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The game of gender: Dismantling liminality of religious identity in Alderman's the Power

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at dismantling Naomi Alderman's *The Power* in terms of the internal and external deconstructive liminality. This liminality is represented through two focal points. The first is the dialectics between the pseudo-religious identity of the rising feminine power portrayed by Allie/ Mother Eve in its binary relationship with the declining secular pragmatic masculine image depicted by Tunde. The second is represented via the narrative in the paratextual elements: the epilogue, and the correspondence between the fictional author and editor of the novel. This multilayered investigation tackles the text from novel and thorough perspectives not previously explored. The analysis reveals that the spiritual manipulation is viciously exploited to achieve Allie's machiavellian end of ultimate power. Addressing women's pains around the world -of different religious doctrines- accelerates the rise and success of the Day of the Girls. However, it turns to be of worse nature than that of men dominance. This is revealed and discussed through the editorial correspondence between the author and the editor. In all, Alderman, through her dystopian novel, is not against women rights, but she provides a critique of the harmful use of power and that it is not a matter of male or female; it is not a gender issue, but a matter of balance between sources of power and dialectics of complementation not conflict; an end which echoes not only the gist of previous enquiries of the novel, but also the premises of reality.

Keywords: Alderman's The Power, liminality, radical feminism, postsecular feminism, gender roles.

1. Introduction

"Woman" the word is made problematic, illusive and ambivalent. It recalls submission, fear of power and opposition/ "threat to the secure patriarchal order" (Third, 2014, p.6). Women are also viewed as synonymous to the Derridean undecidability described by John D. Caputo as

> [...] there are many women, too many to count or contain, in many places, advantaged and disadvantaged, educated and uneducated, Western and third world, [...] The question of woman [...] is many questions about many women, about many differences. (p. 143)

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Amid this disseminated view of Woman, they are demonized inherently, thus they must be tamed lest their devilish gorgon will prevail. The 'gorgon,' of Greek origins, means "terrible," then generalized to reflect "a fierce, frightening, or repulsive woman" (Online Oxford Dictionary). The concept is enthralling as it reflects Alderman's *The Power* (2016). This implies that the link between women and power leads to terrorism/ evil, but why? One possible interpretation is the engendered Western bond between women and the devil as Eve (considering that this is the name 'deliberately' given to the main female in Alderman's novel!), urged by Satan, made Adam eat the forbidden fruit and thus paradise was lost! Similarly, Alderman's Eve is urged by a mysterious internal 'devilish' voice to lead the world matriarchy. The other point is that, in the western patriarchal hegemony, women are looked at in a binary submissive/terrorist (Dobie, 2012). So this is the traditional prevailing patriarchal image of 'Woman' engendered in the Western culture - and transferred to other parts of the world- regardless of the principles of true divine religions which keep balance between women's rights and duties. This collective masculine perspective transcends the boundaries of religions, traditions, cultures and even academia.

According to Literature Compass (2020), literary studies have recently undergone a "religious turn", part of the broader postsecular shift in the humanities. This reflects a growing recognition that secularism is no longer the default framework for interpreting literature, especially in postmodern and contemporary contexts. Religion is now seen as a serious subject of literary inquiry, rather than a private or outdated concern. Literature is viewed as a key space where religious identity is explored, negotiated, or even invented. Texts often challenge secular assumptions, allowing for the expression of ambiguous or hybrid religious subjectivities. This allows religious identity to be portrayed as fluid, experiential, and imaginative, rather than fixed or dogmatic (as it should be!) This is the article's perspective. In the following sections, an overview of the novel is provided to show how this perspective is influential and applicable.

1.1 Alderman's *The Power* (2016)

Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016) is a speculative feminist novel imagining a world where women develop the ability to emit electrical energy. This newly-gained power overturns traditional gender hierarchies. Through multinational narratives, Alderman investigates how women empowerment quickly mutates into domination. Framed as a future historical record, the novel questions how history is written or manipulated by those in control such as the nuns' religious documentations. It challenges the idea of moral superiority in any ruling group. The novel, in general, is praised for its provocative premise and moral complexity, yet critiqued for uneven world-building. *The Power* stands as a dark, incisive allegory of patriarchy's mirror image and a warning about the cyclical, corrupting force of power.

The prevailing chaos along with the iterative processes of undoing identities globally and in specific regions consequently leads to deconstruction within the novel's exquisite binary: historical/ speculative reality, all held and aimed at women of the world, thus, it becomes indispensable to target feminist analyses and readings of the novel. However, still the unspoken -frank- iteration between the basic world religions especially the divine ones: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, requires highlighting its 'feminist' implications. Therefore, this study aims at investigating religious identity in Alderman's *The Power* employing a feminist perspective amalgamating radicalism, and postsecularism. These concepts are included within the overall umbrella of deconstructive liminality. The focus of this analysis is on Allie/ Mother Eve, Tunde, and the borderlines of the paratextual correspondence between the fictional author and editor. The previous literature about the novel's focal attention has been generally examining power parameters of all major characters: Allie, Roxy, Margot, Jocelyn, and Tatiana from mainly traditional feminist and/ or Marxist perspectives (Tazeguney, 2025; Abdulhamza et al. 2025; Barr, 2023; Rosa, 2023; McDevitt, 2022; Paredes, 2022; Sen 2022; Ali et al. 2021; Saber, et al., 2021; Miller 2020; Yerba, 2018; Al-Sakkaf & Öztürk 2016, among others). So, zooming in on the religious identity amalgamating feminist perspectives within umbrella deconstructive perspective is a novel dimension of investigation chiefly motivated by reading the manipulated religious power accompanied by the physical and other materialistic dominance aspects that create Alderman's apocalyptic feminist Bessapara!

2. Theoretical framework

The main theoretical perspectives of this article are feminism and deconstruction. The deconstructive liminality is the overall concept and the radical with postsecular feminist concepts are more specific. There is a persistent play between these concepts in the analysis to provide a possibly clear vision of religious identity in the novel, its role in "the Day of the Girls" and in identifying the iterative gender struggle, and Alderman's aim of this portrayal and critique.

2.1 Deconstruction and liminality

According to De Luca Picione et al. (2025), liminality is useful for analysing identity development, cultural changes, affective experiences, and social belonging, especially when normative structures are under stress or in flux. It highlights that transformation is rarely clean or permanently resolved; instability, uncertainty, and loss of orientation are not just drawbacks but constitutive of liminal processes. Researchers are cautioned to attend to both spatial and temporal dimensions: thresholds, borders, duration of in-betweenness, how long liminality persists, and how people return (or not) to normative orderings.

The concept of deconstructive liminality in Naveira's (2017) article is grounded in the intersection of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction and Victor Turner's anthropological notion of liminality. Derrida's deconstruction challenges traditional binary oppositions by exposing their instability and by reversing hierarchies that privilege one term over the other. Liminality, originally developed by Van Gennep (1960) and expanded by Turner (1967, 1969), refers to a threshold state of ambiguity, fluidity, and potential transformation. Taylor (1998) interprets liminality as a dynamic threshold space where characters or narrators undergo profound transformations. One of the central dimensions she identifies is religious or spiritual liminality, especially in Julien Green's L'Autre. Taylor argues that such religious liminality functions as: a trial space – where characters are stripped of certainties and confronted with their fragility. It is a transformative threshold – where they can move from sin, despair, or fragmentation toward faith, redemption, or transcendence. However, the case is different in Alderman's novel in that the religious/ spiritual transformation is basically ideologically-driven revenge-ridden, thus impulsive, rootless, blinded, and misleading.

Kutash (2019) explains that being etymologically derived from the Latin word 'limen', meaning 'threshold', liminality connotes "the disorientation between a previous way of structuring one's reality or identity and assuming a new one." (p. 2). Relatively, Bernardo (2023) situates the overall conception of Derrida's deconstruction within an open-ended liminality/ undecidability/ threshold/ différance. Therefore, such a view thoroughly engenders liminality in Derrida's deconstruction in that deconstructive liminality is a state of unsettled in-betweenness. This specific 'unsettled' - or in deconstructive terminology- persistent play between binaries differentiates deconstructive liminality from the common concept of liminality as a temporary transitional stage 'between' two states. This perspective of liminality is the coined operational conception of the current study.

This deconstructive liminality is realized through the roles of Allie and Tunde -subtitled as internal liminality- and through the paratextual parts of the novel; namely the prologue and epilogue -subtitled as external liminality. The ongoing transition in the core plot of the novel (the internal process of liminality) takes place between males and females. Alderman destabilizes entrenched binaries and reconfigures religious identity as a threshold between the declining male/ the rising female and secular/spiritual binaries. By the polarity of male/ female, the point is that Allie's blasphemous teachings gain ground among women all over the world in comparison to Tunde's secular mere pragmatic tendency to be the only journalist who works as the eye of the day of the girls. Allie manipulates the religious sublime by her desire to avenge men, the social injustice, and her tragic circumstances. Considering this as the internal liminality, the external liminality takes place at the 'threshold' of the novel's physical text in two major aspects. The first is the supposed religious scripts at the beginning and end of the core text, quotes of the Book of Samuel and the Book of Eve, which provide excavated information about the religious history of "the Day of the Girls." The second is the fictional correspondence between the novel's fictional author, Neil Adam Armon (an anagram of the real author's name), and the fictional editor, Naomi Alderman (who is the real novel's author). Between these poles, several prevailing binaries augment that of male/ female play with special indication to

religiosity. Thus, deconstructive liminality operates as both a critical tool and a narrative strategy: it deconstructs patriarchy while simultaneously reframing liminal identities as spaces of agency, transformation, and feminist resistance. In this way, liminality redefines manipulated religious identity in a mere frantic attempt to establish a pure feminine matriarchy.

2.2 Radical feminism

Feminism can be defined as a multi-staged movement to call for women's rights, especially in the West. According to Dobie (2012), the early stages are logically extreme in which their heralds have demanded equal rights with men like Wollstonecraft. The subsequent movements are milder and take another -balanced- turn in which the women realize the differences with men and thus search for their rights independently. Many feminist scholars have participated in these stages such as Simon de Beauvoir, Showalter, Woolf, Crenshaw, and Spivak, among others. In all, whether women revolt to prove equality, superiority, or mere difference, they revolt against the existing order attempting to impose a reality that guarantees what they consider their legitimate rights.

Radical feminism is roughly attached to the second wave; the liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, according to Krolokke & Sorensen (2006) and Mohajan (2022). This radicalism along with remoteness from spirituality are distinctive features of the early three feminist waves (Thompson, 2018/2025)

Alderman's novel represents an apocalyptic vision of a world/ age dominated by the most radical feminists when they achieve their goals supported by the electric power of the skein. Alderman also introduces a novel dimension of power; the spiritual/ religious, which is ignored/ marginalized by the traditional feminist waves as being a pivot of impossibly avoidable female oppression and exclusively male dominance. Regardless of the spiritual/ pseudo-religious dominance in the novel via the role of Allie/ Mother Eve, an attitude that reflects touches of the fourth wave as to be explained, there are radical and rigid calls and steps for 'dismantling' the existing governmental and religious institutions, especially Catholic Christianity and Islam.

2.3 Postsecular feminism

Poutiainen (2023) investigates the current interaction between feminine spiritualities and feminism through the lenses of postfeminism and postsecular feminism. The author discusses the reason beyond the women's tendency to embrace holistic spiritual practices and distance themselves from traditional feminism which prioritizes secularism. Thus, Poutiainen challenges the binary between spirituality and politics, femininity and feminism, and secularism and enchantment. Poutiainen explains that to foster more inclusive feminist futures, feminist discourse must re-engage spirituality, allowing for postsecular feminist identities that honor affective, sacred, and embodied experiences.

In relation to this article, Poutiainen's is a positive constructive viewpoint from which the overall conception is borrowed. Alderman's novel investigates this thorny issue to show the impact of religious power in shaping women's/ people's lives. However, within the liminality of the novel's premises, this religious identity is manipulated as a guise for what can be vicious pseudo-spirituality. Therefore, Alderman successfully creates that status of in-betweenness through which she implicitly critiques radical power politics disguised as spirituality. To explain further, Allie hypocritically represents a spiritual figure as Mother Eve; thus she is a pseudo-spiritual manipulator, but she is basically a vengeful radical feminist. Allie's characterization portrays religious and feminist liminality. Moreover, analyzing Allie's characterization with that of Tunde represents the liminality of the gender binary.

Therefore, the theoretical framework of this article is a multilayered complex of deconstructive liminality to be applied to the novel from two dimensions: internal and external. The former is to be realized through dismantling Allie/ Mother Eve as a representative of the religious female power, and Tunde as the secular and pragmatic male. The external layer is discussed through the paratextual elements, namely the epigraph, and the prologue, with more focus on the religious aspects and their indications to the female/ male relation.

3. Analysis and discussion

3.1 Internal liminality

3.1.1 The pseudo-religious female: Allie/ Mother Eve

Alderman foregrounds various aspects of both radical and spiritual feminism (postfeminism/ post secular feminism) in her novel. She criticizes pivotal aspects of the gender struggle: political (Margot), military (Roxy), authoritative (Tatiana), media (Tunde, though male, tries to transfer reality 'as it is'), and most importantly religious (Allie). The religious aspects of gender struggle dominate the novel and direct or motivate the course of its events. While Margot, Roxy, Tatiana, and Tunde serve to weave the knot based on a certain aspect each, it is Allie who controls all through her alleged divinity supported by the assumed miracles and sermons that heat women's appetite for a kind of 'blessed power to avenge men of the world.'

Allie or mother Eve grows, in the course of the novel, from teenage to youth. She has lived a shattered life as an adopted orphan. Nothing is said about a solid religious upbringing that can legitimate her later role as a messenger of God with a sacred posture. The only source of her courage to wade deeply in divinity is the suspicious voice inside her that motivates and directs her; which she frequently suspects to be Satan itself. Given this, Alderman, the novel's fictional editor -not the real author, describes her as "contortionists" who remind her of "things done at the Underground Circus" (p. 293) However, Allie's role in the novel is vital and it dominates all other roles. Through her speeches and 'sermons' Allie works as a pacifier for the oppressed women around the world to rally them behind her to turn the world upside down. Generally, she begins with a peaceful halo with goals to spread love, tenderness, and tolerance among all people not only women.

In the convent, Allie finds a proper environment to preach her alleged matriarchal pseudo-spiritual thoughts. On healing one of the residents of her epileptic fits using the electric power in front of other resident girls, she seizes the opportunity to show her 'miracles' and start preaching about her new feminine religion. It is almost the same as Christianity, but, instead of assigning divinity to Christ, it is to Mary: "Eve says, 'Holy Mother, show us what you want of us. Baptize us with your love and teach us how to live' " (p. 78).

An important mark of the ambivalence of this radical religious change is that Eve emphasizes that "[…] the true religion is love, not fear. The strong mother cradling her child: that is love and that is truth" (p. 79). However, this new religion is directed at women only: "God has returned, and Her message is for us, only us" (p. 79). Preaching love and intimacy is totally challenged by the violent acts of murdering those who oppose this movement, as what happened to Veronica in the compound, the girl with doubts about their salvation who "is thrown out of the compound by nightfall" (p. 82), and later Tatiana Moskalev's assassination, (and - maybe- the false news spread about Tunde's death and stealing all his projects and journals by a treacherous colleague:). All these vicious crimes are conducted by Allie herself with the exception of that of Tunde. This highlights the manipulation of religiosity and shows how an attempt that is apparently peaceful (as supported by the spiritual feminism) turns out to be really vicious radicalism and hegemony.

In addition, Roxy's criminal power -weapons and drugs- is used as the material and militant wing to help impose the new feminine regime. The religious power in the novel, held by Allie/ Mother Eve, is a central oppressive apparatus that manipulates all other aspects: military (Roxy), political (Margot), media (Tunde and cameras in general), financial (through rising funds/ donations via social media), and authoritative (Tetiana) to achieve its mass hold over everything else

> Gordy's been filming it on her cellphone. It'll be online in an hour. You don't need too many miracles before people start believing in you. And then sending you money and offers of legal help to get yourself properly set up. Everyone's looking for some kind of answer, today more than ever. (p. 107)

After having full control over the convent, Allie wants the feminine power to go viral by recording and broadcasting a viral cyber-footage using and targeting the spiritual power of religious beliefs, and at the same time risking being opposed and accused of heresy

> Mother Eve records a message to go out over the footage. She says, 'I have not come to tell you to give up a single strand of your belief. I am not here to convert you. Christian, Jew, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, if you are of any faith or none at all, God does not want you to

> change your practice.' She pauses. She knows this is not what they're expecting to hear. 'God loves all of us,' she says. (p. 107)

Allie contradicts herself in the same speech by referring to God as "She" then stating that, "She is beyond female and male, She is beyond human understanding" (p. 107) reflecting inability to comprehend the seriousness of what she introduces and immaturely daring to reset her audience attention to the female figures in their religions which indirectly shows how all religions, divine and non-divine, give advantages to women, "Jews: look to Miriam, not Moses, for what you can learn from her. Muslims: look to Fatimah, not Muhammad. Buddhists: remember Tara, the mother of liberation. Christians: pray to Mary for your salvation" (p. 107).

This speech; however, can be considered as stating the manifesto of her basic religious power and the deviation from the established religions and structured tradition in which the prominent women figures are foregrounded. It also includes blasphemous concepts about God. Therefore, this attempt is not merely preaching a new religion but "dismantl[ing] the old house and begin again" (p. 289), a process of undoing an existing structure then redoing or reshaping it. With the ultimate goal of merely seizing power, maliciously touching upon women's worries and the reasons behind oppressing them

> 'You have been taught that you are unclean, that you are not holy, that your body is impure and could never harbour the divine. You have been taught to despise everything you are and to long only to be a man. But you have been taught lies. God lies within you, God has returned to earth to teach you, in the form of this new power. Do not come to me looking for answers, for you must find the answers within yourself.' (p. 107)

Being supported by several allies, she defies the established religious centers: the Church which declares her deeds devilish, and -with clear and direct adversity- Awadi Atif, the king of KSA. Allie and Tatiana consider him and his army the direct enemy of their change and are involved in a deadly -crusade-like - war with him, as the representative of patriarchy with all its aspects.

Allie wants "the whole world turned upside down" (p. 260), and to control everything herself in a kind of theocracy, so she first decides to viciously assassinate Tatiana (p. 260-261), and spread chaos all over the world (undoing) to redo it later according to the new feminine structure/ power that suits her.

The internal anonymous voice is frequently referred to as 'it' neutralizing its gender whereas Tunde is the only male allowed to move everywhere to record and document the female rise. The former, of neutral gender, works as the supernatural motive that urges and somehow guides Allie in her attempts. Tunde is the major media/ informative eye, through his camera. Media and informatics are sources of power too, but he pays dearly for that role he passionately plays.

3.1.2 The secular male: Tunde

Tunde's role in the novel shows a peculiar status threshold. He is the only male who legitimately invades the revolutionary Day of the Girls, which is set against patriarchy. His attempt as a journalist who looks for the shot and trend, even if it is a movement against his sex, indicates his pragmatic perspective on the matriarchal rise and -maybe- an arrogant masculine attitude that women will never succeed. Considering his liminal position, it can be viewed from two vantage points. The first is from inside the events of the novel. Tunde can be read as the male who apparently allies with the matriarchal rise through his camera. He realizes his mistake later, when the frantic females take the lead and start to chase him. Paradoxically, he is saved by Roxy, one of the leading female figures, who later falls in love with him and ultimately they decide to marry. The second is through the external layers of reading the novel. The fictional audience of the novel are the successors of 'The Day of the Girls,' the successful females -represented by the fictional editor, Naomi Alderman- who enjoy the full matriarchal power. He is seen/ read as an impossible creature, a person who had never existed. These moments of liminality are to be analyzed next, strating from Alderman's (the real novel author) view of Tunde, his rise and intrusion in matriarchal upheaval, and finally his decline and realization of his helplessness and absurdity.

In an interview with Alderman, Claire Armitstead states:

> The evolution of the journalist, Tunde, reveals a lot about Alderman's creative process. He first emerged in a random scene about a man trying to get his passport back, and initially she had no idea where he was headed. It wasn't until she took *The Power* back to the drawing board that she realised he belonged at the heart of the novel, adding a valuable male perspective to a narrative that had previously been exclusively female. (para. 7)

This proves the initial secondary role of Tunde in the novel. However, his relationship with leading women in the global feminist radical revolution against patriarchy sheds light on his real function and that, even in the most radical feminist imagination, whether men still dominate! He is employed in the novel as a stereotype of patriarchal hegemony and arrogance as known in our real world. However, his role in the context of the novel shows him as a heretic/ science-fiction character for the supposed fictional audience of the novel whose society is fully matriarchal.

Commenting on the selection of the specific name "Tunde," Armon's wish for the revival of patriarchy hegemony is engendered in this meaning meanwhile Alderman's choice of the name is governed by its being *unisex* as to imply that power in its both sides can be obtained, well-used or/ and badly exploited by both males and females equally (not a matter of gender but the seizure of power). This feeling of power is generated from his masculinity and emphasized by his camera,

> The camera makes him feel powerful; as if he's there but not there. You do what you like, he thinks to himself, but I'm the one who's going to turn into something. I'll be the one who'll tell the story. (p. 56)

These recorded videos launch his global journalistic mission, and do so for the women's revolution. Then he travels to the main conflict areas: Saudi Arabia, Moldova, and India. The implication beyond targeting Saudi Arabia is significant as it is considered a stereotype of feminine persecution in the Western collective perspective and consequently a fertile potential zone for feminist radical revolutions. Unexpectedly, the Saudi women led by Noor approve him as trustworthy allowing him to intrude the Harem borders. Thus he becomes "the only one filming. This revolution feels like his personal miracle, a thing to overturn the world" (p. 60). "[B]ecause of his reports from Riyadh"(p. 89), Tunde has been welcomed in Moldova, a global symbol of sex trade, and the opposite site to Saudi Arabia. In India, he contacts and films the Kalis, Indian women seizing power. With the clashes the Indian women crowds and policemen, Tunde selects a very high place to watch and record safely. The description of the place and Tunde being there reflects his patriarchal arrogance

> Actually, it's perfect. Like it was meant to work out this way for him. He smiles, breathes out slowly. He can set up his camera here, film the whole thing. He's not afraid any more, he's excited. [...] Just him, and his cameras, up here out of the way. And something's going to happen. (p. 124-5).

However, as in other areas, he is confronted by an unstable woman whom he first thinks is one of his fans. She attempts to rape him after shocking him but he is saved by other nearby women. After shocking him, he says, " 'Stop! Don't do that.' His own voice surprises him. It's petulant, pleading" (p. 125). The contradiction between the word "Stop" and the weak tone of the voice reflects his broken arrogance, uncontrollable mastery, and a realization of the process of transformation/ liminality from power to loss. This decline persists regardless of the terrorist reaction of the aggressive masculine groups who helplessly attempt to convince him to work with them.

His decline which generally symbolizes the masculine decay is highlighted through a shift from narration of Tunde's camera's eye to narration about Tunde.

> In the scribbled notes of his book [he writes]: 'At first we did not speak our hurt because it was not manly. Now we do not speak it because we are afraid and ashamed and alone without hope, each of us alone. It is hard to know when the first became the second.' (p. 213)

The last clause signifies the deterioration of men's situation in terms of their position in society (first to second/ recalling De Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1948)) and/ or their position during the rise of women's dominance/ terrorism! This decline accompanies the sharp rise of Allie, and her allies and supporters.

After the rejection of his reports by the news agencies, Tunde marches towards the mountains in a nihilistic quest for coverage when two significant incidents happen to him. The first is his inability to get some 'bread' because his passport is not stamped by his female guardian. The second is when he

passes near a group of women practicing their power, "Tunde said to himself, I'm not here, I'm nothing, don't notice me, you can't see me, there is nothing here to see;" (p. 234-5). This feeling of invisibility is totally different from the first stages of his glory when he attracts leading women. Moreover, the repetition of expressions that indicate 'sight': 'notice,' 'see,' 'nothing to see' reflects Tunde's basic function; the observing/ watching eye through his camera through which he records, sees, and notices all revolting women and their progress.

In all, Tunde represents a liminal moment between masculine arrogance and its decay. His closeness to the minute details of the "Day of the Girls" and being initially trusted by the revolted women satisfy his masculine ego as highlighted in his first portrayal as "Lord," a guise of divinity, at the beginning of the novel. Nevertheless, his realization that he is useless to them after mastering the power of the world throws him to a shrinking status due to insignificance and ignorance; a status indicated through his fabricated death. After being the hunter, he becomes the prey

> Don't be afraid. The only way to defeat this is not to be afraid. But the animal part of himself was afraid. There is a part in each of us which holds fast to the old truth: either you are the hunter or you are the prey. Learn which you are. Act accordingly. Your life depends upon it. (p. 236)

Finally, he meets Roxanne Monke, the representative of the criminal gangster Gorgon; the other face of Allie/ mother Eve, he saves her, they have an affair in their weakest moments – maybe- for each to regain his/ her balance! Then she helps him to escape.

In addition to the previous arguments about the internal liminality, the paratextual elements of the novel provide thorough liminal dimensions of necessary details about the fictional context of the novel and how it is historical for them and futuristic for us in reality.

3.2 External liminality: Paratextual elements (the religious cover)

This section focuses on the prologue and epilogue of the novel. These contextual parts are composed of quotes from the Book of Samuel and the Book of Eve, which provide religious and historical dimensions; and the correspondence between the fictional author, Armon, and editor, Alderman. These paratextual components situate the novel in its historical and religious context, provide an external threshold through which the game of gender and religious identity, highlighted in the novel text, persists creating an extended external liminality.

The religious scirptures at the beginning and end along with the comments on the portrayal of Mother Eve show that this dimension is engendered in shaping the events, relationships, and identities, that participate in creating the image of the female on the way to establishing the age of matriarchy and the position of the males in this process. From the tyranny King in Samuel's quote, through the 'she,' in the Book of Eve, mastering the world through her electric power and force the whole system to change, and the "contortionist" portrayal of Mother Eve, ending up with the prevailing atheism, it is a persistent dilemma of undecidable religious identity iteratively swinging in-between: faith/denial, power/ submission, and male/female.

The position of the introductory quote from the Book of Samuel is a threshold between the pages of the title, the real author, her dedication, and contents, on one side; and the first correspondence between Armon and Alderman, and the fictional title page which precedes another paratextual page, a quote from the Book of Eve; then the novel's text. The quote is basically about Samuel's debate with his people who ask for a 'King' to guide them in peace and war. They would not listen to Samuel's warnings, that kings are usually tyrannical, and thus God granted them their wish. The wished 'King' is a male representing the ultimate power manipulation for one's interests.

On the other hand, the quote from the Book of Eve, which is the page between the fictional title cover and the novel's text, explains the universal principle of the tree-like shape of power concluding it with how power changes: either from center to branches hinting at the usual way, or vice versa hinting at the Day of the Girls.

The analogy between the two introductory quotes and their positions at the beginning of the novel provides a preparatory atmosphere for the readers. Samuel's quote represents an extreme masculine power moderated by the prophetic missionary one. Eve's quote indicates the way of gaining

power for women: "When the people change, the palace cannot hold. As it is written: 'She cuppeth the lightning in her hand. She commandeth it to strike.'" (p. 14).

In between these two shifting gender powers, the middle scene is the first correspondence between Armon and Alderman. Stating his novel "hybrid" "not quite history, not quite a novel. A sort of 'novelization of what archaeologists agree is the most plausible narrative" (p. 11) locates it within another dimension of liminality. He also refers to the dominant religious perspective of the novel/ Day of the Girls through the shocking portrayal of Mother Eve and how this will not be offensive for his audience as "everyone claims to be an atheist now" (p. 11). Alderman's response reveals a nostalgic wish for a "world run by men" full of peace, and marital stability. This introductory correspondence reflects several liminal dimensions between which the play of all other elements of the novel iteratively persists. Male/ Female, religious/ atheist, reality/ fiction, history/ present/ future.

This unstable liminality is evident too in the correspondence between Armon and Alderman at the thresholds of the novel's text. They discuss the novel's value and its potential reception by the audience in the age of matriarchy. Being of historical nature, Armon builds his fictional story on a historical base inspired by excavated remnants that prove the existence of the age of patriarchy, a fact that -according to Armon- is hidden by the "mostly nun" historians, and that -according to Alderman- will not be relished by the majority female audience. The two do not agree on the gender roles in their history or present (which is supposed to be our future). Armon's thought that gender concerns are just a game of external fragile guise reflecting its absurdity and undecidability whereas Alderman, with her firm beliefs in matriarchy, does not welcome the analogy and its implications. Finally, to save Armon the trouble and support his efforts in writing that novel -but paradoxically, she suggests publishing the novel under a woman's name. This implies the real-world situation when -out of fear of rejection- women writers publish under male names. This paradox proves the deconstructive liminality of the "gender game."

4. Conclusion

This study aims to investigate how gender roles are dismantled through exploiting power sources mainly motivated and enhanced by the spiritual/ religious power. This goal is achieved via deconstructing the internal and external liminality. The first is represented by the rising Allie/ Mother Eve's pseudo-matriarchal religion versus the declining secular/ pragmatic masculine power realized by Tunde. The external liminality is analyzed through paratextual elements in the novel: the prologue, and the epilogue. Applying the adopted multilayered conceptual framework provides an in-depth analysis of the novel from a contemporary perspective: deconstruction and postsecular feminism. Through the fake religious guise, Allie/ Mother Eve succeeds in achieving domination over and revenge from men. Allie undergoes a state of suspended transformation from weakness to power, and from being victimized to a murderer. She manipulates the religious factor to guaranttee reliability among women of the world and thus to assure their submission. In this process, Allie becomes a tyrant. On the other side, Tunde's reversed trajectory of power indicates multidimensional liminality. In the process of chasing his sole pragmatic doctrine of self-glory, he awkwardly situates himself among the revolting females of the world; hence his tragic decline is inevitable. These internal iterative processes between power/ decline, religious (true/false)/ pragmatic, female/ male take place within the external liminality borderlines of the religious scripts, both real and fictional, and of the comments on the novel by the imaginative novel's author, Armon, and editor, Alderman. This external construct shows generally the struggle for power under male or female superiority and specifically the position of male writers who oppose the dominant female narrative in a matriarchal era which creates a comparative binary with the struggle of female writers in the real world.

Evidently manipulating a sacred source of power to achieve one's goals is a Machiavellian approach to power not less vicious than women's oppression in the real world due to unanchored masculine stratagems of all aspects. Allie/ Eve, Tunde, and the paratextual elements represent an iterative process to highlight the mechanism of dismantling/ undoing the existing norms, zooming in the limbo of liminality/ threshold/ undecidability, then reshaping a new reality after the success of "The Day of the Girls" leading to the reversal of normal parameters of earthly life and the subsequent apocalyptic world led by the females.

Foregrounding attributes such as kindness, and care, as missing in the age of girls is based on a kind of spiritual feminism that prioritizes spreading love, intimacy, and tenderness among all. However, the events show a withdrawal from these features to mere cruelty both with the enemies, the males in this case, and the females who are threatening women in power.

Generally, this article highlights the issue of religious identity in Alderman's The Power portraying the pivotal power dynamic in the rise of Alderman's apocalyptic females. As in the previous studies and as seemingly meant by Alderman, dismantling the established orders and switching the gender roles via power parameters and dominance will not but create chaos and deepen instability. Therefore, gaining one's rights in humanity is not a matter of viciously seizing power, but of a balance between normal sources of power and creating mutual understanding and responsibility.

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