

The Construction of Female Identity in Sara Maitland's *Three Times Table*

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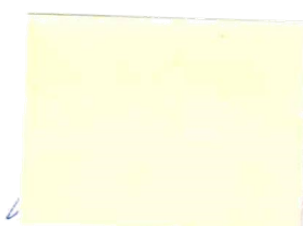
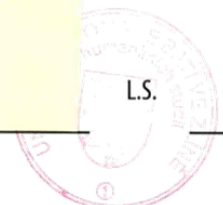
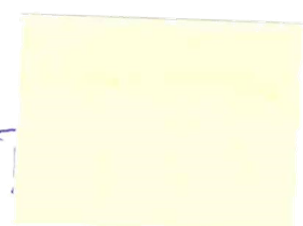
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na analýzu konstrukce ženské identity tří hlavních hrdinek v románu britské autorky Sary Maitland, *Three Times Table*. Román byl vydán roku 1991 v Londýně. Práce zmiňuje život autorky a její tvorbu. Cílem hlavní kapitoly práce je detailně porovnat a popsat identitu žen, které vystupují jako hlavní hrdinky románu. Tato práce zároveň poukazuje na to, do jaké míry jsou si tyto hrdinky v jedné domácnosti vzájemně blízké. V neposlední řadě román poukazuje na životní příběhy tří hlavních hrdinek, do jaké míry jejich minulost ovlivnila jejich současné životy. Zároveň práce popisuje, jak se každá hrdinka vyrovná s těžkou životní situací, kterou právě řeší.

Klíčová slova:

Sara Maitland, *Three Times Table*, feminismus, identita ženy, genderová nerovnost, dospělost ženy, dětství ženy, rodinný život

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis analyses the construction of female identity in the novel by British writer Sara Maitland *Three Times Table*. The novel was published in 1991 in London. The thesis mentions the life of the author and her work. The main chapter is mainly about the novel *Three Times Table*, about three women who live together in one house in London while they are in a completely different world. The aim of the main chapter is to compare and describe in detail the identity of women who act as the main heroines of the novel. This work also points out the extent to which these heroines are close to each other in one household. Finally, the novel points to the life stories of the three main heroines, to what extent their past influenced their current lives. At the same time, the work describes how each heroine copes with the difficult life situation she is currently dealing with.

Keywords:

Sara Maitland, *Three Times Table*, feminism, identity of woman, gender inequality, adulthood of woman, childhood of woman, contemporary women's fiction, family life

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

The term identity means the distinguishing character or personality of an individual and the relation established by psychological identification. Identity also stands for qualities, beliefs, personality, looks, and expressions that make a person. In connection with the definition of identity, identity stands for who the person is, how a person thinks about herself/himself, how the world views a person, and the characteristics, that define the person. The entry for 'identity' in the OED (2nd edition, 1989): "The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or the fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality." Identity construction shapes a person's values, beliefs, practices, discourses, and knowledge, influenced by cultural systems and individual actions. In terms of existing social parameters, women are becoming more expressive in how they define themselves. The process of promotion coincides with the process of forming a female identity. That is why the process of identity formation is the essential task that every woman can undergo. The construction of a woman's identity is crucial for a woman because how she defines herself and what she bases her sense of self will ultimately serve as the basis for her life.

This work aims to analyse the construction of female identity in the novel by the British writer Sara Maitland, *Three Times Table*. Sara Maitland was born on the 27th of March in 1950 in London. She is the British writer of religious fantasy and a novelist. For Maitland's work is typical that it has a magic realist tendency. Maitland is thought to be one of those at the vanguard of the 1970s feminist campaign and is usually described as a feminist author. Sara Maitland was born into an upper-middle-class and big family in London as one of the six children. She entered Oxford University in 1968. She took a degree in English there and built a relationship with the USA's future president, Bill Clinton. At this university, she discovered socialism, feminism, Christianity, and friendship. Those things affected her future life. She has been influenced by religion since 1972. She was married to an Anglican Priest for twenty years, and together they brought up two children. In 1993 they divorced, and after that, she became a Roman Catholic. Another milestone in her life was in 1995 when she cooperated in the movie called *Artificial Intelligence*. When her children had grown up, she changed her life. She has turned to a solitary and prayerful way of living. From time to time, she teaches writing at Lancaster University, and she is also a fellow of St. Chad's College; both in the UK.

Her first novel *Daughter of Jerusalem* won the Somerset Award in 1978. Since that she has started to be a writer. Concerns full of feminism, sexuality, and religion have energized Maitland's writing over the years.

The novel, *Three Times Table*, is an imaginative story. The novel can be viewed in many ways. It can be described as a deeply feminist novel but also as a realistic exploration of one family. The novel's characters are three women. Those three women represent three different generations of the Petherington family. The story is about three women: a grandmother, a mother, and a daughter who share a house in London. Every woman is living on one floor in the house. How women live, how each of them occupies a different floor, is in the book described as "like layers of sediment, geological formations each laid down in different eras."

Sara Maitland has been actively involved in the feminist movements of the 1970s and has struggled to come to terms with her Christian heritage. Maitland focused on revising Christianity by making it incorporate essential points on the feminist agenda.

1 SARA MAITLAND

1.1 Biography

Sara Maitland grew up in Galloway, in Scotland. She was born as the second of six children close together in age. Because she was born into a big family, she has described her childhood as very open, loud, and noisy. She entered Oxford university in 1968, where she took a degree in English. She has been deeply drawn to religion since 1972. After the divorce in 1993, she converted to Roman Catholicism, and now she lives meditative life in an abandoned house in Northern Galloway.¹

Sara Maitland is a mother of two grown-up children, her daughter Polly Lee, an actress, and her son Adam Lee, a photographer. The pictures in the book *Gossip from the forest* and the cover of the book *A Book of Silence* are made by her son.² Currently, she lectures online, for the distance learning MA, in Creative writing at Lancaster University. She is also a mentor coordinator for the organization Crossing borders.³ (the non-profit organization that is empowering people to be active and global⁴). Besides, Sara is a Fellow of St Chad's College in Durham.⁵

1.1.1 Career

Maitland's career started in 1972 when Faber (an independent publishing organization in London) published her short stories in a collection called Introduction. She was a part of a feminist writing group with Zoe Fairbairns, Valerie Miner, Michele Roberts, and Michelene Wandor. Together they wrote *Tales I Tell My Mother*. This milestone enabled Maitland to write her first Somerset Maugham Award-winning novel, *Daughters of Jerusalem*. Since that moment, she has been a writer.⁶ An autobiographical publication of her way of leading a solitary life, *A Book of Silence*, was nominated for the Bristol Festival of Ideas Book Prize in 2009.

¹ "Sara Maitland," Jenny Brown Associates, accessed February 18, 2021, <https://www.jennybrownassociates.com/sara-maitland.htm>.

² Sara Maitland, "Sara Maitland," About, accessed January 14, 2021, <http://www.saramaitland.com/about.html>.

³ Jules Smith, "Sara Maitland," British Council, accessed January 10, 2021, <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/sara-maitland>.

⁴ "Educating, connecting and empowering people to become active global citizens," Crossing Borders, accessed February 11, 2021, <https://crossingborders.dk/>.

⁵ "Sara Maitland," Jenny Brown Associates, accessed February 18, 2021, <https://www.jennybrownassociates.com/sara-maitland.htm>.

⁶ Sara Maitland, "Sara Maitland," About, accessed January 14, 2021, <http://www.saramaitland.com/about.html>.

In the same year, her short story ‘Moss Witch’, was a runner-up in the BBC National Short Story Award.⁷

1.2 Life in solitude

Before more than two decades, her life has changed completely. In 2007, in her late forties, she moved to Galloway, the region in southwestern Scotland, and built herself a little house above the wild moors. There she lives completely alone, discovering the power of solitude and silence. A book closely related to this entirely different lifestyle, *A Book of Silence*, describes partly the history and culture of silence, and partly Maitland’s way of searching for this kind of lifestyle.⁸ Silence engulfed her. Now she is living alone on a high moor with long views and almost no disturbance except the endless wind. She has no television, no radio, her days are wrapped into silence. Here she writes, prays, walks, and she is happy. Activities she does are just walking, watching the clouds, birds flying, and changing seasons. She is exploring the Scottish countryside together with her terrier called Zoe.⁹

Lack of social contact is nothing new for Sara. Sara Maitland lives happily wholly alone on the Galloway moors for more than twenty years. The house is entirely abandoned. The neighbour who is nearest to her house is more than a mile away. These two books that made the author famous *How to Be Alone* and *The Book of Silence* explore the power of living in silence and solitude. Sara Maitland has chosen this way of living since her children have grown up and her marriage ended up in divorce. The decision to lead such a way of living was not, according to the author, overnight. She had to reach this decision by growing up. She absolutely loves the way she lives and would not trade it for anything in the world. She is aware of the fact that she needs to keep in touch with her family. During the day, she writes emails and makes phone calls.¹⁰ Maitland started her searching into solitude even though the silence was nothing, the lack, an absence, an emptiness for everyone around her. Sara Maitland herself thinks of silence as the opposite. For her, silence is neither lack nor an absence or emptiness. For her, silence means freedom and free choices.¹¹

⁷ “Sara Maitland,” Jenny Brown Associates, accessed February 18, 2021, <https://www.jennybrownassociates.com/sara-maitland.htm>.

⁸ “Sara Maitland,” The Retreat Association, accessed February 18, 2021, <http://www.retreats.org.uk/people.php?id=100011>.

⁹ “The Swans, Sara Maitland,” British Council Arts, British Council, accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/staff/strongs/creativewriting/sara.htm>.

¹⁰ Judy Vickers, “What we can learn from a woman who has lived in solitude for 20 years,” Going Places, April 2020, <https://goingplaces.malaysiaairlines.com/solitude-sara-maitland/>.

¹¹ Patrick T Reardon, “Book review: ‘A Book of Silence’ by Sara Maitland,” Patrick T Reardon, August 8, 2018, <https://patricktreardon.com/book-review-a-book-of-silence-by-sara-maitland/>.

According to Sara, loneliness should be a time and space for self-development and self-realization. Loneliness and silence are keys and necessities for people to learn some creative activity (playing an instrument, cooking, drawing). This is the main reason why Christians and Buddhists both proclaim a period of isolation in silence. When people spend time alone, with themselves, they spend time with the person they know best of all. Although these two words “solitude” and “loneliness” have very similar meanings, they mean something completely different. Loneliness is about feeling sad and negative. On the other hand, solitude is a joyful and positive feeling.¹² As for her schedule, it is a bit empty. She prays for three hours each day, reads, smokes cigarettes, and sews. Two days in the week, Tuesday and Thursday, are spent silently. Telephone and computer both are switched off, no social contact at all. Sometimes she goes out for a walk. She even spends Christmas on her own.¹³

¹² Sara Maitland, “Sara Maitland: ‘Savour solitude - it is not the same as loneliness’,” *The Guardian*, May 17, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/17/sara-maitland-savour-solitude-it-is-not-the-same-as-loneliness>.

¹³ The Newsroom, “All quiet on the western front,” *The Scotsman*, November 6, 2008, <https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/all-quiet-western-front-2452536>.

2 WRITING OF SARA MAITLAND

2.1 Themes and topics

Stories about women and the complicated emotions of terror and beauty are her favourite. She uses many old stories from different traditions, mostly fairy stories, myths, and folk tales in her books. The religion also informs her work because she is a deeply committed Christian, Roman Catholic. Her most favourite genre is short stories, but novels and non-fiction are also part of her work. While studying English at Oxford University in 1968, she discovered the power of feminism, socialism, Christianity, and friendship. All these concerns have proved the spirit of her future adulthood.¹⁴

The themes and topics of Maitland's work are wide-ranging. Her work includes short stories, writing about nature, fairytales, folk stories, traveling, silence, solitude, and religion, Christianity. These structures of Maitland's books, full of feminism, sexuality, and religion, have lifted Maitland's production of books over the years. It does not matter whether in the short stories, novels, or works of theology and cultural studies.¹⁵

Maitland found her natural talent in writing short stories between the years 1980 and 1990. Later she characterizes the short stories as 'blood-strewn tales of madness and badness' done to and by women, in a timeless space between the boundaries of myth and history. Sara Maitland's writing contains a range of unusual genres and maybe the old-fashioned connection between art and religion.¹⁶

2.2 Feminism, Christian spaces

In 1983, Sara Maitland edited collections of essays, stories, and pictures about women's spirituality, *Walking on the Water*. The relationship between feminist identity and religious beliefs had been introduced. Sara Maitland was involved in the feminist movement in 1970 and had struggles with her Christian heritage. Maitland focused on revising Christianity by making it incorporate essential points on the feminist agenda. Maitland in her writings expresses a simple goal, to renegotiate the place of women in Christian history. Maitland devotes attention to the goal of reviewing the place of women in the Christian Church. In

¹⁴ "Sara Maitland," About Sara Maitland, accessed February 2, 2021, <http://www.saramaitland.com/about.html>

¹⁵ Sara Maitland, "Sara Maitland," Scottish Book Trust, accessed February 6, 2021, <https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/authors/sara-maitland>

¹⁶ Jules Smith, "Sara Maitland," British Council, accessed February 8, 2021, <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/sara-maitland>

connection with religion, Maitland thinks that religion is organized expressions of beliefs, spirituality is more about personal experience or sensation. Maitland draws attention to the second wave of British feminism. According to her, the 1960s movements enabled the women's movement and made political activities of the seventies possible. She concludes the sixties as years of collective exploration. Time of optimism and excitement. Time of the transformation for almost all women in Britain. In the late 1960s and 1970s in Britain, when the feminist movement just flourished, a strong sense of community and support was generated. Feminists agreed with a model of a traditional family in terms of support and loyalty between family members. It was extremely challenging to be a good mother and feminist at the same time. Maitland underwent an intricate spiritual journey. She returned to Christianity in 1972 even she was born into a family with Scottish Presbyterian tradition. After years of being catholic Anglican, she became a Roman Catholic in 1993. After the feminist movement, Maitland takes upon herself to actively transform the textual and social space of the Church, and she accommodated feminist formulations of individual and collective identity. *A Book of Spells*, a collection of short stories from 1987, expresses the transformation from the second wave of feminism to a more specialized engagement with theology. For Maitland, the Church is a place for a personal revelation. Books written by Sara Maitland uncover the connections between personal space and spirit.¹⁷

¹⁷ Arina Lungu-Cirstea, "Feminism and Faith: Exploring Christian Spaces in the Writing of Sara Maitland and Michèle Roberts," *Open edition Journals*, February 8, 2011, <https://journals.openedition.org/erea/1563#bibliography>

3 IDENTITY, THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The Term of Identity

Identity is not something that is given to an individual by nature. It is a process of finding, realizing, and defining oneself.

The concept of identity includes memories, experiences, relationships, and values that create a sense of self. This merger creates a lasting sense of who a person is over time, even as new aspects evolve and integrate into one's identity. Identity includes many relationships that people form, such as their identity as a child, friend, partner, and parent. It includes external characteristics over which one has little or no control, such as height, race, or socio-economic class. Identity also consists of the political views, moral attitudes, and religious beliefs that all guide the choices person makes each day. Identity is also based on the values that people hold, which dictate their decisions. Identity consists of many roles, and each part has meaning and expectations that are internalized into one's identity. Identity is constantly evolving throughout an individual's life. The creation of identity involves three key tasks: discovering and developing one's potential, choosing one's purpose in life, and looking for opportunities to use it. Parents and peers also influence identity during childhood and adolescence experiments. Adolescence is when teenagers develop an authentic sense of self, different from their parents, to become independent adults. Experimentation is an essential part of the process of becoming independent. When teenagers try out different identities, like friends, hobbies, looks, gender, and sexuality, they understand who they are and who they want to be. The characteristics of a person's identity can accentuate similarities or differences between people, for example, through race, gender, or profession. These differences between identities can either unite or divide people. People who consider themselves members of a larger group tend to have a stronger relationship with other people and nature.¹⁸ Kate Millett, an American feminist writer, claims that gender identity is imposed by society, not genes. However, although people may have different economic or social arrangements in the future, nothing will change the biological facts.¹⁹ The responsibility for shaping the character of the person in our society lies with the peer group rather than the family.²⁰ This also applies to Maggie, one of the main heroines of the novel.

¹⁸ "Identity," Psychology Today, accessed March 3, 2021,

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/basics/identity#what-is-identity>

¹⁹ John Harrington, *Male and Female: Identity* (United States: J. Wiley, 1972), 158.

²⁰ Harrington, *Male and Female: Identity*, 44.

She perceives that her peers are more mature, and therefore she is forced to leave her fantasy world. Psychologists assume it, that formation of identity is a matter of ‘finding oneself’ by combining a person’s talent and potential with available social roles. Therefore, defining oneself in the social world is one of the most difficult choices one has ever made.²¹

As for the novel *Three Times table*, a woman’s sense of identity, as well as her view of her place in society, is likely to be largely shaped in response to her relationship with the woman who served as her earliest model, it can be mother, grandmother or other. Yet, the bond is often full of danger.

3.2 Development of Identity

The process of identity formation requires three main goals. The first goal is to discover and, at the same time, develop a person’s potential. Personal potential represents the skill that one can do better than other skills. Discovering potential requires exposure to a wide range of activities, some of which we do relatively well, based on the feedback we receive from others and our positive feelings about those activities. A Person is successful in these activities, and that is why he/she is motivated to do so. However, developing skills and talents requires a lot of time and effort, as well as a willingness to tolerate frustration when obstacles arise. The second goal is to choose a life goal. It is necessary to decide what one wants to achieve in one’s life. To be successful, goals must be compatible with talent and skills. A life goal that is incompatible with abilities brings frustration and failure. The last, third goal is to find opportunities to realize this potential and purpose. However, identity is never the “final” version and evolves throughout the whole lifetime. Knowing your identity accurately increases self-esteem and reduces depression and anxiety. When people spend their time doing what they think they should do, then they are happy. When people are misrepresented or presented in a way that impresses their audience, the behaviour is unnatural and exhaustive. Besides, when people look at how others define them, who they should be, what they should look like, and what people should do, they risk acting in a way that endangers their health.²²

²¹ “Basics of Identity,” Psychology Today, accessed March 6, 2021, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-choice/201412/basics-identity>

²² “Basics of Identity,” Psychology Today, accessed March 6, 2021, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-choice/201412/basics-identity>

3.3 Theories of Psychological Development

According to psychologist Erik Erikson and his theory of psychological development, personality develops through eight stages, from infancy to adulthood. Erikson argues that people progress through life through a series of stages as they grow and change throughout life. Adolescents explore their independence and develop a sense of self in the stage during adolescence, between the ages of 12 and 18. Behaviour of adolescents often seems unpredictable and impulsive, but it is all part of the process of seeking a sense of personal identity. Parents and family members continue to influence how teenagers feel, but external forces become particularly important during this time. Friends, social groups, classmates, and social trends in shaping identity.²³

According to Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic theory of personality, the ID is a component of personality composed of unconscious psychic energy that satisfies basic compulsions, needs, and desires. Freud compared personality to the glacier. What you see above the water is just a tiny piece of the whole glacier, most of which is hidden under the water. The tip of the iceberg above the water represents conscious consciousness. The vast majority of the glacier underwater represents the unconscious mind, where all hidden desires, thoughts and memories exist. The ID is unconscious and it serves as a driving force for personality. It seeks to meet the most basic urges of people, many of whom are directly related to survival and provides all the energy needed to manage personality. According to Freud, however, other components of personality evolve with age. Another component of character is the ego, which appears between the desires of ID and the demands of reality. Furthermore, the superego or aspect of personality, which represents internalized values and morality, appears to push the ego to act in a more virtuous way. The ego then has to cope with the competitive demands of id, superego, and reality.²⁴

3.4 Gender Roles

In society, gender roles in society mean how we are expected to act, speak, dress, adjust and behave based on gender. For example, girls and women are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways and to be polite, helpful, and caring. Men are generally expected to be strong, aggressive, and courageous. Every society, ethnic group, and culture has

²³ Kendra Cherry, "Identity vs. Role Confusion in Psychosocial Stage 5," Verywell Mind, accessed March 5, 2021, <https://www.verywellmind.com/about-us>

²⁴ Kendra Cherry, "Freud's Theory of the Id in Psychology," Verywell Mind, accessed March 6, 2021, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-id-2795275>

expectations regarding gender roles. When it comes to gender roles, we can encounter several stereotypes. A stereotype is a widely accepted judgment or bias about a person. Gender stereotypes can result in unequal and unfair treatment because of a person's gender. The four basic types of gender stereotypes include, for example, personality traits, domestic behaviour, occupation, and physical appearance. In terms of personality traits, women are often expected to be helpful and emotional, while men are usually expected to be more confident and aggressive. In terms of domestic behaviour, women are associated with childcare, cooking, and house care, while men are in charge of finances, car and household repairs. In the same way, jobs are stereotypically associated with gender too. Women should be thin and charming in terms of physical appearance, while men should be tall and muscular. A stereotypical way of dressing, trousers for men, dresses for women is also expected.²⁵

3.5 Female Identity Development

Femininity is an ever-changing concept, defined by society and culture. It is also a biological fact that has various consequences for women around the world. There is an increasing emphasis on reconciling differences in identity, which are defined by standards of beauty, sexuality, and gender roles. Most women deal with common topics of the coming age, such as body appearance, sexuality, and self-identity. Teen Maggie also goes through this process in the novel *Three Times Table*. She has to leave her childhood fantasy world and grow up, so she begins to perceive femininity in a completely different way. Maggie passes from post-adolescence to womanhood in her early adult years. During youth, the development of identity becomes more and more important because youth is a phase in which the individual is more interested in feeling about herself and formulates independent values and opinions that differ from the views of others. The process of identity development during adolescence is a complex transition. Ethnic identities are strongly influenced by cultural background and are visibly defined by the environment, and a woman's identity alternates between different cultural dimensions. Primary themes, such as sexuality, culture/tradition, relationships, social factors, and other external influences, influence female identity formation. The need of women to integrate into a given culture is reflected in gender, sexual, cultural, and personal ideals. The concept of identity has traditionally not focused on personal definitions

²⁵ "What are gender roles and stereotypes?" Planned Parenthood, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/gender-identity/sex-gender-identity/what-are-gender-roles-and-stereotypes>

of an individual's social categories, such as gender, race, ethnicity, gender, and class identity. Instead, identity was a space for individuality. Gender is a crucial factor in the development of identity, sexual roles have a ubiquitous influence on every aspect of adult life. Unlike men, women are pressured to maintain traditional roles and values. The three basic themes of female sexuality include appearance, behaviour, and practices. Women either adhere to these issues of female sexuality or deviate from these norms. The consequences that these women experience burden their social, family, and even professional relationships and environments. The role of women is often "domesticated", a woman should be able to cook, clean, take care of her household and especially be able to take care of her husband. Another important aspect is the importance of "independence", taking care of yourself, not being dependent on any man taking care of you. It also means being more confident, strong-minded, and willing. Education is an absolute necessity in terms of a woman's independence. The bond between mother and daughter is another crucial factor in the formation of female identity because identification and idealization are among the important mechanisms by which identity develops. Women have a feminine ideal, and it is similar to the description of their mothers. The strength, ingenuity, and independence of the mother are often admired by the daughter. The matriline line plays a major role in the process of developing a female identity: attitudes from grandmother to mother and granddaughter can be found. The matrilineal line plays a major influence in the process of developing a female identity: shifts in the attitudes of one generation can be determined, from the grandmother to the mother and granddaughter. The same structure lies in the novel *Three Times Table*. Rachel, a grandmother, represents the traditional representation of women and has administrator and provider roles. While Phoebe strives to strengthen her relationship with her daughter and tries to support her daughter Maggie, who is entering a new stage in her life.²⁶

3.6 Women in the Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century brought about many cultural, political, and socio-economic transformations in Europe in the role of women. Women have achieved this by fighting for their legal, economic, and political rights.²⁷ The concept of women's emancipation means fighting for self-determination and improving legal, social, cultural, and political positions.

²⁶ Marleine Marcelin, "The Woman In the Mirror, Female Identity Development in a Cross-Cultural Context," Hofstra Papers in Anthropology, Hofstra University, February, 2012, <https://www.hofstra.edu/academics/colleges/hclas/anthro/hpia/hpia-marcelin.html>

²⁷ Sylvia Paletschek and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century, A European Perspective* (United States: Stanford University Press, 2006), 5.

This term includes both feminist and potential feminist discourses. Women's emancipation movements or feminist movements are organized pursuits for achieving leading and political equality.²⁸

In the book, *Women's Human Rights in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, representation of the "new women" is introduced based on women's rights advancements in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The gender of men and women was not equal in the 19th century. The female sex was considered as a weaker one.²⁹ This mainly affected middle-class women because they had no reason to leave home and work. At the beginning of the 19th century, women had very few rights of their own, especially after marriage. After the wedding, the women were the property of their husbands. Issues commonly associated with women's rights include the right to bodily integrity and autonomy, exemption from violence, voting, the conclusion of legal contracts, equal rights in family law, work, fair wages or equal pay, reproductive rights, property ownership, and learn.³⁰ The end of the 19th century was a time full of change and reform for women. They turned from the role of wife and mother towards the worker and respected themselves as equals. New opportunities in education, politics, and employment have defined new roles for women in the coming decades.³¹

²⁸ Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century, A European Perspective*, 6.

²⁹ Gloria Y.A. Ayee, Dmitry Kurochkin and Elena V. Shabliy, *Women's Human Rights in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture* (Washington: LEXINGTON BOOKS, 2020), 83.

³⁰ Ayee, Kurochkin and Shabliy, *Women's Human Rights in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, 217.

³¹ Ayee, Kurochkin and Shabliy, *Women's Human Rights in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, 324.

4 THREE TIMES TABLE

4.1 Review of the Novel

The novel describes the lives of three main characters Rachel, Maggie, and Phoebe, three generations of Petherington women, grandmother, mother, and daughter, who share a house in London. These three women live in one house, but each of them inhabits a different floor. Rachel Petherington lives on the ground floor. Phoebe Petherington lives on the second floor of the house. Above Phoebe Petherington, there lives a Maggie Petherington. Rachel is the oldest one, and she is 74 years old. Phoebe is 37 years old daughter of Rachel. And the last main character is the youngest, Maggie, the 15 years old daughter of Phoebe.

Rachel works as a curator in a natural history museum, specialized in dinosaurs. Her daughter works as a gardener in a public park. Phoebe was never married. Daughter of Phoebe, Maggie, living in the attic, is imprisoned in loneliness, lonely being locked in the teenage. The character of Fenna greatly influences her psyche. The dragon named Fenna is her friend, who is part of her reality. The book begins when it is made clear that each of the Petherington women is facing a crisis, which is life-altering, and it is necessary to decide. In the following 200 pages of the book, through interconnected memories and flashbacks to the past, readers can learn more about who these three Petherington women are and what led them to the next crises. The book opens to readers more information about dinosaurs, dragons, gardening, and math.

The oldest Rachel, a curator in the museum, is no longer able to lie. Rachel, whose reputation is based on following a step-by-step ('gradualist') theory of evolution, is about to submit an article to a professional journal. She will present an article that will contradict her primary life's work to everyone, including their colleagues. She can no longer ignore all gathered evidence. This evidence suggests that instead of a stable and uninterrupted Darwinian model of evolution, there has been a "cosmic failure" - accidental disruption of the genetic line. Her theory has been wrong all these years of her career. Dinosaurs have not disappeared gradually, affecting changes in their food supply, dinosaurs were destroyed because of violent meteor bombardment.

Rachel's daughter, Phoebe, is facing a completely different fear. She is a middle-aged woman who is suffering from a feeling of deep anxiety. After her beloved father died, she disappointed herself because of her failure to earlier promise to be a mathematician. After the death of her father, Martin, she was also unable to maintain a long-lasting relationship.

The fact that Phoebe has not fulfilled her life dream and currently she is living alone is not her only crisis. There is also a lump in her breast. Phoebe knew about the lump, ignored the disease, and let the lump grow foolishly. She let the lump in her breast grow because she believed that cancer was revenge for her life failures.

And finally, there is Maggie Petherington, the youngest one. Maggie is a small, thin, and lonely 15-year-old child. After a long time of persuasion, she decided that it is time to leave her childhood. She also wanted to free herself from the pressure of Fenna, her dragon friend. The dragon, Fenna, is a darkly compelling character, thanks to which Maggie learned to fly away and escape from reality. After Maggie has got rid of her ideas and illusions in the child's world, the only thing she hopes for and believes is rebirth.³²

Three generations of Petherington women have become entirely estranged. Aging Rachel does not understand her daughter Phoebe's thought processes. She thinks that her daughter does not have enough regime and discipline in every direction. Rachel does not understand that her daughter Phoebe is constantly looking for emotions and sensations that Rachel herself does not understand. In the book, there is a part that describes the response of one generation to another. Rachel, an older woman and academic, is confused by her daughter, who has spent much of her life on the "hippie trail" and now looks after perennials flowers in the city park. On the other hand, Phoebe perceives this situation entirely differently. There are too many things to do for her. She feels stressed about her maternity responsibilities, and she has to take care of a dilapidated house that she was forced to share with her mother. And the result of the tense relationship between Rachel and Phoebe is how the youngest Maggie perceives the world around her. Maggie does not even remember a time when there was no constant tension between her mother and grandmother. The only activity that is liberation for Maggie is flying on the dragon's wings and escaping from reality. Maggie is worried about what will happen once she leaves her dragon friend Fenna and faces a hard and cruel reality. The end of the book tells of how each character touched their conscience and underwent a significant change.

The tales of Maggie, Phoebe, and mainly elderly Rachel reflect how fluctuating family relationships can be. Behind all these fluctuating relationships, anger, and malice, there is always love in the family. Relationships between females can often be very complicated.

³² Judith Freeman, "BOOK REVIEW: The Family Ties Are Tested to the Third Degree: THREE TIMES TABLE," *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-05-10-vw-1249-story.html>.

Even if they love each other, the time when, for example, women share different opinions, will come and before they settle down again, they will become enemies for a short time.

The hope of reconciliation is always immortal. To summarize this chapter, the book tells three telescoped stories of three women of one generation. The novel *Three Times Table* is an amply imaginative story. The novel is perceived as a feminist tale and explores realistic living in one British family.³³

4.2 Erotic Asceticism

The heroines struggle alone with their private problems. Phoebe has breast cancer and instead of being treated for her disease, she lets the tumor continue to grow. Phoebe reacts to her breast cancer equally to the description of the masochistic and erotic spirituality of Maitland. Maitland is a supporter of the opinion that Phoebe has missed too many opportunities in her life. Phoebe spent too much time in her life digging flowers in the garden and was a slave to cleaning and caring for the house. Therefore, death will be what sex was always meant to be. Both essential and centering parts of being human. Maggie as a teenager rejects leaving the imaginative world and thus enter adulthood. Maggie flies around London on the wings of her dragon companion named Fenna. Earlier, Rachel thought that Maggie's fantasy was beyond solidarity with her work as a paleontologist and the dinosaurs. But Rachel later realized that a dragon named Fenna was the opposite of their loved scientific models. The dragon named Fenna was the representation of the dark power of the imagination as well as her golden dance in the fire; invisible to people, people cannot see Fenna, if within their desire they do not want to be seen by the dark. Fenna represented chaos and order at the same time. The dragon's fiery breath brought with it an abyss full of danger. But Maggie had a friend. Together with Fenna, she could safely play and explore the land of dark flames, which lies in a pit of disorder. But what was pleasant and exciting for Maggie becomes dangerous and threatening because Maggie belongs to her dragon friend and Fenna hurts and possesses Maggie. During the plot, this incident with Maggie takes place, which brings all three women together in the kind of freakish way. The story results in catharsis for all the characters. Rachel decides to publish her paper and show the truth to everyone. Phoebe decides to treat her breast cancer. And finally, Maggie says goodbye to her dragon friend Fenna. In the end, the dragon Fenna does not leave the Petherington family. Rachel,

³³ "Three Times Table," Publishers Weekly, Publishers Weekly, January 1, 1991, accessed March 4, 2021, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-8050-1576-8>.

who has lived a life full of rationality, and now she should embrace imagination and adventure, will take care of the dragon.³⁴

4.3 Relationships of Mothers and Daughters

It is very tough to describe and define the relationship between mother and daughter from a psychological perspective. There is nothing wrong when a mother and daughter tell each other what to do or not to do in life. The relationship between them is so natural. But the love between mother and daughter changes from time to time. When they may love each other so deeply, and at other times, they may hate each other for a while. Place in women's society and the sense of identity of women is possibly given in response to women, who had the role of the model in early childhood. However, it does not matter if it is a mother, grandmother, or another woman. The mother's and her daughter's bond is a model of female behavior, attitude, and independence in adulthood. No matter what kind of relationship the mother and daughter have between them, they remain attached together even if the connection is complicated. Children who are totally dependent on their mother cannot explore their separate life and own identity.

The novel *Three Times Table*, in this respect carries a complicated structure. The past life of Rachel, Phoebe, and Maggie is examined, and doubts about their mutual bond and love are resolved and cleared up in the end. Maggie knew everything about her mother's Phoebe misfortune. Even about how unsatisfied her mother is. She wondered if she was the cause of the restlessness of her mother. She wished for support from her mother, for mother's concentration, and focus, she just wished Phoebe would be proud of her. And most of all, she hoped both her grandmother Rachel and her mother Phoebe would be still alive. The novel describes the mutual creation and connection of three main heroines. These three heroines are united not only by a blood bond but also by a desire for mutual knowledge. The heroines, which Sara Maitland describes in the novel, are all three strong but slightly different from the beginning of the story. Each of the heroines faces a life crisis completely alone. They become allies only after many disagreements. The relationship between Phoebe and Rachel breaks down after the death of her father, Martin. When Maggie is born, Phoebe and Rachel find their way back together, but the old rivalry between them remains. That is

³⁴ Anna Elizabeth Fisk, "Wholly Aflame": Erotic Asceticism in the Work of Sara Maitland," *Theology & Sexuality* 16 (1): 5-18, 2010. Proquest.

the reason why Maggie is forced to create her own world full of fantasy, trying to get the attention of her mother and grandmother. At the same time, the magical element is represented by Maggie's imaginary dragon friend named Fenna. This mystical element pushes the story to the edge of science fiction. The dragon emphasizes the wonderful side of science with which Rachel is so well acquainted, namely paleontology. From a psychological point of view, the relationship between mother and daughter is very significant. It represents the formation of the daughter's future personality. Emotions and rivalry between the trio of main heroines would be inconceivable without blood ties. When Phoebe left her mother after her father's death, Rachel was shocked about how she must know her daughter's independence. For years of endless waiting and wondering how to get her daughter back, she just wished her daughter would come back home. When Phoebe returned home, Rachel suddenly realized that it was time to apologize. However, Phoebe defined herself as a negative reflection of her mother, and the rivalry between them continued. Phoebe and Rachel's conflicts continued over what Phoebe had chosen for her job and over Maggie's education. But the truth is that Rachel also went against her mother's expectations. Rachel also went against her mother's expectations when she decided to study the same field as her father. This is what Rachel and Phoebe have in common: "Daddy's girls" in terms of studies. For areas of study such as paleontology and mathematics, they found allies and inspiration from their fathers. However, after her father's death, Phoebe gave up mathematics and preferred to do gardening. When Maggie was born, Phoebe became a mother, but she never behaved like a mother. Rachel and Maggie, both so different from what Phoebe was. She wanted to run away, but there was no escape. Rachel and Maggie were an obstacle for Phoebe, a barrier to self-realization. Running away was the only possible escape route for Phoebe.

Finally, after all these misunderstandings, Rachel concentrated on her daughter, who she had never seen before as an equal person. Phoebe is a case of ambiguity; she is a mother and daughter at the same time. However, she is trying to find a compromise. Phoebe has to compromise with Rachel over Maggie in connection with her own world of fantasy. Rachel and Phoebe are both too proud to ask for reconciliation first. Only when Maggie is in danger when the roof collapses on her in the attic, Rachel and Phoebe realize life's genuine and serious priorities and understand what is really important in life.

Male figures are characterized in the novel *Three Times Table* differently. During the novel, no male protagonist is introduced to readers. Only briefly, Rachel's husband, who was a wonderful father to Phoebe, is presented. The story also mentions one of Phoebe's

lovers, the rude and aggressive Jim, who is also the father of Maggie. But then the novel tells more about Phoebe's disease, cancer, that she eventually decides to treat because of Rachel and Maggie, so then all the men disappear from the scene. But the male characters are not a complete disappointment. Martin, the husband of Rachel, showed love and understanding for his wife, Rachel, and clever daughter Phoebe. Bill, the newest lover of Phoebe, is tempted to leave his wife because he really loves Phoebe. But Maitland women are too stubborn to remain married. For Phoebe, friendship with her best friend Lisa is just enough. Thanks to their work, Rachel and Phoebe found the opportunity to realize themselves. They devote all their free time to their work. That is the reason why Rachel and Phoebe do not have enough time for a relationship with a man in their lives. The strength of people like Rachel and Phoebe, is certainly owing, at least in part, to their respective fathers. The relationship between mother and daughter should not be a war. The relationship between mother and daughter should bring a challenge for one another.³⁵

4.4 Historical Context-Sex, Romance, Politics

The work of Sara Maitland is characterized as radical, inspiring, and political. Contradictions, doubts, and uncertainties are the main features of Maitland's works. But based on these contradictions, the reader can look for the uncertain assumptions. Works of Sara Maitland started to be popular and read by lesbian feminist, when her book *Virgin Territory* was published in 1984. Based on how strong and popular the feminist movement in 1970 was, in 1984 the movement of women continued as a second wave. The novel *Virgin Territory* is one of the novels that includes ideas of lesbian feminists. At that time, the main opinion of feminism was that all women were oppressed, there was violence against women, pornography, and masochism. All these things were the reason for the oppression of women. Heterosexuality was defined as a social ideal, the ideal of a male-dominated society. Heterosexuality was considered as the only acceptable form of sexuality. There have been debates about whether heterosexuality is just a secret agreement, and the idea that lesbianism can also be a political choice has been put forward. Feminism also defined various forms of protection for women who remained within the boundaries of heterosexual life. Heterosexualism offered two options for women. Be either a good woman or a bad woman.

³⁵ Giuliana Giobbi, "Blood Ties: a Case-Study of Mother-Daughter Relationships in Anita Brookner, Sara Maitland and Rosetta Loy," Rome University, accessed March 8, 2021. https://www.otago.ac.nz/deepsouth/vol1no3/giobbi_issue3.html.

The meaning of a good woman is wife, mother, or virgin, and the meaning of a bad woman is prostitute, mistress, or ruin. This policy also became known to the lesbian community, reinforcing many of the ideas that have already existed before the second wave of feminism. Masculine identity, the feminine identity of sado-masochism, all were liberating and radical solutions. One of the feminist theories that held that loving women involved a political and personal rebellion against patriarchy was replaced by arguments that sexuality is an individual preference that has nothing to do with politics. These arguments posed a problem for feminists. Women without their own category could not be oppressed. Another problem was that both feminism and lesbianism had disappeared. What could be feminism without women and sexuality without gender?

The main characters from the novel *Three Times Table*, face the same fears and difficulties that match the dilemmas of the main character Anna in Maitland's novel, *Virgin Territory*. Anna is part of a cruel and scary world where options for her are very harsh. These fears and problems include that characters need to leave the worlds of certainty and imagination for which they chose to live. The novel *Three Times Table* examines predominantly male theories of knowledge, including evolution and the theory of physics. These predominantly male theories of knowledge describe their role as purely patriarchal. It, therefore, examines the social constructs and real life of women with this limitation and their influence. Here in this novel, Sara Maitland introduces both positive and negative solutions of pain again, either destroying oneself or taking control of the situation and continuing. All three main heroines of this novel, grandmother, mother, and daughter, know very well that the situation will continue to be such that they will have to face the future by confronting it. Although the influence of postmodernist thinking on the novel is clear, Sara Maitland always creates certain contradictions, which she then holds to. Sara Maitland understands that uncertainty is at the heart of life. And while she understands these uncertainties, she argues that we must continue to act in the world. Sara Maitland significantly takes the view that lesbianism is the hope for the next generation of women. In connection with such doubts, Maggie, the youngest 15-year-old heroine of the novel, finds some certainty. When a gang of boys see Maggie in their best friend Hermione's arms, they called Maggie a 'dyke', a lesbian. Laughing Hermione shouts to the boys responding on this:

‘Don’t worry...it’s probably just a phase we’re going through’.

‘It’s all right’ says Maggie, perfectly clear, her bell sounding again uncracked and certain as she had feared it never would. ‘My grandmother says that a normal evol-utionary phase can last two hundred million years.’³⁶

In this novel, Sara Maitland offers us other possible explanations, natural, biological, political, spiritual, or magical. Although Sara Maitland has been a vicar’s wife for more than twenty years, she believes that lesbianism is the answer. In the novel *Three Times Table*, Sara Maitland represents the divisions that their characters show in their relationships with adult women, with a sense of abandonment, betrayal, or inability to separate from their mothers. This concern complicates the main protagonists of the novel, how they deal with mothers and represents their current relationships together. The three generations of Petherington women, in the novel *Three Times Table*, all struggle with the complex process of trying to separate from their mothers while maintaining their attachment to their mothers at the same time.³⁷

4.5 Problematic Daughter/Mother Relationships

Three women of one generation are stacked in the house like layers of sediments, but each of them at a different stage of life. The story starts when all three women pause in exhaustion after a ‘very tiring day.’ Their personal pasts are examined later, gradually displaying the events that led to this moment. The novel describes a situation where each of the main heroines gives up something without which she could not imagine living, and thus completely changes the whole life. Rachel denies her theory, which made her famous as a paleontologist. Phoebe tried to abandon her attitude of indifference to her life, which described her adult life. Maggie was strong enough to say goodbye to her dragon, named Fenna. A few years ago, in the book “Fossil Remains and Dragon Lore,” Rachel argued in detail and convincingly that the tradition of dragons is derived from “the deep racial memories of humans about dinosaurs.” Thanks to this book, Rachel became famous and thus began her career.

However, to prove her theory, Rachel needed evidence of the date of the extinction of the dinosaurs. But Rachel was misled by the fact that she underestimated her imagination.

³⁶ Sara Maitland, *Three Times Table*, (London: Virago Press, 1991), 215.

³⁷ Rachel Wingfield, “Jeanette Winterson is not the only lesbian,” *Trouble&Strife Issue 38*, Winter 1998/1999, <http://www.troubleandstrife.org/articles/issue-38/jeanette-winterson-is-not-the-only-lesbian/#tc-comment-title>.

Rachel, therefore, concluded that myths must be based on facts. Her granddaughter's great attention to her dragon friend made Rachel think again. The youngest heroine, Maggie, tries to escape from everyday life's complications and worries by creating a little girl's dragon friend. A dragon friend - the dark power of imagination along with the dragon's fiery golden dance. But now that she is growing up, she wants to be like her other peers, and Fenna has become too much of a responsibility to her. Phoebe, a woman who lives in the middle of the house, used to be a master of chess, excelled in mathematics, a hippie woman, a woman looking after enlightenment in the East, a rebellious teenage girl, a feminist, a single mother, and a journalist. Phoebe would like some things to disappear from her life for good, especially the lump in her breasts. She would also like to take on her role as a mother more responsibly, but she is afraid she cannot handle this role. Most of the novel takes place in retrospectives that took place before the day it focuses on, in women's history, in their minds and imaginations, where we see how Rachel and Phoebe - and to a lesser extent Maggie - got to where they are now. All three women had suffered somehow from each other, but it seemed as if they were now attuned to the same note bound by the power of detail. Although Rachel and Phoebe did not get along for a long time, they found the joy of life elsewhere, whether it was career growth or chess victory. Equally complicated, however, for Rachel and Phoebe were relationships with men, especially with their fathers. The father of Rachel, David Hunter-Pearce, who was an amateur paleontologist, encouraged Rachel in her future career. The fact that she received letters from him and then wrote letters back to him taught her how to see and think. Rachel's husband, Martin, downplayed the work of Rachel, which overshadowed his own work, but encouraged Phoebe to have a certain interest in mathematics. Phoebe adored her father, Martin, and when he died, she lost all passion, enthusiasm, and joy for life, for everything. It has been a long time since Maggie's father is gone. Maggie's father was a thin left-wing man, and he forced his girlfriends into the women's movement. Phoebe lost her father for good, and she did not even have time to tell him she was pregnant with Maggie. All three women judged their mothers incorrectly. Rachel did not even know that her mother was a suffragette until Maggie learned of her great-grandmother's practices from a book. Phoebe realizes that she should adore and admire Rachel, but at the same time, she cannot because Rachel is her mother. The youngest Maggie is embarrassed by her mother Phoebe's proletarian feminism. The degree of this proletarian feminism is barely remembered by adults, and it is difficult for adolescent Maggie to bear it. Each of the main heroines paid too much attention to herself and not to others. But now, each of them is horrified that one phase of life is over for them, so they fear that they will

need others for their lives. When their rehearsal day is over, they get a little older and slip the story closer to the grave, but everyone feels the lightness of the thrown load. Each of the main heroines finds a new way of seeing and a new way of thinking, but what happens to them remains unknown.³⁸

4.6 Women as Scientists

A scientist's employment is relatively rare in the major novels, and it is even rarer for a woman to be employed as a scientist. Science fiction, detective fiction, horror, and thrillers are more usual genres of fiction for a fictional and working scientists. In the novel *Three Times Table*, the winning of the champion women is costly. A final integrity test is prepared for Rachel Petherington-because she wants to deny the theory, she came up with herself. For a woman who promotes the ideal form of science-the promotion of truth independent of profit or ego-the stakes are higher and lower than for men. As being an outsider woman, she has less to lose because she is less integrated in terms of professional life and gets smaller rewards for her work. Women were not granted the same right by Sigmund Freud as men. Men are entitled to work and to love. The work of women, especially the creative one, still remains a matter of question. The novel describes that science is a threat to the intimate relationships of women. Maitland contributes to keeping women from the natural sciences. Phoebe Petherington is so drawn into the world of science that she has no time at all in her life for nothing and no one. Phoebe has been punished for her anger for many years and blames herself for ending math. While she was studying 'sphere singing', the news of her father's sudden death struck her greatly. Phoebe ends with math. Mathematics distances her from all other duties. It even distances her from the responsibilities of womanhood. Rachel and Phoebe both have left science by the end of the novel.³⁹

Gender gap in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math is generally known. Over the last 60 years, across all these fields, only 27 percent of research publications were published by women. I have considered that maybe there are less women scientists because women have more responsibilities with raising the family and taking care of children. But women can start out on life science career as well as men. Although the number of female scientists has increased over the past years, true gender equality in the fields of

³⁸ Eric Kraft, "Misjudged Mothers," *The New York Times*, April 21, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/04/21/books/misjudged-mothers.html>.

³⁹ Alison Sinclair, "Stealing the fire: women scientists in fiction," Alison Sinclair, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.alison Sinclair.ca/reading-writing/women-scientists-in-fiction/stealing-fire/>.

science has not been achieved and science is still male dominated discipline. Despite that women have made great gains and can be as prominent as men in scientific areas.

4.7 Cartographies of Female Identity

In the novel *Three Times Table*, Sara Maitland provides to readers an introduction and comparison of the three main phases in women's lifecycles. From the youngest Maggie in the adolescence phase to Phoebe in adulthood and elderly Rachel. Maggie's transition from one stage of life to another also represents an imaginative depiction of a significant moment in a teenager's life - the moment when Maggie realizes her female sexuality. The novel pays special attention to the way the characters negotiate their transitions between individual lifecycle phases. Maggie and her transition from childhood to adulthood represent very profound ways related to that moment in which she is trying to think about real life in London. For Maggie as a child, it is a simple task, she walks through the unknown streets of the city with just herself, and it represents a significant step towards adulthood and an attempt to enter a new phase of her life. The adolescent Maggie thinks of London as the type of fascination she enjoys a lot. Sara Maitland reserves this situation in London for the celebration of the natural wilderness:

Then suddenly she was at the top of the hill and London lay below her getting dressed for the night, laying aside its working clothes and stringing its neck with garlands of pearls and diamonds: costuming itself for her amusement. On Parliament Hill there were two young men walking their dog and an old drunk asleep on a bench. She spun round lightly taking the sweep of it with pleasure; behind her was a meadow of cropped grass, and in front of her was the City. It was such a lovely evening, the light fading down with a soft elegance, and the sense of striding above London, lightly over the grass, was at least the shadow of flying.⁴⁰

Entering a new phase of life, womanhood, is also a trauma for Maggie, who has to give up the world of childhood, which is happy and safe for her at the same time. Maggie is increasingly aware of her physical and social environment:

It was the first journey in her whole life that Maggie had made on foot and alone, and she felt the bleakness of being solitary. She also noted with pleasure a new ability to look out at what was real. She noticed the people more than the leafing trees and greening grass. They seemed to her to have a precision, a novel solidness – this little pink nosed baby in this red-and-white striped buggy ...⁴¹

⁴⁰ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 40.

⁴¹ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 5.

In this passage, London is described as a real place, but in many parts of the novel, Maggie looks at the city through fantasy, myth, and Christian history. The main characters engage in such an intense relationship with the surrounding place that, thanks to their intuition and creativity, the transformed and enriched ordinary urban reality ends. Although the novel makes it clear that Maggie must turn her back on world of fantasy to become a woman, the overall evaluation of the three life stories in the story suggests that Maitland begs for the importance of fantasy and spirituality as a psychological resource in a world ruthlessly, dominated by mathematical calculations and pure scientific theories.⁴²

Obviously, the possibilities offered by Maggie's world full of imagination are dominated by her imaginary dragon friend Fenna. In the company of her dragon friend Fenna, Maggie keeps her eyes on the wonderland. Maggie loves to hover over London and thus gets to know the shape and structure of her intimidating city, which for her, in the everyday world is more of a maze. With this view, Sara Maitland uses Maggie's flight imagination to provide her cartography of London in the form of an aerial map that shows the essential architectural elements. Maggie is intensely connected to a world full of myths and fantasies, and both on foot and in flight, she is fully oriented in the city. The fact that the heroine of the novel is geographically oriented through the city is admired and researched with great enthusiasm. However, when Maggie does not fly over the roofs of London's buildings, she experiences feelings of confusion and malaise. From another point of view, Maggie, and her unconventional way of moving through London, which is the novel's main theme, represents both the real world and the fantasy world. Although a fairy-tale dragon empowers Maggie, the flight over London provides an aerial image of the city, which is no different from the illustration available through modern technology, such as a helicopter or an airplane camera. Thus, Sarah Maitland's novel gives the same level to the worlds of magic and technology. Although Maggie is very attracted to her dragon friend's fantasy world, she cannot forget that the fantasy world has deprived her of all the little things of everyday life and makes her feel alienated from her peers. Hence, she begins to admit addiction and resemblance to her dragon friend. For Maggie, flying is not only a desire for self-knowledge but also a form of power. Together with Fenna, Maggie feels completely safe and secure. Dragons, witches, birds, and angels, flying in general, can represent freedom. The dream of flying over the city also represents Maggie's imagination and creativity. In the novel,

⁴² Arina Cirstea, *Mapping British Women Writers' Urban Imaginaries: Space, Self and Spirituality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 98-100.

however, Maggie has to give up flying to continue her normal and inevitable further development of a woman's life.

The novel takes a rather pessimistic view of a woman's condition; in particular, entering sexuality means losing not only childhood innocence but also freedom of movement in social places and thus have an identity of several forms. However, this does not expel Fenna from the story of the novel. Later, dragon Fenna becomes the source of joy to Rachel, Maggie's grandmother. The novel further suggests that creativity can be developed even in the later stages of life. Although the loss of Fenna is very traumatic for Maggie, Maggie is experiencing moments of happiness in which she and her friend Hermione rejoice in getting to know her new, most precious secret, sexuality. However, both girls must assert their ability to cope with the challenges associated with their new sexual condition. This excerpt from the novel represents an engagement to the second-wave feminist agenda, as this excerpt suggests that a woman's sudden entry into a world of male-dominated sexuality may be mediated by networks of women's solidarity and sisterhood. Women rely on each other and support each other and are ready to face all threats together.

The two of them were overcome with giggles, shaken by their own senseless amusement... They collapsed into each other's arms and at that moment a group of callow youths stomped past, bigger than the girls and ferocious looking. 'Well', said one of them, 'what have we got here? Looks like a couple of little dykes to me.' They might have been frightened, or offended, but they were laughing too much. 'Don't worry about it', said Hermione, cheeky in her hilarity. 'It's probably just a phase we're going through.' The boys grinned a little sheepishly, acknowledging her courage.⁴³

It represents the freedom to feel comfortable and equal in the public space of the metropolis, the right to walk the streets of London more confidently than a hundred years ago.⁴⁴ For Maggie, after all her travels through the city, her home is a landmark to which she always likes to return. This is how her mother, Phoebe, and her grandmother Rachel perceive this typical house too. After a busy day, the house means an emotional hiding place for them. Rachel bought this house after her father died. The home is designed to meet the needs of all three generations. Although the house is divided into individual floors and each of the women has her privacy, there is a certain tension in the family. Although they love each other, each of them asserts the right to individuality and privacy.

⁴³ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 103.

⁴⁴ Cirstea, *Mapping British Women Writers' Urban Imaginaries*, 100-103.

However, considerations of individual awareness and family ties should not be taken for granted. Rachel's approach to the household is different from the household in which Rachel grew up. Rachel herself had a hard time intrigue and plan for many years to force her daughter Phoebe to live together with her in one house. Rachel, who lovingly bought and rebuilt the house, and Maggie, who spent her entire childhood in this house, view the house as a "home" and a vital space. However, Phoebe has an opposite view. Phoebe is torn between contradictory emotions; on the one hand, she recognizes the potential of the house to provide emotional and material support, but on the other hand, she feels overwhelmed with all the responsibilities associated with the house.

Without noticing she had become the mistress of the house. But she had no desire to be that, no desire to be the grown-up looking after the two little girls. She had become the mother. She had not started out as the mother; she had never chosen to be the mother. These two women, Rachel and Maggie so differently, so craftily, had sneaked into her life, her flesh, parasites of love. She wanted to escape and she could imagine no escape. The house, sensing the danger of her betrayal in her sturdy foundations, had fought back with outrageous demands – a deft damp patch in the cellar, vague wobbles in the window frames, discreet collapses in the décor, a minor jinx in the wiring – all requiring her attention and the investment of her time and energy. It was a big house; it craved a full time mistress ...⁴⁵

This passage represents Phoebe and her mixed feelings about taking care of a family home. In the novel, the child's bond to the family home and the functioning relationship of mother and daughter are essential elements in identity formation. The novel also suggests that home may represent "mother's house" or a "scary place" for women, evoking feelings of anxiety about the traditional female role of a woman and the worries associated with the house.⁴⁶

The title of the novel *Three Times Table* evokes the crucial elements of arithmetic. However, the relationships between the three main characters do not represent similar clarity. The novel introduces areas of intervening space and ambiguity. All the heroines defy all the rules of Newtonian physics. The novel does not focus on the bias of each character, impressions, or point of view but seeks to gather scattered experiences to get an overall picture of the world they live in. Following this, one level of experience that the novel deals with is the attempt of women to penetrate traditionally male field, science. Both Phoebe and Rachel are interested in science because of their solid fatherly influence. Instead of building a relationship with their mothers at an early age, they prefer to imitate male scientists,

⁴⁵ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 47.

⁴⁶ Cirstea, *Mapping British Women Writers' Urban Imaginaries*, 103-105.

following the imitation of their fathers. According to Sigmund Freud, the mental development of girls differs significantly from the mental development of boys. In his opinion, the mother is the first object of desire for all children, and this bond is related to the development of the “castration complex” in the phallic phase (3-5 years). In the case of boys, the castration complex is understood as a lesser fear of losing the penis, which arouses at the first glance of the female genitalia, which is interpreted as “castrated.” Freud argues that little girls develop a castration complex when they realize that, in fact, all women, including their mothers, do not have a penis. Regardless this complex, Maitland seems to have relied on Freud’s Oedipal scheme to construct the psyche of the heroine, Rachel. Rachel’s childhood memories provide clear examples of infantile desire; in a highly relevant scene, such as a little girl and her mother are anxiously preparing for her father’s return home. Rachel sees her profession as a profession for men, which radically opposes her mother’s ambitious household. Thanks to her profession, Rachel overcame her jealousy of her mother, but even so, their relationship remains quite distant. Mature Rachel thinks this indifference results from a generation gap between herself, a professional woman of a post-war generation, and her mother, a typical upper-class housewife. Rachel finds out that her mother participated in the suffrage movement and was imprisoned for his political activism in a at a time when she was already married to her father. This is the reason why Rachel tries to control her personal life as well as her professional ambitions.⁴⁷

Rachel was strongly attached to her father and longed to fulfil her professional dream. In the end, Rachel succeeded in becoming a successful palaeontologist. But there was much hard work behind it. She began her career as a secretary, imitating a male model of a scientist, not having enough time for her friends and later for her daughter. She only has a distant relationship with student Claire, with whom she has cooperated during her career. She marries an older man who serves for her as a substitute for her father and as a male model. As a result, Rachel dares to come up with her independent research. Educated by her father in the spirit of joint research, she also supports her husband’s professional goals. Her husband refuses to recognize professional merit and hates her achievements. When her first study is published, her marriage begins to deteriorate.

Although the attachment to the husband gradually declines and their marriage eventually breaks down, Rachel is still able to establish very successful professional and personal relationships with men, especially with her young students, such as Paul. After admitting

⁴⁷ Cirstea, *Mapping British Women Writers’ Urban Imaginaries*, 105-108.

that her lifelong research is not true, the company of her daughter and granddaughter is a lifestyle change for her. She is also forced to admit a fundamental mistake in her major scientific work and demand the dismantling of her beloved dinosaur—a fossil that she carefully reconstructed. It is proudly exhibited in the London Museum of Natural History. The crisis of her existence is suppressed by a close relationship with her granddaughter, who forces her to acknowledge her disappointment.

Fenna and Maggie persuaded her that she could no longer claim for science the priority over life and death and dreams that she had demanded for it. Fenna and Maggie persuaded her, very simply, that dragons were entirely real, were real products of the mind and eye and hopes and desires and loves and hates of life. Their reality, the reality of the imagination, was as central as her scientific causal reality.⁴⁸

Rachel can be assumed to be aware in old age how much experience escaped to her. But Rachel remains a reminder of her scientific authority, scientific story, and job, which brought her many new opportunities. Dragon Fenna has a specific spiritual significance. The dragon pretends to be evil, but Sara Maitland reworks the relationship between the woman and the dragon as a relationship of joy and love over fear and a form of reconciliation. The final episode of the novel represents a moment of spiritual revelation. For Rachel, the much-feared crisis at the end of her career is replaced by feelings of peace and joy, as well as the ability to rejoice in her role as a mother and grandmother.⁴⁹

When Phoebe was a little girl at her early age, her approach to life is influenced and reflected by Phoebe's mother, Rachel. Later, however, following the example of her father, a palaeontologist, and a fellow of Oxford University, she has a passionate relationship with mathematics. Although she is aware that her mother is also a palaeontologist, teen Phoebe perceives her mother's work as invalid, feminine, and inferior. Phoebe identifies with a male-dominated world of traditional academic art.

⁴⁸ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 110.

⁴⁹ Cirstea, *Mapping British Women Writers' Urban Imaginaries*, 109-113.

She had spent her adolescence in the company of eminent old men; eminent old men who received her respect as their due and enjoyed teaching the brilliant daughter of their colleague ... Once he and she had gone to tea with an old friend of his and the two of them had sat in the shabby college room and laughed together about why women never made good scientists. The other man joked about writing a scientific monologue on the subject; and had suddenly looked up, remembered Phoebe's presence, and hastened to say cheerily, 'Not you, of course, Phoebe, you're different; we're only talking about statistical norms.' But she had not needed comforting, she hardly heard them; she had known all along that what they were saying didn't apply to her, but to other women, women like her mother.⁵⁰

Although Phoebe and Rachel have a common interest in science, their relationship is delayed. Phoebe enters the world of science by refusing to accept her feminine nature, thus inadvertently copying her mother's life. A few years later, Phoebe concluded that her mother achieves success in the world of science only in its old age, after the sudden death of her father. Phoebe realizes that her desire to find the absolute scientific truth prevented her from paying any attention to the real world around her. Based on this, Phoebe gives up her studies and joins various rebellious youth movements of the 1960s and 1970s; from the hippie movement, the socialist movement, and also the feminist movement. Regardless of Phoebe's rebellion against science and academia, her career choice as a gardener is very symbolic. Gardening, particularly 'lighter' gardening, which includes growing plants for pleasure, sowing, and collecting flowers, is traditionally considered as a hobby of upper and middle-class women and can be linked to a patriarchal model of femininity. However, a problematic form of gardening that requires strenuous physical work is typical for lower-class men. Phoebe seems to have given up her career as a mathematician to confirm the social prejudice that women have never been good scientists. From this point of view, Rachel and Phoebe represent two ways for a woman to fail in a scientific career. However, Phoebe then began to pursue a more masculine profession because landscaping public gardens and parks requires perseverance and botanical knowledge. Phoebe is interested in this work and approaches it with scientific rigor and kindness same as she once did in mathematics. It can, therefore, be argued that, just as the museum shaped her mother a space of the city and mind for several generations of schoolchildren, gardening Phoebe puts science into modelling cityscape in ways that benefit the less privileged in the city residents. Phoebe prefers her services to city councils and housing associations rather than to become a recognized garden designer, as her best friend Lisa points out.⁵¹ Inadvertently, Phoebe, like her mother, opted

⁵⁰ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 29.

⁵¹ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 27.

for a popular model of cultural production, which is radically unlike the tradition of male scholarship, in which she was educated. The novel captures moments of an acute crisis in the lives of all three main characters. For Phoebe, this crisis takes the form of potentially fatal breast cancer. Although Phoebe represents the feminist principle that women have to take care of their bodies, she is overwhelmed with fear when discovering a growing lump in her breast. While teenager Maggie can find effective support and comfort in female solidarity, for Phoebe, a sexually mature woman and mother, women's sisterhood has proved insufficient and demanding. It does not provide appropriate answers to the questions of bare life. Gradually, Phoebe finds feelings of joy and satisfaction only at work, and suddenly professional success turns to her as proof of her value.

Of course there was still love, there was healthy, growing love and its name was called Work... She saw her work laid out there in the garden, all the muscled cold wet harshness of it; all the labour and the ingrained resistance to working, and she thanked her mother, who had given her this thing. This knowledge that in the end everything must crumble but a woman's work is her rock and her shield, a strong fortress, a faithful lover...this capacity to look at a thing and know that, because it must be done, it is the doing of it that brings freedom and salvation.⁵²

Phoebe also encounters an existential crisis as her privacy begins to take hold, Phoebe comes in control of strong affective ties with her friends, daughter, and mother, and a reasonably satisfying love affair. The crisis was also fuelled by the prospect of Phoebe becoming the mistress of the family house, becoming dependent on her mother's views. Finding a way out of this emotional dead end, Phoebe is once again aware of her mother's previous experience. Furthermore, that is why she decides to have more active contact with the public and becomes a gardener. Gardening means for Phoebe a reward for her efforts. She can leave her footprint in the public space thanks to her competence and energy. She can firstly model her ideas and images and then return to real life more enriched and calmer. Despite different life stories, the three female heroines in the novel fall into the footsteps of the other. While Maggie is forced to give up her world of imagination because of the powerful resources and start living everyday life, at the end of the novel, Rachel awakens to this secret power of fantasy, when her revelation can no longer fundamentally change in her profession or private circle. For Rachel, access to this alternative dimension of fantasy could be a consolation for her departure from sexuality or recognition, or perhaps in anticipation of her impending

⁵² Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 213.

departure from the human world. At the same time, despite her rebellious choice of profession, Phoebe's philosophy of life seems to reflect her mother's lifelong faith in the highest ability of human labour to tame and organize the space naturally. Only the teenager, Maggie, and postmenopausal Rachel could see the figure of a mythical dragon. That is why Sara Maitland seems to favour a long-standing rule requiring privileged women's spiritual roles, from ancient prophets to contemporary nuns, to the time when a woman abandons her creative and sexual attributes.⁵³

4.8 Discourses of Ageing

The novel *Three Times Table* tells the story of three women of one generation who live together in one house without men. However, the focus on individual women alternates throughout the novel. The novel shows the path on which Phoebe, a single mother, reconciles her relationship with both her widowed mother and adolescent daughter. Before Phoebe moved into her mother's house, her life was a reaction to her mother's marriage and motherhood. Phoebe refused to marry the father of her child. Instead of living in a community with other people sharing living spaces, she moved into her mother's house, which she called a "women's house," because no men live there. Phoebe defined herself as a negative image of her mother, as Rachel did so herself, just as everyone did.⁵⁴ This lifestyle excludes men. However, the nature of Phoebe's reaction to her mother is more complicated than it might seem. Rather than blaming the mother for trying to make her daughter happy, Phoebe instead accuses her of becoming her father's daughter and then letting her cope with his early death at the last year of school. Phoebe believes that her mother betrayed her, encouraged her father to force her to act like a real mother so that she could confess her stupid, petty, insignificant, and small job. Phoebe hates her mother, who has a successful career. If she rejects the idea of motherhood, it is because she feels the lack of motherhood herself: "She wanted to be held, she wanted to be cuddled, taken care of, love cherished, kissed, kissed sweetly and softly, tucked up in cool sheets and adored. She wanted to be mothered."⁵⁵ Even though she has longed not to be like her mother, she still finds out that she really needs her "mummy."⁵⁶ Rachel just wants, too, more than marriage and motherhood from her life. A few years later, her career has won the right to be respected as an autonomous intelligence and is represented

⁵³ Cirstea, *Mapping British Women Writers' Urban Imaginaries*, 114-117.

⁵⁴ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 95.

⁵⁵ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 120.

⁵⁶ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 157.

without all the conventional negative attributes of aging. Rachel tells her friend Bill: “Being a grandmother is one relationship I am convinced I was born for.”⁵⁷ Maggie, and her world of myths, is associated with her grandmother’s work on dinosaurs. Maggie refuses to enter womanhood, and yet it can be said that she is against the model of womanhood by her mother. Fenna does not allow her to grow up, Fenna needs Maggie’s unique imagination. Despite everything, Maggie has to overcome “the fear of sex, of adulthood, of life.”⁵⁸ and enter the world of womanhood alone. For Maitland, the figure of a virgin represents great power of autonomy and assertion. After Maggie left her dragon friend and imaginative life, she becomes a woman and has her first period for the first time.⁵⁹ The journey to womanhood without the help of her mother and grandmother thus represents her form of feminism. Three main phases of women’s lives are represented by Maggie the Maiden, Phoebe the Mother, and Rachel the Crone. Sara Maitland represents those three women as equivalents of the male trinity.⁶⁰

4.9 Magical Realism

4.9.1 The Term of Magical Realism

According to the book *Magic(al) Realism* written by Maggie Ann Bowers, the history of this term is very demanding and complex, lasting eight decades, and includes three main turning points. These three main turning points gradually take place in Germany in 1920, then in Central America in 1940, and the third period in Latin America in 1955. All these three periods are connected by literary and artistic personalities who spread the influence of magical realism all over the world. Magical realism is the contested term primarily due to most critics increasing the confusion surrounding the history of magical realism rather than acknowledging the full complexity of magical realism and origins of the term. Much of the confusion about magical realism stems from the fact that it was contemporary with surrealism. The revolutionary exploration of the human mind by Freud and Jung became a major inspiration for the surrealists. The similarities between the terms Magical realism and Surrealism are significant, desire for novelty, harmonization of contradictions, the idea of

⁵⁷ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 104.

⁵⁸ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 184.

⁵⁹ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 185.

⁶⁰ Jeannette King, *Discourses of Ageing in Fiction and Feminism: The Invisible Woman* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 90-93.

unique and extraordinary reality. All writers of magical realism had their source of influence.⁶¹ Magical Realism is a very controversial concept, not because of its complicated history and development but because it includes many variants. The definition of magical realism relies on a prior understanding of what is meant by the term ‘magic’ and what is meant by the term ‘realism’. ‘Magic’ is the less theorized concept and carries a wide range of definitions. The term ‘magic’ has a wide range of meanings; it can refer to the mystery of life, extraordinary occurrences, anything spiritual, and miracles. The term ‘realism’ connected with art and literature started to be commonly used in the mid-nineteenth century and began to be widely recognized. Realism assumes the reality of the external world and is often connected to the structure of the novel and its expansive form. Magical realism relies upon the explanation of imagined or magical elements as if they were real. Fantasy is another term that is associated with magical realism very often. It is assumed by mistake that magical realism is a form of fantasy writing. The most significant difference between these two terms, fantasy and magic, is that fantasy takes place in a world other than the world of people, while magical realism focuses on ordinary people who go about their daily lives in the ordinary world.⁶²

4.9.2 Faith and Myth in *Three Times Table*

The novel *Three Times Table* introduces young Maggie, who has to overcome her dragon friend Fenna. The story connects the plot because it intertwines parallel stories of grandmother, mother, and granddaughter. One-third of the novel describes Maggie’s adolescence. This novel does not belong into the category of the fantasy genre. It is a realist novel that contains a magical realism about three women sharing a household uneasily. Maggie represents a young woman who is struggling with her fears and looking for her power. Maitland’s novel points out works of art that decorate Maggie’s room, ‘leading a dragon into a city on a golden chain.’⁶³ According to her grandmother Rachel, Fenna was Maggie’s imaginary friend who had risen when Maggie was five years old and had never gone away, and the dragon had been constant company for Maggie. From Maggie’s childhood, she could only remember the constant tug of tension between her mother and grandmother. Fenna enables Maggie to escape from family tension. At the age of fifteen, Maggie experiences menstruation for the first time, and she realizes she has to give up her dragon friend, give up the

⁶¹ Maggie Ann Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 7-17.

⁶² Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, 19-29.

⁶³ Maitland, *Three Times Table*, 8.

friendship and power to flight. Menstruation means entering womanhood. Maggie is reconciled to having to leave her dragon friend. The last time she flies over the roofs of London's buildings, she is thrown from the dragon's wings back into her attic room, as the falling shards of the skylight wake her mother and grandmother, both of whom believe the skylight broke by accident because Maggie already lay in bed. This moment unites all three women when a mother and grandmother rush to help Phoebe. The bonds between these three women are more robust, and their community is stabilized. Firstly, the character of Fenna is represented as helpful and protective, but later the company of Fenna separates Maggie from others. After Maggie freed herself from the dragon, Phoebe finally visited the doctor, Rachel renounced her lifelong theory, and Maggie entered womanhood while experiencing menstruation. In the end, the eldest Rachel took over the dragon's friend as she left the museum office and realized that it was time to retire.⁶⁴

Dragons represent ancient and powerful creatures in the human mind, and they represent the idea of art. In Sarah Maitland's novel, a dragon named Fenna carries a young teenage Maggie from her attic room to a fantasy world, where she can look down on all the buildings in London. The dragon in the novel thus represents both 'imagination' and 'serious' fiction. *Three Times Table* is a playful novel, and it is realistic and fantastic. Grandmother, daughter, and granddaughter live together in a tense and fragile accommodation of comfort, habit, and unspoken, almost unspeakable needs. However, each woman has a 'dragon' problem. Paleontologist Rachel introduces the dinosaur on which her successful career was based, but which she now knows is the wrong idea. Phoebe, the gardener, carries a 'dragon crab' with her: breast cancer, dark mistress, and secret. Maitland thus represents the existence of various species of dragons. Some are 'real,' such as a tumor, and others are 'unreal,' such as wrong scientific judgment. However, some dragons represent both because Maggie's Fenna is nothing more than her childhood dreaming and nothing less than eternal darkness. Maggie's new test of courage is not killing but rejecting her beloved Fenna and releasing him to grow up. Her mother's test is one of many people have to go through: She has to go to the doctor. At the sensational end of the novel, followed by a shower made of broken glass, all three heroines triumphantly have dropped their 'dragons.' And the reward that

⁶⁴ Suzanne Bray, Peter Merchant, and Adrienne E. Gavin, *Re-Embroidering the Robe: Faith, Myth and Literary Creation since 1850* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 63-71

everyone receives is not the crown and fanfare, but the reward for the heroines is life, the life that flows on.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Ursula K. Le Guin, "Trouble With Dragons," *The Washington Post*, March 31, 1991, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/1991/03/31/trouble-with-dragons/cd4dfb42-8321-463b-b197-427cd4804d00/>.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this thesis was to analyse the construction of female identity throughout the novel *Three Times Table* and the novel's three main heroines Rachel, Phoebe, and Maggie. The bachelor's thesis consists of five main chapters. The first chapter explored the life, career, and living in silence of British novelist, feminist, and religious thinker Sara Maitland. For more than two decades, Maitland celebrates the positives of living completely alone, she had found herself 'falling in love' with silence. The second chapter brought readers closer to the writing of Sara Maitland, her themes and topics, and her work. Her concerns with feminism, sexuality, and religion. Her portfolio has a wide range of themes and works. The third chapter described the historical background of the term female identity. Construction of human's identity involves experiences, relationships, and connections during life, robust mental and emotional stamp on the human. The determination of identity identification is based on social circumstances in which people have been raised. Identity is not something given to people but is produced and constructed by interactions and experiences. The fourth part is devoted to an analysis part and includes a detailed description of the novel and examines three main characters Rachel, Maggie, and Phoebe, three generations of Petherington women, grandmother, mother, and daughter, who share a house in London. Through interconnected memories and flashbacks to the past, the book presents to readers more about these three Petherington women and explains what led them to their current crises. Main heroines share a house, but they inhabit different worlds. Maggie escapes on the wings of her dragon to her secret world, Phoebe is facing a professional crisis and is suffering from breast cancer, and Rachel is forced to reconsider the theory she has always fought for. Each woman has an important decision to make. The book opens to readers more information about dinosaurs, dragons, gardening, and math. The thesis is concluded by the last fifth chapter that explores the term Magical realism and reflection of this term in the novel. The novel is a blend of straightforward narrative, feminism, and magical realism. Maggie is on the verge of womanhood, but to transcend this phase of her life, she must challenge the power of Fenna, an obsessed dragon who has been her undisclosed companion for ten years. The dragon Fenna enables Maggie to escape from family tension. By the end of the novel, each heroine has done a soul-searching deal and undergone a significant change. The novel *Three Times Table* is an imaginative story about three hurried stories of three women of one generation.

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