

Using Haraway's Split Researcher in the Context of Theatre: A Case Study of Subject/Object in Romantic Love

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Published: September 1, 2023

ABSTRACT

Donna Haraway's 1988 article 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' attempts to outline a loose methodology for objective feminist research. One of the key concepts in Haraway's argument is the 'split' researcher; through the process of 'splitting', a researcher can see from a multitude of perspectives and shift away from centring their own subjective experiences. Lauren Gunderson's 2010 play *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* likewise 'splits' the character of Emilie du Châtelet, which involves two actresses playing different versions of Emilie. This means that one version of Emilie, the leading Emilie, can observe the events of her life from a distance and can therefore move into a more objective sphere to come to her own conclusions. Leading Emilie must observe and sometimes enact memories from her life that lean into subjective and emotional experiences of romantic love. This article argues that despite the relative subjectivity and emotionality associated with romantic love, leading Emilie is able to make astute and helpful deductions about her romantic relationships. This suggests that the feminist researcher need not fully push aside their subjective experiences in order to come to beneficial conclusions.

Keywords: splitting, feminist perspectives, dual-role playing, perspectives of love, Lauren Gunderson

INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of Donna Haraway's foundational text 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' (1988), feminist scholars have grappled with the plausibility of objective feminist research. From Sandra Harding's 1991 suggestion that the definition of objectivity has been too closely aligned with impartiality to Kathy Davis's 2007 claim that women's lived experiences are essential to understanding how systems of oppression operate, the debates surrounding Haraway's concept of situated knowledge as feminist methodology range from reconsideration to outright dismissal. In this article, I examine how Lauren Gunderson's play *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* (2010) uses fragmented shifts in perspective to offer a methodology for balancing objective perspective and women's lived experiences. This article argues that Gunderson demonstrates an opportunity for unity between Haraway's objective methodology of 'splitting' oneself and subjective experiences of romantic love, blurring the binary between objectivity and subjectivity and suggesting that the relationship between the two is a continuum rather than a direct opposition.

Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight (2010) is a historiographic metadramatic play by American playwright Lauren Gunderson, first performed by the South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California on 24 April 2009 and first published as a play-text by New York City-based publisher Samuel French in 2010. The play centres around eighteenth-century French natural philosopher, Emilie du Châtelet, who is best known for her translation of Isaac Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687) and for being one of Voltaire's most prominent lovers; Gunderson's play sees du Châtelet reliving and rewatching the moments of her life play out in front of her, after her death.

Whilst the character of Emilie is able to relive some of the conversations she had during life, she is not able to touch other actors and cannot re-enact intimate scenes. For Emilie's life to be replayed, another character, named Soubrette, must play her in scenes where physical touch is necessary. This article explores the contrast between the fragmented expressions of romantic love shown by the different versions of Emilie du Châtelet performed by Emilie and Soubrette and the sexually driven expression of romantic love exhibited by Emilie's lover, Voltaire. I

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contend that Gunderson's fragmented representation of Emilie du Châtelet's experiences allows for the character Emilie to both display and problematise Haraway's concept of 'splitting' and thus enables her to consider romantic love from different perspectives, whereas Voltaire's perspective is singular and subjective. This means that Emilie can demonstrate a more malleable and complete impression of romantic love, whereas Voltaire's linear and physical expression of romantic love exposes the issue with prioritising personal sexual desire and pleasure over aspects such as compassion, respect and communication.

Haraway encourages the concept of splitting oneself to disengage from the process of being. She argues that 'one cannot "be" either a cell or molecule – or a woman, colonised person, laborer, and so on – if one intends to see and see from these positions critically. 'Being' is much more problematic and contingent' (1988: 585), thus suggesting that the process of self-identification obscures the ability to examine situations through an objective lens due to the imposition of the self on the situation. The first section of this article explores the process through which Emilie du Châtelet is 'split'; she is able to 'be' and 'be split' simultaneously, offering a bridge between Haraway's objective methodology and the ostensibly opposing subjective perspective. By splitting Emilie into different characters with disparate perspectives based on their positionality and relative distance from the location of 'being', Gunderson demonstrates how Haraway's process of splitting can function whilst the self and its subjectivity remains intact. In her play, Gunderson literalises the process of splitting that Haraway recommends and explores how splitting can function through visualising split perspectives on the contemporary stage.

This process of splitting within the play allows for different Emilies to gain disparate perspectives on their engagement with romantic love. Whilst romantic love could be seen as a subjective experience that rejects objectivity, this article argues that the splitting of the character of Emilie enables objectivity to be somewhat maintained despite the appearance of subjective experience. hooks defines love as 'an action' (2000: 13), rather than an emotion or a collection of feelings. hooks notes that, in order to love, 'we must learn to mix various ingredients – care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication' (2000: 5). Combining hooks' suggestion that love is an action that requires dedication and Ellen Berscheid's 2010 definition of romantic love in opposition to companionate love, compassionate love and adult attachment love, the second section of this article considers how the split Emilies respond to romantic love and how the most objective of these Emilies is able to use her skills of deduction to come to beneficial conclusions, despite the appearance of subjective experience. In this section, I analyse how the different Emilies' disparate perspectives on romantic love stem from their splitting and allow for a more holistic experience of romantic love than Voltaire, who is unable to tap into an objective viewpoint. Together, the two sections of my argument consider how Gunderson's splitting of the Emilies provides a methodology for the splitting of the self that Haraway suggests and how feminist objectivity can be somewhat maintained when researching a topic steeped in subjective experiences.

EMILIE SQUARED: FRAGMENTATION AND SITUATEDNESS

Donna Haraway's 1988 article 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' attempts to offer an objective feminist methodology. Haraway argues for 'a doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing' (1988: 585); the onus is on communities and connections rather than the single perspective of the subjective self. In her definition of feminist objectivity, Haraway complicates this relationship between the subjective and objective by suggesting that 'feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see' (1988: 583). Here, Haraway argues that a methodology of feminist objectivity cannot and should not fully subjugate the feminist subject but can adopt a politics of situatedness to expand the breadth and depth of feminist thought. One cannot fully split from their subjective self but one can use their location to objectively analyse 'where we are or are not' (Haraway, 1988: 583) in relation to other locations. Rather than claiming that there is a way to transcend the subject, Haraway suggests that one need not dismiss one's own subjectivity but simply destabilise it in order to consider the world from different perspectives.

Elaborating on the need for feminist objectivity to develop a multiplicity of perspectives and interconnected relationships, Haraway suggests that one cannot understand all perspectives but must endeavour to see from at least more than one point of view. Haraway argues that:

All these pictures of the world should not be allegories of infinite mobility and interchangeability but of elaborate specificity and difference and the loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another's point of view, even when the other is our own machine. (1988: 583)

By noting the impossibility of ‘infinite mobility and interchangeability’, Haraway contends that there is no way to produce an all-seeing objective viewpoint and suggests that objectivity arises from the effort and attempt to see the world from another’s perspective.

This is where Haraway’s notion of ‘splitting’ arises. Haraway argues that ‘splitting, not being, is the privileged image for feminist epistemologies of scientific knowledge’ (1988: 586) and claims that this is because both the subjective self and the notion of vision are ‘multidimensional’ (1988: 586). Since one cannot simultaneously ‘be’ all things and see from all perspectives, Haraway suggests that being is incompatible with objective methodology. For one to see objectively, one must understand the self as split in order to make partial connections. Identity, Haraway claims, ‘does not produce science; critical positioning does’ (1988: 586) and, therefore, the self, understood as split and fragmentary, is able to apply a more critical lens to analysis than the self that prioritises identity and ‘being’. Fragmentation is necessary for one to see objectively whilst also acknowledging one’s own subjectivity.

Despite being published in 1988, Haraway’s article continues to provoke reactions in contemporary scholarship. More recently, Sandra Harding has built upon Haraway’s notion of the objective in *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women’s Lives* (1991). Harding states:

Neither knowers nor the knowledge they produce are or could be impartial, disinterested, value-neutral, Archimedean. The challenge is to articulate how it is that knowledge has a socially situated character denied to it by the conventional view, and to work through the transformations that this conception of knowledge requires of conventional notions such as objectivity, relativism, rationality, and reflexivity. (1991: 11-12)

Here, Harding rejects the suggestion that objectivity when being attempted by a subjective self can never be impartial and therefore claims that the synonymic connection between the words objective and impartial should be deconstructed and problematised. Both Harding and Haraway refuse to place subjectivity as an opposition to objectivity, acknowledging that the pursuit of the objective by a subjective self is not only possible but necessary.

In the last decade, several scholars have engaged with Haraway’s ‘Situated Knowledges’ and questioned the problematic connection between the subjective and objective in the article. Peta Hinton argues that:

[Haraway’s] contradictory suggestions for embodied locatability indicate something of the dilemma of a politics of location that I would like to put in question here – namely that although subjectivity has been reconfigured, its classical coordinates may be quietly, and inadvertently, reinstalled. Insisting that we account for ‘who’ it is that speaks or organizes collectivity, as an *enunciative* politics would require, demands a self-presence of that speaking subject and its identity – the same claim for self-presence which informs the rational subject’s capacity to stand back from the world in order to take measure of it. (2014: 104-105)

Hinton suggests that the self-presence of the subject is ever-present and argues that identity cannot be as easily dispossessed in search of the split self as Haraway suggests. Hinton agrees with Haraway’s argument that a multiplicity of positions and perspectives is essential to feminist politics but suggests that the subject ‘is always in a process of becoming (within) a web of political productions’ (2014: 109). Hinton is not explicitly disagreeing with Haraway but complicates some of the more ambiguous definitions and connections within Haraway’s work.

While Hinton complicates and problematises Haraway’s argument without dismissing the general basis of her conclusion, Kathy Davis argues that Haraway’s scepticism of individual experiences is disputable. Davis suggests that the dismissal of women’s experiences:

Leaves feminist theorists empty-handed when it comes to understanding how individual women give meaning to their lived experiences and, in particular, how they negotiate the tensions between these experiences and the cultural and institutionalized discourses in which they are embedded. (2007: 132)

Davis’s suggestion that the lived experiences of women are integral to understanding how culturally and politically-imbued meanings are inscribed upon women seems to suggest that the pursuit of feminist objectivity should be secondary to the understanding of subjective experience. This thread is picked up by Sara Ahmed, who claims that feminism ‘often begins with intensity’ and sensation (2017: 22) and therefore suggests that experience is integral to the call to feminism and feminist research. Ahmed also considers emotionality, as a claim about a subject, to be ‘a characteristic of bodies’ (2014: 4), emphasising the impact of subjective experience and emotional reaction on embodiment and questioning whether one can be disentangled from these connections when one is embodied. Haraway insists on ‘the embodied nature of all vision’ (1988: 581) and therefore suggests that to have vision and attempt to see from different perspectives is to be embodied. If embodiment is intrinsically connected to subjectivity and emotionality as Ahmed suggests, then the plausibility of objective feminist research seems dubious.

Whilst these opposing methodological approaches in feminist research may seem conflicting and rather oppositional, Lauren Gunderson's *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* (2010) offers an interpretation as to how objective feminist perspectives can be achieved whilst subjectivity remains not only intact but also integral to the main character. *Emilie* allows for two characters to play Emilie du Châtelet and therefore demonstrates a split perspective from one subject. The main character, noted as 'EMILIE' (Gunderson, 2010: 7) in the play text, is on stage for the entire duration of the play and the actress who plays her does not play any other characters. In this article, I will refer to this Emilie as the leading Emilie. The only other actor in the play who only performs one character role is the actor who portrays Voltaire. There are three other characters noted in the play text: Madam, Gentleman and Soubrette. These three characters in the play text play several roles throughout the play; Madam plays Emilie's mother and a few snobbish courtiers; Gentleman plays Emilie's tutor: Mauvertuis, Emilie's husband: Marquis Florent-Claude du Chastellet and Emilie's later lover: Jean-François; Soubrette plays the second version of Emilie, Emilie's daughter: Gabrielle-Pauline, and Voltaire's later lover and niece: Mary-Louise. For the purpose of this article, I am interested in the character of Soubrette whose main role in the play is to be the second version of Emilie aside from the leading Emilie.

The conceit of actors playing more than one character is not novel in theatre. A popular example is that of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton* (2015) where the Marquis de Lafayette and Thomas Jefferson, John Laurens and Philip Hamilton, Hercules Mulligan and James Madison and Peggy Schuyler and Maria Reynolds are pairs of characters played by one actor rather than two. A more transgressive example is British dramatist Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* (1979) in which the actors switch characters in the second act and both acts' casting choices cause gendered subversion. The character switches and disconnects have been described by Joanne Klein as 'an insidious critique of the Victorian role models and the arbitrary nature of role playing' (1987: 65). In *Emilie*, the role-switching emphasises the importance of the two characters who do not switch roles: leading Emilie and Voltaire. The characters played by Soubrette, Madam and Gentlemen can be seen as various stock characters: Soubrette plays young, sexual and flirtatious women, Madam plays older, pompous and arrogant women and Gentlemen plays any man who is not Voltaire. The only transgression comes in Soubrette's performance as a younger Emilie which duplicates the presence of du Châtelet on the stage.

This duplicated presence is apparent to the audience from the outset of the play. The leading Emilie opens the play by stating that she will set the stage and declares 'my name is Emilie' (Gunderson, 2010: 11) before pointing to Soubrette and saying, 'I think that one's me, too' (Gunderson, 2010: 11); leading Emilie then confirms that Soubrette Emilie is 'definitely' her too, once she 'voraciously' kisses Voltaire (Gunderson, 2010: 11). Here, at the very beginning of the play, leading Emilie explicitly tells the audience that there are two versions of herself present on the stage, speaking and acting from two different perspectives, which makes the audience aware that they are watching a performance where the leading Emilie will be able to comment on her actions from a distanced perspective by watching them being performed by Soubrette Emilie. Returning to Haraway's suggestion that splitting allows one to see where one is and one is not, leading Emilie's distanced examination of the image of herself played by Soubrette allows leading Emilie to realise that they are not viewing the events from the same perspective. This means that leading Emilie is in the privileged position to observe her past actions from a perspective that will allow her to reconsider and recontextualise her choices. Like her professional position as a natural philosopher and mathematician, this perspective grants Emilie the opportunity to observe, consider and present her findings to the audience once she comes to a conclusion.

Soubrette Emilie, however, does not re-enact all of leading Emilie's memories, complicating the binary of performer and observer. Leading Emilie is able to re-enact conversations and, therefore, also plays herself at a younger age. The first instance where leading Emilie plays herself, rather than appearing as a distanced observer and narrator is when she re-lives the conversation she had with Voltaire on the night they met. The two tease each other with vigorous wordplay, with Voltaire calling Emilie 'my dear' (Gunderson, 2010: 16), Emilie counteracting with 'a dear perhaps, but not yours yet' (Gunderson, 2010: 16), Voltaire replying with 'I hear a "yet"' (Gunderson, 2010: 16) and Emilie wittily concluding with 'and missed the "not"' (Gunderson, 2010: 16). Here, the two pick apart each other's syntax and construe their own meanings, giving the audience an insight into their wit and compatibility. Leading Emilie can, therefore, engage in the type of witty back-and-forth dialogue she engaged in with Voltaire in her youth and is able to move between being the objective observer and the subjective participant.

Leading Emilie's position as a fluid member of the cast of the play could undermine Soubrette Emilie's role. However, aside from the fact that Soubrette Emilie is necessary for leading Emilie to have moments of contemplation, Soubrette Emilie is also a necessity because she is able to touch the other actors when leading Emilie cannot. When leading Emilie touches another actor, the lights go off and, when they return, she is breathless (Gunderson, 2010: 18). Leading Emilie rationalises this by stating 'I understand now. No touch. Touching life is like having it. And I realise that I don't. This time, my life is not *really* life or mine' (Gunderson, 2010: 18). Here, leading Emilie acknowledges her position in relation to the play; she is present, but she does not 'have' life and, therefore, cannot perform life in the same way the living actors can. Leading Emilie then beckons Soubrette over,

who is able to touch Voltaire '*successfully*' (Gunderson, 2010: 18). If leading Emilie does not have life, her perceptions and experiences are disparate from that of someone who is alive and this means that the different versions of Emilie observe the events of the play from different perspectives and viewpoints.

The multiplicity of perspectives allows leading Emilie to engage in the play as a subjective participant and an objective observer, moving between the two roles throughout the duration of the narrative. Through the process of splitting, leading Emilie retains her selfhood and subjectivity and achieves an objective viewpoint that considers alternative perspectives and interpretations, whilst rejecting the omniscient and universal perspective Haraway warns feminist researchers about. However, this binarised position between the subjective and objective position is problematised when the objective observer, leading Emilie, must observe events from her life associated with romantic love, prompting the conclusions she relays back to the audience to become emotional and instinctive rather than contemplative and systematic.

FRAGMENTED PERSPECTIVES OF ROMANTIC LOVE

When the leading Emilie steps back from the action of the play and becomes the objective observer version of herself, she is able to view her experiences of romantic love from a distanced perspective. However, this distanced perspective does not prevent her from reflecting on her subjective experience and emotional response. The scenes in which leading Emilie interacts with her lover, Voltaire, as a subjective participant and then steps back to become an objective observer demonstrate the conflict arising when the subjective self pursues objective observation when what is being observed is something deeply personal. I argue that, despite the subjectivity associated with experiences of romantic love, the split Emilies' different perspectives on love are still able to provide a more holistic and objective view of romantic love than that of Voltaire, someone entirely driven by his subjective and self-oriented desires. The conflicting perspectives on romantic love from leading Emilie and Voltaire arise from a disconnect in the definition and exploration of their own romantic love. To determine how this disconnect manifests itself, I turn to bell hooks and Ellen Berscheid's definitions of love and romantic love.

As I noted in the introduction, in *All About Love*, bell hooks refers to love as an action rather than simply a feeling or a combination of emotions. The reason hooks does so is because 'to think of actions shaping feelings is one way we rid ourselves of conventionally accepted assumptions such as that parents love their children' (2000: 13) and, therefore, to view love as an action is to acknowledge that it is neither guaranteed nor expected and is instead a process based on our connections and relationships. hooks continues to claim that 'when we are loving we openly express care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment, and trust' (2000: 14), highlighting that the act of love requires effort from all parties and, without authentic effort, relationships between people that are prompted by desire and/or utility are not loving relationships; 'affection,' hooks says, 'is only one ingredient of love' (2000: 5) and cannot be fulfilling without the other ingredients. Here, hooks is not referring solely to romantic love, but all forms of love including what Berscheid refers to as companionate love, adult-attachment love and compassionate love. I am focusing on romantic love specifically as this is the type of love exhibited by the split Emilies and Voltaire.

Berscheid's definition of romantic love links companionate love with sexual desire (2010: 12). She notes that 'virtually all theories of Romantic Love do link it to the sensual feelings, specifically, the experience of sexual desire, and most laypersons believe that an individual cannot be "in love" with another unless sexual desire for that person is experienced' (2010: 14). This argument is problematised by the existence of romantic love between people who identify as asexual and therefore do not experience sexual attraction. However, in the context of *Emilie*, both the split Emilies and Voltaire within the play are evidently allosexual, meaning that they do experience sexual attraction, and, therefore, sexual desire is necessary for their romantic love to form. Companionate love, or friendship love, has been described by Nancy Kropp Grote and Irene Hanson Frieze as 'a comfortable, affectionate, trusting love' (1994: 275). Here, some of hooks' ingredients of love are carried over: affection and trust. With this in mind, romantic love can be seen as an act of care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment, and trust that is either sparked by or linked to sexual desire.

Other definitions of romantic love highlight its opposition to sexual desire, rather than acknowledging sexual desire as an aspect of romantic love. Berit Brogaard states that 'while romantic love and sexual desire are felt as different emotions, they lie on a continuum' (2015: 46) and Lisa Diamond takes this difference between the two further by claiming that '*sexual desire* typically denotes a need or drive to seek out sexual objects or to engage in sexual activities, whereas *romantic love* typically denotes the powerful feelings of emotional infatuation and attachment between intimate partners' (2004: 116). Diamond refers again to one of hooks' ingredients of love, by highlighting attachment as a key aspect of romantic love, however, if emotional infatuation and attachment are aspects that can also be found in companionate love then discerning between companionate and romantic love becomes difficult. Conversely, Wendy Langford's definition of romantic love centres sexual attraction; Langford claims that romantic love is 'one in which cultural legitimation is given to the desire to seek completion through

attachment to a sexual object' (1999: 62). Here, Langford suggests that sexual desire is the spark for romantic love and claims that romantic love is neither an action nor a feeling, but a process of legitimization.

These contrasting definitions do not delegitimise romantic love, but they do suggest that romantic love is not neatly defined due to its presence and appearance being markedly different when considering the experiences of individual romantic couples. hooks' definition of love attempts to distinguish between societal expectations of love and practically and ethically viable; this means that her definition refers to an ideal form of love that many people will aspire towards. hooks' definition of love rejects the idea that feelings are enough to sustain love and acknowledges the effort required for love to be a positive action and for it to last. For this reason, hooks' definition focuses on accountability and therefore offers a positive framework for the possibilities of love. With hooks' definition of love, Berscheid's definition of romantic love and contradictions from Brogaard, Diamond and Langford in mind, a holistic and positive definition of romantic love could be the action of care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment, and trust, that is sparked by emotional connection, and often involves sexual desire but may not if the two lovers do not experience sexual desire.

Since romantic love requires some form of emotional, and perhaps physical, connection, experiences of romantic love are always somewhat subjective. Marilyn Friedman claims that the meeting of two lovers and embarkment on a journey of romantic love requires a merger of two selves. She states that 'human lovers cannot merge so thoroughly as to obliterate their separate individual embodiments. Aspects of personal identity that were important to each before the romantic relationship brought them together as a couple still persist in their lives' (2003: 118). This means that one's selfhood does not dissipate when enacting romantic love; the subjective desire towards one another is sparked by an attraction to and/or affection for aspects of their own personal identity that the other may find alluring. In the case of leading Emilie and Voltaire in Gunderson's play, their romantic love is sparked by mutual sexual attraction and appreciation of each other's intellectual ability. Leading Emilie has the luxury of both performing past scenes where she expresses romantic love without touching the other actors and moving back to observe her loving scenes from a distanced perspective. Despite romantic love requiring subjective attraction and affection, leading Emilie is still able to reflect and consider her past events with some objectivity due to her distanced perspective.

Each split version of *Emilie du Châtelet* exhibits a different aspect of romantic love within the play. Soubrette Emilie is able to touch other actors and can, therefore, perform scenes of sexual passion that involve physical interaction. Leading Emilie, unable to touch the other actors, must express and experience love from a distance. She exhibits care, respect and trust within her loving relationships; romantic love arises when she re-enacts past conversations with her lovers, Voltaire and later, Jean-François, revealing her attraction to both on an intellectual and spiritual level. When she moves back to comment on the play from her more objective viewpoint, her expression of romantic love shifts to a reflective form, where she can watch, observe and interpret her own emotions, rather than reliving them.

Soubrette Emilie's displays of romantic love are rooted in sexual desire and mirror Voltaire's focus on the erotic. One of the earliest examples of this in the play is when Soubrette replaces leading Emilie in an embrace with Voltaire, described in the stage directions as having '*much fewer clothes on, grinning, grinning, grinning*' (Gunderson, 2010: 20). The repetition of the direction 'grinning' emphasises the necessity for the actress playing Soubrette to lean into an expression of post-coital bliss. George Bataille has described eroticism and the expression of sexual desire as the 'breaking down of established patterns' (1986: 18), rendering the moment of sexual euphoria as a heightened, embodied experience, separate from normality. Leading Emilie, unable to physically touch the other actors, cannot relive and represent these moments, whilst Soubrette Emilie can use her physicality to visualise sexual pleasure to the audience. Soubrette Emilie and Voltaire are described as '*the picture of affection*' (Gunderson, 2010: 20) in the stage directions when they dress each other post-sex. As hooks notes, affection is only one aspect of love; this scene between Soubrette Emilie and Voltaire works to exhibit that mutual affection but does not demonstrate the actions of care, responsibility, respect, commitment, and trust required in a healthy loving relationship.

In a direct comparison to Soubrette Emilie, when leading Emilie is able to relive her memories, she shows signs of the care required in a loving relationship. When leading Emilie relives the moment in which she confesses her love for Voltaire, she uses her confession to settle Voltaire's erratic feelings towards her. Voltaire bemoans 'I don't care about the universe if you don't love me!' (Gunderson, 2010: 25), to which leading Emilie calls over Soubrette Emilie and they both say, 'I love you!' (Gunderson, 2010: 25). In this moment, leading Emilie does not need Soubrette Emilie's involvement, nor does she ask for her to fully take over. Instead, they utter the phrase together and in sync giving leading Emilie a way to emphasise her love for Voltaire and, therefore, demonstrating her actions of care towards her lover by using her confession to reassure him. Soubrette Emilie's involvement in this utterance is not to act as leading Emilie, but to act as a part of leading Emilie, once again, demonstrating the split perspectives of the Emilies. The two split perspectives from within Emilie work in unison to momentarily exhibit a more holistic experience of love and Emilie speaks across time and space to confess her romantic love for Voltaire.

When Voltaire is avoiding arrest by the King of France, leading Emilie and Voltaire engage in another passionate conversation without Soubrette Emilie's presence and the audience sees the leading Emilie's caring actions in addition to her respect and responsibility towards her lover. Leading Emilie offers Voltaire the opportunity to stay at her home in Cirey, to which he begs 'say you'll come!' (Gunderson, 2010: 28) and she replies, 'I won't say anything to you EVER AGAIN – which is what happens when you go to the Bastille!' (Gunderson, 2010: 28). The emphasis the actress playing leading Emilie must put on 'ever again' highlights the severity of the situation and the worry she is reliving at the thought of Voltaire being imprisoned. This intense exchange shows that the centre of leading Emilie's love for Voltaire is not wit or cleverness, but deep-rooted, emotionally charged care, respect for his ability and responsibility for his well-being and, in this specific case, survival. In a matter of Voltaire's life and death, leading Emilie's sole focus is making sure that her lover lives.

Later in the same scene, leading Emilie fully comes to terms with her feelings for Voltaire. Leading Emilie says, 'it seems I love you desperately' (Gunderson, 2010: 29) to which Voltaire replies, 'desperation can be quite enjoyable. Be my muse' (Gunderson, 2010: 29). Throughout the play, Emilie has prioritised scientific pursuit, often at the expense of her own emotions; indeed, her relationship with Voltaire began because of their shared wit. In this moment, leading Emilie relives her past grappling with the romantic love she has for Voltaire due to her attempts to keep her thoughts rational and orientated around her studies. Leading Emilie attempts to distance herself from her own feelings with the phrase 'it seems', suggesting that this is another of her deductions. Whereas the earlier expression of love, with Soubrette Emilie in tow, seems to be an attempt at settling Voltaire and therefore appears as an act of care towards him, this confession is almost a resignation. Leading Emilie is resigned to her feelings; she is aware that she loves Voltaire and perhaps she is slightly aware that she loves him more than he loves her. Indeed, he does not repeat the three-word phrase back to leading Emilie¹ and yet his assertion that she be his muse distracts her from his reluctance to return the phrase.

Leading Emilie's reliving of the revelatory moment where she confesses to Voltaire is epiphanic because she is able to revisit the moment in her life where she finally held the balance between her experience of subjective romantic love and her objective scientific pursuits. Sara Ahmed notes that 'the association between passion and passivity is instructive. It works as a reminder of how "emotion" has been viewed as "beneath" the faculties of thought and reason' (2014: 3). Emilie's reluctance to fully express her romantic love for Voltaire before this moment suggests that she once held a belief that her subjective experience of romantic love should be seen as secondary to her objective involvement in her scientific work. As teased out by Ahmed, the association between passivity and passion implies that passionate love is at odds with an active pursuit of scientific discovery. Leading Emilie tells the audience that this is the scene where she switches 'from eccentric to rebel over night' (Gunderson, 2010: 30). In this scene, leading Emilie relives the part of her life where she is not just rebelling against the crown by housing Voltaire, she is also rebelling against her past reluctance to embrace her own experiences of romantic love. By the time leading Emilie relives the moment where she admits to being desperately in love, she can no longer hold back her emotional response to Voltaire and she seems to understand that her philosophical relationship with Voltaire does not come at the cost of her romantic love for him.

Whilst the moments where Soubrette Emilie and leading Emilie relive du Châtelet's experiences of romantic love are steeped in emotional subjectivity, leading Emilie is still able to retain some objectivity when she steps back and observes the relived scenes despite their romantic content. Leading Emilie reflects on these moments of romantic love, performed by Soubrette Emilie and herself, and draws conclusions about each of her romantic relationships. Leading Emilie has two boards on stage with her: one titled '**LOVE**' and one titled '**PHILOSOPHY**' (Gunderson, 2010: 5). As she watches her life play out in front of her and joins in reliving her experiences, she adds tally marks to each of these boards and often offers commentary as to why she has placed a tally mark there.

After Soubrette Emilie and Voltaire redress themselves following their implied sexual interaction, leading Emilie makes a mark under the word '**LOVE**' (Gunderson, 2010: 20), explicitly sharing with the audience her distanced interpretation of the event. Leading Emilie from her comparatively objective viewpoint sees this display of sexual desire as a characteristic of romantic love, echoing Berscheid's claim that sexual desire is a foundation of romantic love. Following a scene with her husband, the Marquis Florent-Claude, leading Emilie also makes a few tallies under '**LOVE**' and explains 'this is where it gets confusing because *that's* Love too. [...] Not the fire kind, but the *bread* kind' (Gunderson, 2010: 27). Here, leading Emilie, employing objective investigation and reflection, begins to understand the different dimensions of the multiple romantic loves within her life. Here, in her relationship with her husband, sexual desire is not foundational and warmth and comfort, akin to bread, are the defining characteristics. It is in her final lover, Jean-François, that these two dimensions of romantic love combine. Whilst watching Soubrette Emilie dance with Jean-François, leading Emilie makes the distanced observation 'this

¹ In fact, the only time Voltaire ever says the words 'I love you' (Gunderson, 2010: 12) to leading Emilie is at the beginning of the play where he attempts to upstage leading Emilie and take over the telling of her story. This moment is played for comic effect and the words are performed as if Voltaire is reading off a script.

is it. Happy mind. Happy heart' (Gunderson, 2010: 66), emphasising that she has reached the balance between her desire for scientific discovery and her desire for reciprocated romantic love: the objective and the subjective can finally co-exist in her life. From this distance, leading Emilie is able to see what aspects of romantic love were missing from each of her previous relationships.

The distance afforded to leading Emilie by her ability to react to her memories is maintained even in particularly emotional scenes. Leading Emilie comes to terms with the romantic incompatibility between herself and Voltaire when she observes the moment that Voltaire begins a sexual relationship with his niece, Marie-Louise, despite having previously told Emilie that he is impotent. After the ensuing argument, in which leading Emilie tells Voltaire to 'get the hell out of my house' (Gunderson, 2010: 56), she moves back into the objective sphere and '*wipes through all the marks under LOVE*' (Gunderson, 2010: 56). Here, the emotional and subjective scene bleeds into the objective observation space but does not stop leading Emilie from using reasoning to come to a judgement; the scenes with Voltaire prior to this moment have appeared to represent romantic love from her deductions, but this scene provides more context and reminds leading Emilie that Voltaire not only broke her trust but also rejected any form of commitment between the two.

The relationship between Emilie and Voltaire is an example of a romantic relationship sparked by sexual desire where one party is more invested in the action of love than the other. It is only when leading Emilie's subjective emotional response bleeds into her objective sphere in this scene that she is able to come to this conclusion through her observations. Marilyn Friedman notes that in romantic mergers 'the needs or interests of one lover may come to take precedence over those of her partner' (2003: 124) and claims that 'women tend to give more care and nurturance to their male lovers than they receive in return' (2003: 129). This is true in the case of Emilie and Voltaire's relationship in the play; his needs are prioritised and leading Emilie is the only one to perform actions of care. It is through the splitting of Emilie, allowing leading Emilie to consider Voltaire's inadequacies in relation to her own performance of the action of romantic love, that reveals the imbalance in their relationship.

This does not mean that Voltaire has never loved Emilie, but it does suggest that he was only able to perform some of the actions of romantic love. During their relationship, Voltaire is driven by sexual desire and it is not until the end of the play, when they decide to be friends rather than lovers, that he is able to provide Emilie with the support she requires. Moving once again into her objective sphere, leading Emilie notices this and claims that they are 'old friends made new' (Gunderson, 2010: 60), emphasising the shift in their relationship away from the sexual and towards the companionate. Despite Berscheid's claim that romantic love is a combination of sexual desire and companionate love, Voltaire is only able to exhibit companionate love towards Emilie when the sexual desire is diminished. This suggests that whilst Voltaire exhibits affection and sexual desire towards Emilie during their relationship, he does not exhibit enough ingredients of love for their relationship to be mutually beneficial and positive for both parties. Leading Emilie's move into the objective sphere while retaining some of her subjective perspective allows her to come to terms with the disparity between her criteria for a healthy loving relationship and Voltaire's.

CONCLUSION

Lauren Gunderson's *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* (2010) demonstrates a way to interpret Donna Haraway's concept of 'splitting' in objective feminist research. Gunderson's splitting of the character of Emilie into Soubrette Emilie and the subjective and objective leading Emilies allows the leading Emilie to interpret her own life from a multitude of perspectives, astutely deducing where she is and where she is not and using her deliberations to come to conclusions about her life choices and the behaviours enacted by the people in her life, the society in which she lived and her own decisions. This enables her to gain a more objective perspective when she is split from her subjective experiences and observes them from a distance, like the scientific researcher she is in her professional field. This objective perspective is problematised when she observes moments from her life linked to her experiences of romantic love. However, she is able to use the subjectivity that seeps into her objective position to come to terms with the deficiencies in her romantic relationship with Voltaire.

Although leading Emilie is unable to entirely maintain a distance between her subjective experiences and her objective deductions, she is able to utilise her split self in order to see her life's events from disparate perspectives, giving her a more holistic view of those around her and her relationships. She is not only able to re-experience the emotional and subjective moments of romantic love within her life, but also to see these moments through new eyes and, therefore, from new perspectives. It is this ability to see from split perspectives that allows her to come to a rewarding and positive conclusion regarding her love life. Leading Emilie revels in the performance of the action of love, bestowing acts of care, respect and responsibility on her lovers, however Voltaire does not reciprocate these acts, rendering their relationship uneven. Once leading Emilie carries her subjective experience into her objective sphere, she sees this imbalance and pursues future relationships where balance is assured. Ultimately, in Gunderson's play, Voltaire is not only rendered incompatible by leading Emilie's mostly objective

deductions, but he is also a secondary character in Emilie's story. The results of the split Emilies in Gunderson's play may suggest that there are certain themes and topics, such as romantic love, where objectivity is difficult for the feminist researcher to maintain, but that does not stop Gunderson's feminist researcher, leading Emilie, from coming to useful, constructive conclusions.

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Citation: Roberts, B. (2023). Using Haraway's Split Researcher in the Context of Theatre: A Case Study of Subject/Object in Romantic Love. *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics*, 7(2), 22. <https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/13550>

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