

Wanda's pose is relinquished and submissive in the arms of the mourning women. Has her resistance been diluted by water? Wanda embodies suicide considered 'feminine' in the history of the patriarchal culture. Femininity finds itself in the element of water – the matter of despair – as water is the symbol of female volatility. Her body is the repository of tears, blood, amniotic fluid, and milk. Death in water as an example of the female variant of suicide is best represented by the heroine of Shakespeare's most famous play. Hamlet becomes a worthy participant in political life when he sacrifices love. Ophelia, on the other hand, is short-lived; her life is the life of the dead one. The Ophelia complex embodies the sense of patriarchally conceived femininity: she has been born to die in water and to find her fate in there. "A woman can only weep over her misery, her eyes drowning in tears" – writes the scholar of Western imagination Gaston Bachelard – "the water, the homeland of the nymphs of the living, is also the homeland of the nymphs of the dead". Wanda-as-Ophelia replicates the compulsion to give up herself which is associated with femininity. She personifies the idea of martyrdom. She only gains the heroic status by yielding her own sensual fulfilment. In the history of European iconography, the complete separation of 'a woman' as a phantasm from the real experience of women is achieved in the Italian Renaissance. The Florentine nymph in Boccaccio's work is "a woman who has become an idea", writes philosopher Catherine Malabou in her book *Pleasure Erased. The Clitoris Unthought*. The Renaissance period fossilises the ambivalent principle of representation, that is "the unity and, at the same time, the lack of unity of the phantasm of a woman with the woman herself". "This caesura important for medieval poetry has never ceased to rule the Western imagination and continues to haunt contemporary art" and our collective imagination. It is produced by the fundamental principle that "the image and the living body [of a woman] cannot merge". Such woman becomes a fixed metaphor for patriarchal values, a stake in the game of phallogocentric imagery. She is dis-placed from the ideals that men fight for on a public stage, from the political triumph of male desire. Her body becomes a vessel for male fantasies.

Wanda, the most mysterious figure of Polish culture, is nevertheless a crack in the patriarchal image of women. According to folk tales, her allure was full of terror, her superhuman beauty made her enemies tremble. Wanda is ambivalent and contradictory: human and inhuman, involved and passive, pagan and divine. She epitomises an archaic and repressed force that returns to shake the foundations of our world. Wanda – the foundress of the Polish nation – behaves in a perverse way: as a functioning-beyond-danger benevolent young woman and a savage priestess. A goddess of good and evil. In her purity and innocence, she is supposed to resemble the Virgin Mary but instead, she manifests the gridlock and impossibility of feminine energy which accumulates in a positively perceived feminine passivity. Lamented as a *pietà*, Wanda is in fact a great indictment. Water as fluidity in feminist deconstruction is a sign of resistance, of survival, of creative power. Hydrofeminism today proposes the meaning of water as a symbol of political critique. "Today, when you or I drink a glass of water", argues cultural theorist Astrida Neimanis, "in this act of ingestion, we come into contact with all of our

companion species”, but we also relate more broadly to the phenomenon described as 'Hypersea', which arose when life moved out of marine waters and by necessity folded a watery habitat back inside of itself. Water is an element that transcends the cycles of life and death. Becoming a body of water is an experience of how bodies and community should be understood differently. The fact that Hypersea creates “flows of power, culture, politics and economics” is also something that we need to re-evaluate.

Wanda-Ofelia is the allegory of femicide which underpins a patriarchy that perpetuates gender-based sexual violence and maintains an age-old contempt for women's and LGBTQ+ rights (and, in Poland, a draconian abortion law). Wanda as a “body of water” (a forever-living body) is a symbol of activism of the (not only Polish) imagination. Her story of female survival not only challenges the dominant order but is a narrative shake-up that introduces transformative changes. Wanda as the element of Hypersea confronts any anti-female political discourses, activates the primal forces and shatters a male history through the feminine desire. Wanda's aquatic body, pulled ashore, releases women's tears. Water flows through these tears. The water flows as the struggle continues.

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