating at all or throwing up, cutting themselves, whatever" (Smith 35).

At this point, George's subjectivity begins to be entangled with what is often part of the image of the artist. Her so-called "neuroses" are neither considered the same as other people, common people, nor comprehended by her adjuvants. In addition, in expressing her urge to witness not only the girl's suffering but also all unfair events that happen to other people, George approximates herself to the observation station occupied by photographers. The desire to witness life's happenings may be perceived, as well, in George's photographs of Lisa's house. She assumes the same position to observe and register the woman's routine, and when she decides that she is no longer going there, George still leaves something to mark

her spot and remind Lisa that someone was there, that someone monitored and witnessed what was going on:

> There are 2 girls kneeling on the paving. … they're painting, eggs? No, eyes : they're painting 2 eyes on to a wall : they take an eye each : they begin with the black for the hole through which we see : then they ring the colour round it in segments (blue) : then the white : then the black outline. … a girl (who is she?) bends down to a pot with white in it, reaches forward, adds a small square of white the size of the end of her fingertip then does the same in the place to the other eye cause an eye with no light is an eye that can't see… (Smith 312-13)

In the presence/absence relation implicit in the photographs, George not only fulfils her impetus of honouring her mother's eyes, but she also assumes the position of the witness of Carol's daily life doubled on Lisa's. It is photography that enables the teenager to register and narrate her point of view of a specific period of her mother's life. And, because of that, she decides to actively interfere with it, as it is her right as an artist – a position granted her by del Cossa's claim that the girl is an artist. The observation spot, then, becomes a literal reminder of her passage there.

The moment the narrative shifts from a third-person narrator to Francescho's point of view, in the "Eyes" chapter, another layer of distance is added between the reader and George's exploration of her subjectivity. The process is mediated by the eyes of another character, who might be seen as a sort of foremother, someone who has already experienced the struggle to establish an identity while also trying to overcome personal loss through art. Even the gender-bending aspect of del Cossa's subjectivity is doubled in George at this point, as the painter mistakes the teenager for a boy when she first arrives at the contemporary age.

While the shift in narrative focus does distance the narrative from George's perspective, the experienced narration of del Cossa adds nuances to the girl's experiences that

might have been overlooked if it continued being told by a third-person narrator. Since del Cossa has already been through similar experiences, she can notice George's grieving and tells her that "nothing is finished or unchangeable except death and even death will bend a little if what you tell of it is told right" (Smith 238), and that "nobody knows us : except our mothers, and they hardly do (and also they tend disappointingly to die before they ought). … cause nobody's the slightest idea who we are, or who were, not even we ourselves" (238-39). From that, it is noticeable that del Cossa perceives and truly understands how the apathy that follows the loss of a beloved might lead to an identity crisis, especially when the deceased is the one who is supposed to know her the best: the mother.

Another relevant aspect specific to George's subjectivity is subtly disclosed by del Cossa when she tells the moments George and Helena are twisting themselves inside the wall of photographs. More precisely, in the moment "at which the paper wall breaks and as it comes apart its brick-shapes fly off like rooftiles and the girls hit the floor together in each other's arms in the mess of the pictures littered round them" (Smith 310). In this scene, del Cossa adds "I like a good skilful friend. I like a good opened-up wall," (310) before moving on to talking about her friend, whom she loved and who also loved her, although they were never allowed to say it aloud. What is implied in this "opened-up wall" might be seen as the culmination of George's process of questioning her sexuality and feeling comfortable enough to tell Helena: "*You asked, and te semper volam"* (Smith 148, author's emphasis)[41].

3.3.2. Adulthood

Contrary to *How to Be Both*, in which the narration is either in the third-person or by a ghost, in *A Line Made by Walking* the struggle to understand and construct an identity is

[41] Latin translation of "I will always want you".

narrated by the artist herself. Hence, it is easier to notice the different stances that interpolate and interfere with Frankie's subjectivity, and her perception of her self.

Even so, what is mostly reflected in Frankie's identity crisis is the difficulty in conciliating being a normal woman with being an artist. She explicitly mentions the conflict during an appointment with a psychiatrist:

> 'There really isn't much wrong with me,' I say, 'it's just that, well, I'm not like other people; I don't want the things they want. And this is not right, I mean, in other people's eyes, and I feel as though they feel they are duty-bound to normalise me, that it isn't okay just to not want the things they want, you know?'
>
> I realise I've been leaning forward. I lean back. 'So it's as if,' I say, 'I'm okay in my own bones, but I know that my bones aren't living up to other people's version of what a life should be, and I feel a little crushed by that, to be honest, a little confused as to how to align the two things: to be an acceptable member of society but to be able to be my own bones both at once.' (Baume 133-34)

While she seems to be comfortable being the artist, the one who is different from everyone else, she is disturbed by the fact that she cannot fulfil what is expected from her. The role she is supposed to play in society does not accept everything else that is intrinsic to her. This conflict also permeates her family relations, even though she seems to have more space to be herself with them:

> Because I am the complicated, creative, cantankerous youngest child, my family have always afforded me dispensations from the petty responsibilities of life, from the conventional social graces. … But nowadays I feel guilty that I am granted the immunity of the artistically gifted, having never actually achieved anything to prove myself worthy. (Baume 168)

What this excerpt reinforces is that, even though Frankie is exempted from ordinary family obligations, such as buying Christmas gifts, she is still haunted by guilt. Thus, even when the woman artist receives the "immunity of the artistically gifted," (168) she still needs to prove herself worthy. This, however, indicates that being the artist is not as comfortable as she previously says it is.

The same guilt permeates the novel, as she demonstrates her discomfort in not being able to create despite having everything she could possibly need to do so. It appears more clearly when she is reflecting on her own life, as in the following excerpt:

> My happy life was never enough for me. I always considered my time to be more precious than that of other people and almost every routine pursuit – equitable employment, domestic chores, friendship – unworthy of it. Now I see how this rebellion against ordinary happiness is the greatest vanity of them all.
>
> I think of my aunt and her 'self compassion'. But it isn't fair to forgive myself so easily. (Baume 239)

Although Frankie embraces throughout her life the immunity given to artistic people, she notices the vanity in perceiving her time as more precious than everyone else's. These contradictions in her posture – affirming that she feels good in her bones, while still feeling guilty about living as she does – reinforce Frankie's struggle to conciliate the life of the woman with that of the artist. The memory of the aunt and her self-compassion comes from a moment when Beth tells her:

> 'Don't feel guilty,' she said. 'Nothing good comes of guilt.'
>
> She said it after I admitted how frightened I am that all this stupid sadness is chewing at my intellect. 'It's time to let this go,' she said.

> She meant: it's time to postpone – if not entirely abandon – my burden of unrealistic ambition. To start churning the intellect I have left into simply feeling better; to make this my highest goal. It's time to accept that I am average, and to stop making this acceptance of my averageness into a bereavement. (Baume 219)

But, to Frankie, accepting her averageness means that she would have to give up her artist self, something that she is not even able to conceive. In her own words, "Art is the only thing I am able for" (Baume 183).

In addition, it is necessary to add that Frankie does not want to be any kind of artist. She sets being the outsider genius as her life goal, which, as briefly mentioned in chapter I, causes her to be constantly haunted by the myth of the romantic genius. Even her age becomes an issue because of that. While she says "I am twenty-five, still young, I know," even though she already felt "so improper, so disordered" (Baume 11), turning "twenty-six is not significant in a good way. It's the age at which I become irrevocably closer to thirty than twenty. … now I know, with certainty, that it's too late to be a genius." (146-47) It leads her to complain that

> It took me five years of formal education to figure out that what I truly wanted to be was an outsider artist, and that it was too late. … there's no going back – now I'm closer to thirty than twenty – condemned by formal education to rationalise, conceptualise, interpret. Not just think, but rethink. Not just look for meaning, but make meaning all by myself. (Baume 183-84)

Even amid this identity crisis, it is Frankie's five years of formal education that guides her sight into seeing art in every little thing, regardless of how strange or unorthodox it might be. In her words: "An uneven arrangement of timber planks on the verge of a dual carriageway: art. The sound of oboes from a decommissioned trawler lilting along a quayside

in the dead of night: art." And when these things make her question "what do ordinary people think these things are? Is their world more generally mysterious than mine because they are not so easily able to identify public sculpture?" she contends with the fact that "I think: I can read into anything. I think: I can read into nothing at all" (Baume 167). Frankie's formal knowledge turns into ordinary the lesson Carol wanted George to learn: that seeing is rarely simple and that a trained eye may always see more into anything, even into nothing at all.

Contributing to the construction of this shattered self in search of an identity, it is rather relevant to note that the few images of Frankie built in the narrative are glimpses of her reflection in mirrors. In these moments, there is usually an element that seems new to her or that she does not recognise as part of herself. For instance:

> I catch the reflection of a *figure* in the wardrobe mirror, turn *my* head to face it. *A person too old to be a child but too young to be an adult.* Hair falling limply yet somehow wild, short yet somehow knotted. Baggy eyes, blotchy skin. I notice for the first time all day what *I'm* wearing: a woolly winter cardigan that hangs down to *my* knees, even though it is warm, even though it is spring. (Baume 30-31, emphasis added)

In this case, at first, she sees a figure not too old, not too young, and it takes a while to understand that it is her own reflection, as demonstrated by the use of "a figure," and "a person" until this other becomes the I in "I'm wearing" and "my knees," highlighted in the quotation. Nonetheless, Frankie herself sheds light on the fact that mirrors represent different versions of the person looking at them when she is scrutinizing her hair to check if her hairline had moved: "But mirrors are treacherous things. Each one revised my reflection according to its position on the wall, my position on the floor, the angle of the light." (67) Hence, the image on the mirror is only one of several versions of her, despite the existence of a "true" subject.

Besides, being as intrinsically attached to Art as Frankie is, it is not surprising that she faces a sense of loss and emptiness when she cannot give life and materiality to her urge to create. Returning to her parents' house, she states: "I had not yet decided whether I wanted to get better or die altogether. I only knew that I couldn't go back to Dublin, and couldn't stay where I was either," (Baume 82-83) and this nuisance is what leads her to the isolation of the bungalow. Here, it is worth recalling that the construction of the artist often

> relies on specific psychopathological characteristics, namely: introverted character, marked by hyperexcitability, nervousness, instability close to self-destruction and internal dissonances which make all communication with other humans problematic and critical. Art, therefore, becomes a refuge for these inner disturbances, this existential suffering. (Lago 137)[42]

All these symptoms are found in the narrative associated with Frankie's diagnosis of clinical depression. The protagonist's behaviour might also be associated with a state of melancholy, pointed out by Lago as characteristic of the romantic genius. Luiz Costa Lima, in turn, characterizes melancholy as

> the fear or the prolonged dysthymia (discouragement or prostration), accompanied by other traits also frequently referred to – neglection, laziness, disagreement with the place where one is, even the most serious: the feeling of lack of meaning for what one does, if not for life itself. (Lima 59)[43]

[42] In the original: "... conta com características psicopatológicas específicas, quais sejam: caráter introvertido, marcado pela hiperexcitabilidade, nervosismo, instabilidade próxima da autodestruição e dissonâncias internas que torna problemática e crítica toda comunicação com os outros humanos. A arte, portanto, torna-se um refúgio para essas perturbações interiores, esse sofrimento existencial..." (Lago 137)

[43] In the original: "o medo ou a distimia (desânimo ou prostração) prolongada, acompanhados de outros traços também com frequência referidos – desleixo, preguiça, desacerto com o lugar em que se está, até o mais grave: a sensação de falta de sentido para o que se faz, quando não da própria vida..." (Lima 59)

It also implies "having the world as an indifferent or constantly hostile partner" (Lima 59)[44], which Frankie does, since she believes: "I am being killed very slowly; now is only the outset. My small world is coming apart because it is swelling and there's no place for me any longer" (Baume 6). However, when this melancholic state "allows for an increase in sensibility, which is fulfilled by seeking to know the constitution of what provokes it, it is likely to favour artistic production" (Lima 60).[45] In this way, even if it is not a psychic trait common to all artists, Frankie's attempt to understand the world and the melancholic state itself favours her artistic production, which brings about the theme of art as a tool for self-knowledge. Hence the relevance of this state to her attempt to rediscover her identity, both at a personal level and as an artist.

3.3.3. Bridging the Paths

Besides the subtleties entailed in searching for an identity at different moments of life, there are common traces connecting the representation of these two artist-protagonists, especially the fact that both of them are facing an identity crisis triggered by loss and that none of them identifies themselves as a photographer, specifically, only as artists. Even so, although George and Frankie are traversed by gender issues while constructing their selves, the way such issues are represented in the narrative is slightly different.

In Smith's novel, George is led into assuming Carol's role in the family, so she becomes the one responsible for raising her little brother and taking care of the house. She has not even started to come to terms with her grief when she is pushed into this position, especially considering her father's sudden alcohol addiction and his constant absence from the house. Although George's main struggle in the novel is not directly linked to artistic

[44] In the original: "ter o mundo como um parceiro indiferente ou constantemente hostil" (Lima 59)
[45] In the original: "*admite* um acréscimo de sensibilidade, que se cumpre pela procura de saber da constituição do que o provoca, ele propensamente favorece a produção artística" (Lima 60)

creation, it is in artistic experimentation that she encounters a path to discover an identity for herself, independent from Carol's, although still influenced by hers. Thus, George's identity is slowly being constructed on the traces of the women who preceded her, following a matrilineage that leads her into the Art world. She still does not have an established perception of her self by the end of the novel, but she seems much more comfortable in exploring different nuances of her subjectivity.

In Baume's novel, in turn, gender issues are embedded in the guilt Frankie constantly feels for not succeeding as expected, for having the time and an entire bungalow to herself, and yet not being able to create something, not being worthy of it. At the same time, she is also pressured by social expectations concerning relationships, marriage, and beauty standards, up to the point, for instance, in which she notices her weight and wonders: "I used to try so hard to be this thin and now I find it bittersweet that I am even thinner still without having tried at all. Back then, I would have been triumphant. Now, I am only perplexed. Where did so much of me go, so effortlessly?" (Baume 247)

At this point, considering how photography impacts one's subjectivity, it is relevant to recall Sontag's claim that photographs "depict an individual temperament, discovering itself through the camera's cropping of reality" (219) and Louvel's explanation that, in fiction, photography might serve "as an instrument of revelation, in keeping with the technical developing process and the slow apparition of the image in its acid bath. The "revelation" may be that of a betrayal, of an ugly deed, of identity. It entails a process of recognition." (40) Even though this process of revelation happens to both George and Frankie, it is not exactly something concrete. Instead, it comes as little reminders. To Frankie, it is the confirmation that she would not meet the same end as her creatures. She would not just disappear, and she is not dying. Thus, it is only in coming to terms with her status as an artist and her incompleteness that she distances herself from the appeal of death, of non-existence. To

George, it is a reminder of her mother, a direct one that screams her mother's absence, and a sign that her life continues, despite her loss.

In representing the opposition between life and art, so characteristic in artist narratives, both Smith and Baume seem to embrace a contemporary take on the paradigm by linking the protagonists' will to live to their art. They do not necessarily need to choose between one or the other; however, the more involved they are with their artistic projects, the more alive they feel and the more comfortable they are in their skins. Since this process is portrayed as mediated by photography, it is possible to consider that, in revealing a different perspective of reality and themselves, it also forces George and Frankie to face the possibilities of the life ahead of them.

On the main differences in their representations, it is worth highlighting the fact that George is taught to be free and independent and to develop a strong critical and moral sense concerning her beliefs, even though she is often reprimanded for her attitudes, as in the episode of the porn film. Meanwhile, Frankie enjoys the immunity of the artist given by her family, but she is the one reprimanding herself for not living up to her and others' expectations. She has a bungalow of her own to recover, explore and dedicate herself to being an artist, but she lacks the energy and the comprehension of those surrounding her. George, on the contrary, has the motivation to become an artist, but she is held back by life's circumstances. Even so, she manages to move between the two worlds: she takes care of Henry and her father, she tells Nathan her roof was leaking, but she also takes time for herself to pursue her will after she sends Henry to school and Nathan to work.

This chapter, then, attempts at demonstrating how gender issues are reflected in the construction of the artist's identity and the circumstances in which they actively interfere or shape their selves. Understanding these processes is vital to fully comprehend, for instance, the reasons why Frankie feels so pressured to achieve great things as an artist, why she

constantly looks for concrete evidence that she still exists, or what motivates George to want to witness the bad things that happen in the world, and why she skips school to observe a stranger's life. What is delineated, then, is the difficulty in establishing an identity and exploring subjectivity while being a woman artist, from the struggles to become and be accepted as one, to the gendered aspects that weigh on the ones who dare to be both woman and artist.

Not surprisingly, both of the artist protagonists of the novels analysed here are facing an identity crisis, triggered by different reasons but mostly permeated by a similar sense of loss. George and Frankie often seem to be dancing on the limits of what is accepted as a normal person, as they are constructed to be exceptional on their own terms – even if it happens in the embracement of their averageness. It is difficult not to notice, however, that to try to (re)construct their identities both of them turn to what they fear the most: death and absence. As mentioned throughout the chapters, in photographing dead creatures, Frankie registers her own presence/existence in the world, in the same way that, in monitoring Lisa's daily life, George captures the absence of her mother. Because what they need is a form to capture reality and hold testimony of it, photography figures as the ideal art form for their explorations.

All things considered, it becomes clear that the subjectivities of the artist protagonists are inevitably marked by these struggles. Although there have been significant changes in the Art world concerning the artist and the recognition of women's artworks, it is rather difficult to question the fact that the woman artist is still battling for a space in which her identity is no longer questioned and evaluated based on male standards.

"Art Is Everywhere": Final Remarks

> I believe that, through the act of living, the discovery of oneself is made concurrently with the discovery of the world around us, which can mold us, but which can also be affected by us. A balance must be established between these two worlds—the one inside us and the one outside us.
>
> Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographers*

The search for an identity in the novels *A Line Made by Walking* and *How to Be Both* runs through distinct, yet rather similar, paths in relation to Frankie's and George's experiences. Despite the implications of the evident difference between their stages in life, what approximates their stories is the fact that they resort to Art to deal with an identity crisis. Beyond that, as mentioned before, both of them manage to overcome personal issues and traumas by means of photographic series. It is possible to claim, then, that the line connecting their stories is precisely photography.

As discussed through the chapters, because of its specificities, photography is able to mediate Frankie's and George's contact with the world around them, in a moment when they are struggling and perceiving the universe as a rather hostile environment. Whether seen as a professional activity, to Frankie, or as an experimental one, to George, the act of photographing gives them power, or, at least, a sense of control over life. They do not hesitate to assume the observation station dedicated to photographers, as explained by Sontag, nor in

exercising the right to intervene or not, inherited from the cameras, even though neither one of them identifies herself as a photographer. In the same way that Frankie easily decides to let a rook die or to remove a tin can from a fox's corpse in favour of the aesthetics of her photographs, George carelessly disturbs the life and the privacy of Lisa, and of everyone who lives in the house with the woman. Both of them, however, seem to have escaped the situation without any kind of reprimand.

Besides, as the novels explore the theme of the artist at work, the other stages of the artist-protagonists' creative processes are also represented. On the one hand, Smith's representation of George's process is rather succinct, mostly because the one who tells this part of the story is the ghost del Cossa. The narrative focus lies on the way photographs are produced, their appearance on the phone's screen, and their development into printed "studios" – elements that would surely catch the attention of a Renaissance painter. The actual manufacturing of the star with photographs, for instance, is not narrated, only the confection of the brick wall collage is, which also happens to be the moment George is acknowledged as an artist. On the other hand, Baume's narrative takes the readers all the way through Frankie's journey, from her first thought about creating a series until the last photograph. Even the book's design project reinforces this by placing the photographs on the exact moment Frankie finds the animals so that readers encounter them at the same time. In this way, every step of the artistic process is shown, varying only in the degree of attention dedicated to each one.

Moreover, George's and Frankie's subjectivities are also explored through and reinforced by their connections to other artists and artworks. Given that everything, in a narrative, has a double function, as defended by Bertho, it is through their readings of other artworks that the protagonists reveal several aspects of their subjectivities. Frankie, during her quizzes, aligns her artist self with a few artists, such as Richard Long, Vincent Van Gogh

and Mona Hatoum, and distances herself from others. With this, she demonstrates that she has a clear image of whom she wants to be, even though she still has not figured out who she is yet. A similar process happens with George, considering what is implied in her identification with Sylvie Vartan. She understands that she seems to physically resemble the singer, up to the moment when she starts to find comfort in her songs, but it is the cultural background implicit in Vartan's image that underlines, to the readers, a few sides of George's subjectivity that she has still not realised.

However, it seems relevant to draw attention to the fact that these artist-protagonists' journey in search of constructing a sense of identity, by exploring their subjectivities, is crossed by numerous issues beyond their control. They struggle with gender expectations regarding their role in society, as well as the pressure to grow up, succeed in a career, be sociable, manage all areas of their lives, and the list goes on endlessly. At the same time, the artistic path also demands them to create, to understand that nothing is stable, nothing is fixed, and to acknowledge the need to embrace their incompleteness and, thus, learn how to cope with the absence, to turn it into something else.

This thesis has been an attempt to delineate the assumption that the identity of artists and their perception of themselves is highly influenced by the art form they prefer to explore, even though this choice might change throughout their lives. Given the complexity of the novels and this thesis' objectives, the argumentation is grounded on identity and gender studies, to understand what is entailed in being a woman artist, on photography theory, to explore in which ways the protagonists are affected by the art form they choose, and mostly on the Intermedial studies, to be able to identify and interconnect all of these elements, taking into consideration the role each one of them plays in the construction of the novels, as a whole, and of the artist-protagonists. By presenting a comparative reading of two novels that portray women artists at different stages in their lives, I try to cover a myriad of aspects and

nuances that take part in the construction of Frankie's and George's subjectivities and to understand the ways through which photography guides and affects their journey.

In Chapter I, I contextualize the novels within the tradition of artist narratives of female authorship, which figures as one of the major forms of intersection between literature and the arts and media. These narratives benefit from their proximity to the arts, by incorporating specific traits from the art forms they depict into their own structure, and they share a set of distinctive characteristics which includes, for instance, certain themes and types of characters, common scenes, and a high level of pictoriality. I rely mostly on the studies of Izabela B. Lago, Solange R. Oliveira, and Eliane T. A. Campello about artist narratives, Rachel B. DuPlessis and Campello's take on the artist narratives of female authorship, Michele Perrot's and Virginia Woolf's comments on the woman artists and their representations in fiction, Irina O. Rajewski's notion of intermedial references, Claus Clüver's perspective on ekphrasis, and Sophie Bertho's model to comprehend the functions Art might play in artist narratives to demonstrate the implications of the portrayal of these elements in *How to Be Both* and in *A Line Made by Walking*.

Besides, more than just labelling the novels, this chapter also aims at explaining the relevance of examining the artist-protagonists' readings of other artworks and comprehending the functions each of these pieces operates in the narrative. This is relevant as it sheds light on the subjective aspects of Frankie and George's points of view which are imbricated in their reception of other artworks. The chapter also begins to pave the way to the understanding of the different factors that affect the artists, the myths surrounding the artist figure, the common traits associated with them, and the ways they are usually portrayed in narratives, which are elements relevant to the analysis in chapter III.

Chapter II recalls the discussion around the role of Art in narratives to draw attention to the specific traits of the Art form chosen by Frankie and George. Thus, I explore

photography, its development and what is entailed in the act of photographing. The aim here is to underline that, although the indexical quality of photography is highly relevant to the narratives, there is always a certain degree of subjectivity implicit in a photograph. It is, after all, a reflection of the artists' perspectives, recreating the reality and the meaning they want to convey. It is also in this chapter that George's and Frankie's photographic series are analysed, as well as their creative processes, taking into consideration what these series add to the perception of their selves. The theoretical background is composed mainly of studies on theories of photography by Arlindo Machado, Susan Sontag, Liliane Louvel, Ian Haydn Smith, Lars Elleström, and Linda Hutcheon.

Shifting the focus from their works to their selves, Chapter III explores the notions of the post-modern subject, subjectivity, and the elements that take part in the process of constituting an identity as an artist. Based on Donald E. Hall, Stuart Hall, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler and Catherine Belsey, it discusses the fluidity and the fragmentation intrinsic in the concept of the subject, and the different aspects that interfere with or affect the process of constituting an identity for oneself, especially if the subject in question is a woman. It is only after investigating what is specifically intrinsic to women's subjectivity, however, that I delve into Frankie's and George's search for an identity. The analysis made of the novels has taken into consideration the subjective aspects of each protagonist's path, before comparing the ways Baume and Smith represented the construction of their identities.

What is relevant to grasp here is the understanding that women's subjectivity, especially that of women artists, is built on a perpetual state of tension, regardless of their level of agency. In the case of the novels analysed here, these artist-protagonists are caught between being overwhelmed by social expectations and familiar struggles or feeling crushed by the guilt of pursuing something different from what is expected from them. Additionally,

in both scenarios, there is a sense of frustration that comes from not feeling worthy of the opportunity. It is not unexpected, then, that they are driven into identity crises.

Finally, what remains, perhaps, is the reassuring acknowledgement that both Frankie and George seem to have found a balance between the opposition of art and life. The closer they are to Art, the more alive they feel, which forces them to realise that there is a lot more life beyond the chaos they are living. After all, as Frankie would say, art is everywhere and it is every inexplicable thing.

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