**BODILY FICTIONS THESIS SAMPLES**

'Lesbian Existence' and Queer Femininity as Reflections of Male Desire
in *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*

Sissy Hankshaw's enormous thumbs in Tom Robbins's *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues (1976*) serve as phallic symbols that distance her from normality in, and conformity to, the American society. She is not to be easily defined in terms of gender, because her 'performativity' of certain features of masculinity renders her androgynous. Her story is an example of the 'lesbian existence' that Adrienne Rich talks about, an existence, however, that is presented in a problematic way. Tom Robbins' novel manages to contribute to the effort of dismantling certain binaries of modern western society, by featuring characters living on the periphery of society, and yet, there seems to be a blind spot. If over-sexualizing Sissy, as well as other female characters, is a hint to the sexual liberation of the female, it is no less an over-simplification of a female emancipated subject.

 My paper will try to show that Tom Robbins's attempt to defy all the binaries does not always escape the objectification of a subject as the mirror of male desire, nor does Sissy's bisexuality and queerness escape the rhetoric of the authorial omniscient male gaze, which is there to colonize, literally or metaphorically, a woman in-between societal prototypes. For me, the most obvious example of this 'colonization' is the ending of the novel, which signifies the restoring of the heteronormativity with the 'procreative couple' of Sissy and Dr. Robbins, a character conspicuously named after the author himself. To prove this, I will be drawing on several passages from the novel--especially on the last scene of Dr. Robbins's removal of one of Sissy’s thumbs, which I see as a form of “castration”--as well as on feminist and gender-related theory by several thinkers, such as Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich and Judith Halberstam, among others.

Travelling to a Past of Body Satisfaction: The Meaning behind Einar’s Paintings
in *The Danish Girl*

Einar Wegener, the protagonist of David Ebershoff’s 2000 novel *The Danish Girl,* is a landscape painter. In most of his paintings he paints the bogs in Bluetooth, his childhood abode, which “was not much more than a village surrounded by bogs” (Ebershoff). Greta, his wife, “never understood how he could paint them over and over. He would finish off this heath tonight and begin another in the morning.” (Ebershoff). The narrator informs the reader that, in this village and around the bogs, Einar had a powerful homoerotic relationship with his friend Hans. When he had to leave the village and go to the city to pursue his career as a painter, Einar abandoned this self and did not have such a relationship again. However, the obsessive painting of the bog reveals that his mind remained stuck in this phase of his life when he could express his bodily desire towards another man.

In this essay, I intend to show that the recreation of the bog through the paintings helps Einar escape a reality in which he is unable to accept his real self. By painting the bogs he escapes the present to go back to the past when his body insisted on expressing itself towards another man, even if that meant that Einar had to face the anger of his homophobic father. In his paintings, Einar gives emphasis on the bogs, not only because his village was surrounded by them, but also because the bogs are dark and fluid, just like his gender identity in the eyes of society and in his eyes, respectively. As a boy, Einar experiences bodily desire for a person of the same sex, and even if that feels right to him, his father reminds him that it is not. As a painter of the bogs, Einar shows that his identity is something different from what he was born in, namely the body of a male. His identity is like a murky bog and the abandonment of his homosexual desire does not help in making the picture of his identity clear. On the contrary, the fear of societal disapproval brings more darkness which is expressed through his paintings. That could probably explain why, when Einar finally becomes a transsexual named Lilly, she does not feel the need to paint any more. She has a relationship with Henrik, her body is finally able to express its desires towards another man and she does not need to paint in order to “travel” to Bluetooth. When Greta shows Lilly Einar’s paintings of the bog, she says that she does not recognise them. She feels as if they “belonged to someone else” (Ebershoff). Lilly’s identity is not a bog like Einar’s but a clear, blue sky.