

## WRITING FEMINITY: CASE OF ANASTASIJA

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### **Resumen**

En este artículo se explora el caso de una mujer que quiso vender a su hija por Internet y se hace un seguimiento de su tratamiento judicial posterior. La autora toma el caso como un artificio: investiga cómo los medios de comunicación de masas elaboran la historia de una mujer condenada y distingue entre lo que está realmente sucediendo, prestando atención a la narrativa acerca de Anastasia, que es modelada como persona, mujer y madre, mientras se crean y recrean concepciones, imperativos informales acerca del comportamiento correcto según el sexo, y los roles sociales ligados a ello. Se pone de manifiesto la contradicción entre las decisiones reales tomadas durante el juicio y las concepciones de la sociedad.

**Palabras clave:** roles sociales, género, medios de comunicación de masas.

### **Abstract**

The case of a woman who wanted to sell her daughter on Internet and following lawsuit is explored in the article. The author analyzes this case as an artefact; she investigates how the story about condemned woman is constructed in the mass media. The author dissociates from what has actually happened, paying attention to the narrative about Anastasija who is shaped as a person, woman, and mother, while both creating and reproducing conceptions, unwritten behaviour imperatives for sex category and social roles. The contradiction of the factual trial and society's conceptions about "correct" performance of gender and mother role is examined.

**Key Words:** social roles, gender, mass media.

### **The case of Anastasija**

In September 2007, Latvia was shattered at the news of an unusual lawsuit. The defendant was a 19 years old woman who in May 2006 had placed an announcement in the Internet offering to sell her daughter aged not a year yet. The

announcement said: “I am selling my seven months year old daughter. She is beautiful, lovely, and in good health. I cannot survive with 56 lats<sup>1</sup> anymore”.

The woman was hoping to receive 2,000<sup>2</sup> lats for her child. Some other women read the Internet announcement and wanted to make sure whether it was really possible to buy a child. Police got involved too. Pretending to be the buyers, policemen arrested the young woman, and a criminal charge was brought against her for trafficking in human beings. The mother was temporarily suspended her parental rights. On 14 September 2007, a trial was held. As a result, the woman was given a suspended sentence and probation of two years, as well as security measure – supervision of police; her parental rights were also resumed as during the investigation process she had demonstrated care for her child and collaborated with state institutions. The court decided that it was in the interest of the child to grow up in her mother's care. The convicted woman's name is Anastasija.

The lawsuit stirred vast response from the Latvian society. News appeared both in electronic media and the press. It seemed that everyone had an opinion about Anastasija, her behaviour, and the outcome of the trial. This case interested me from several aspects. The social opinion and media news condemned the attempt to sell a child or, in other words, they condemned the behaviour of an adult person. The case of selling a child was categorised as trafficking in human beings. However, besides her behaviour, they also condemned the person itself. There was a public discussion about Anastasija as a person deserving condemnation. It is not about the fact that a person of age tried to sell an under-age person. The case of Anastasija is not merely legal. It is a moral offence. She is being publicly tried as a mother and a woman. To be more precise, as a heartless mother who acts against what society considers being a good or at least a “normal” mother. She is tried as a woman as only women can be mothers. She is also an “abnormal” woman, for the constructs of a mother and woman are closely interconnected. The assumption that biology produces two categories of different people

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<sup>1</sup> 56 lats is approximately 80 EUR.

<sup>2</sup> 2,000 lats is approximately 2857 EUR.

is still alive. Gender divisions are so common in our daily life and, for most people, so „natural”, that it is only the rare gender rebel that challenges them. (Lorber, 1993, Lorber, 2000). It is often considered that the quality of being motherly is one of the natural and thus almost obligatory manifestations or incarnations of a woman.

### **Theoretical considerations**

It seems that today’s feminists have theoretically divided a woman into small pieces in order to find a woman in these. For centuries, Western culture philosophers did not distinguish between genders when immersing into contemplations about a human being or, to be more precise, what they meant when talking about a human being was a man. Till the 18<sup>th</sup> century scientists and philosophers were of the opinion that there was only one sex – a human, and genitals of females and males were equal with the only difference of being differently developed in space (Laquer in Lorber, 1993). First documents on human rights did not include a woman in the definition of a human. Feminism in the diverse types of its manifestation emphasises both equality and difference between women and men although, mainly, difference between sexes. If so much effort is made to find a woman in a human being, then no doubt woman is a secondary/deviative manifestation of a human being. For feminists as a food for thought can become toilets (West and Zimmerman, 1987, Lorber, 1993), breast (Bartlett, 2000), womb and birth-giving (Croghan, 1991, Mullin, 2002, Beckett, 2005), chromosomes and hormones (Tavris, 1993, Roberts, 2002), and brain (Tavris, 1993). Theorists are preoccupied with the idea to prove that differences between a man and a woman are not so essential to legitimise the ontological separation of both genders, or these differences may be considerable but social inequality should not be justified anyway. Of course, I agree with that. But I cannot disregard the fact that in any opinion of scientists the focus is put on differences either by substantiating and legitimising them or by trying to delete this demarcation line. It shouldn’t be asked whether these differences exists and what that mean, but rather “Why is everyone so interested in differences?” and “What

function does the belief in differences serve?” (Tavris, 1993:151) Even “most feminists who seek change in the structure and value system of gendered social orders rarely challenge the binary divisions, perhaps because they too believe in their ultimate biological underpinnings” (Hawkesworth in Lorber, 2000: 80).

Within the framework of this publication it is of use to retain the division of mankind in two categories as the sex category is essential in understanding how the life of an individual changes. In legal terms, the main character of the publication Anastasija is a person who has breached the law, but in the eyes of society she is a woman and a mother who has done something extreme, and as such she arouses interest in mass media. Already in the beginning, it should be defined what is meant by gender in the context of the publication. The analysis of various texts will be based on Erving Goffman’s model of theatrical performance and, more specifically, his approach to role interpretation. Goffman believed that in everyday interaction individuals play roles by influencing and controlling each other and oneself. “A “role” or “routine” are predefined action models elaborated during a performance or played in other cases” (Goffman, 2001:24). The social role is also “implementation of rights and obligations corresponding to a specific status” (Goffman, 2001:24) and it can be related to other roles played; each of them separately or all together can be demonstrated one by one to different or one and the same audience. But Goffman does not consider gender as a role but an element of a “person's facade”, which is most directly associated with the performer of the role, assuming that it belongs to the person invariably just like his/her essence.

West and Zimmerman (1987) emphasise that gender is not a set of traits, is not a variable, is even not a role, but a product social doings of some sort. Gender itself is constituted through interaction; however, as Goffman maintains that it seems to be “naturally” inherent to an individual. Gender is not a social role, like a “doctor”, “student”, or “customer”, which is situative; gender has no specific site or an organizational context. (West and Zimmerman, 1987:129)

Mother is a role as it is variable. No-one is born being a mother; even if a woman is a mother today, she will possibly not be a mother tomorrow. In different situations the fact that she is a mother may not be known at all or may be kept in silence, while the fact that she is a woman is obvious and cannot be disregarded. Being a mother is both an objective experience and an ideological construct; work of parenting cannot be divorced from ideological expectations which surround it. (Croghan, 1991: 222)

### **Method**

The case of Anastasija is not of interest to me as an event as such, nor as a criminal offence. I leave outside the range of my interest issues concerning motivation of the young woman, as well as psychological, economic, and political considerations of the reason of her behaviour. I am not asking what made the woman come to such a decision, whether she defines herself in legal terms as a person who has acted illegally or whether she recognises herself in moral terms as a person who has acted unethically. To a certain extent, in my analysis I am dissociating myself from what has actually happened. I am interested in Anastasija's case as an artefact. In the way how mass media and public discussions in an Internet forum construct the event, at the same time shaping the main character of the story –the woman Anastasija– shaping her as a person, woman, and mother, while both creating and reproducing conceptions, unwritten but normative behaviour imperatives. Gender can also be viewed as a narrative by focusing on the way women and men perceive themselves, the way they interpret and respond to events that befall them. To understand the construction of a gender, one must hear what story they tell about themselves. "We can open our perceptions to the stories people tell as well as to the stories we expect them to tell". (Tavris, 1993: 163) Under the inspiration of terminology used and the ideas of writing a personal story mentioned in publications "Thinking through breasts: writing maternity" by Alison Bartlett (2000) and "The Mismeasure of Women" by Carol Tavris (1993), I

want to show how in a written story about a certain event the described person is marked, evaluated and in most cases put into Procrustes' bed<sup>3</sup>, which represents social opinion and attitude towards the strict segregation of the sex category, which Anastasija has breached in this case, thus causing overall fluctuation of opinions. Therefore the title of the article is "Writing Femininity".

For my analysis I have selected news provided by the Latvian news agency LETA and published in two Internet media [www.postfactum.lv](http://www.postfactum.lv) and [www.tvnet.lv](http://www.tvnet.lv). Analysis was made of the article published on 14 September 2007 in the portal TVNET under the title "Sievietei par bērna pārdošanas mēģinājumu piespriež nosacītu sodu" (Woman Given Suspended Sentence for Attempt to Sell Child) and 92 comments, and the article of 2 October 2007 titled "Sūdzība lietā par mēģinājumu internetā pārdot bērnu" (Complaint in Case for Attempt to Sell Child on Internet) and 15 comments. News of similar nature had been published several days in succession also in other Internet media, which will not be discussed here.

Analysis was also made of two newspaper articles: article of 15 September 2007 "Bērna pārdevējai internetā – piecu gadu nosacīts sods" (Internet Seller of Child Given Suspended Sentence of Five Years) in the newspaper of national scale "Neatkarīgā rīta avīze", and the article of 14 September 2007 "Par bērna pārdošanu – nosacīts sods" (Suspended Sentence for Selling Child) in the regional newspaper "Zemgales Ziņas". Of special significance for the analysis is the publication in the weekly magazine "Ieva" under the title "Kāpēc es mēģināju pārdot savu bērnu..." (Why I Tried to Sell My Child...) in magazine issues dated 26 September and 3 October 2007.

### **The story of a journalist**

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<sup>3</sup> Procrustes is a mythical Greek giant who stretched or shortened captives to make them fit his beds.

Kristīne Ancāne, the journalist of the weekly magazine “Ieva”<sup>4</sup>, writes in her publication that when first hearing of the offence committed by Anastasija – the attempt to sell her baby, she was shocked – “how could anyone think of **something like that**”<sup>5</sup>. At that time the journalist herself was expecting a baby and decided to find Anastasija to hear her opinion of what had happened. She tells that she had asked the young woman: “How did **the absurd idea** of selling your child come to your mind!?” Anastasija gave reasons for her behaviour, but the journalist adds: “Already after a moment Anastasija reproached herself for the **stupid idea** to sell her child. (...) I want to believe from all my heart: what Anastasija wanted to gain by selling her daughter was not money”. The journalist and Anastasija continued to communicate, and Anastasija trusted the journalist her thoughts in letters as the journalist had “become a sort of a shoulder of a friend who would listen, not reproach, but try to understand.” Then come as if letters of Anastasija which are in a way called a diary. From a methodological aspect, the following should be taken into account:

- It is not important whether this “diary” is genuine. Even if such notes would exist, it must be assumed that for preparing a publication they have been edited as a literary text.
- It is not important whether by reading Anastasija's “diary” we actually read reflections of Anastasija or a public, censored and (re)constructed version about an almost biblical sin of a woman and mother, then confession, and atonement.

The moral attitude of the publication has been given already in its first lines. The journalist emphasises that the publication “*does not justify this woman; however, the wish to understand **what really happened** in the young woman's soul is very great*”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hereafter quotations taken from the article “Kāpēc es mēģināju pārdot savu bērnu” (Why I Tried to Sell My Child...), “Ieva”, 26 September, 3 October 2007

<sup>5</sup> Text bolded by the author to point out more important notions used as arguments in this publication.

<sup>6</sup> Goffman maintains that participants of a performance are concerned about making others believe their role so much that they would take it as reality. If the performer of the role and the

Besides, the woman's idea to sell her child is called stupid, absurd, and unbelievable as well. However, the journalist of the magazine "Ieva" is hoping to find out a very certain and "mitigating" motive which would allow accepting Anastasija as a "normal" woman and mother. It could be anything: economic, political, psychological circumstances, social inequality, or features characteristic of the specific age. What is the most important is that the reason of this behaviour would make readers feel compassion for the woman, which had become confused for a moment. The publication is a story describing a basically good person that "has gone astray" after facing different hardships.

### **Anastasija is a loving mother**

The story of Anastasija features several persons –her daughter Daniela, father of her child, his mother, her own mother, her girlfriend, and others. Already in the beginning of the story we can read that Anastasija actually loves her child. The child was born as "*a tiny and still a red chubby baby,*" „*all the pains were worth that as now I have a little daughter with lovely long, black hair. (...) so tiny, and while dreaming, she smiles time after time.*" Even when placing an announcement in the Internet, the mother had written that her daughter was "*beautiful, lovely, and in good health.*" At the end of the story, when the mother has realised what she had "done and that there is no-one so dear to me except Daniela in this whole world," she dedicates the warmest feelings to her daughter:

"Never in my life will I give her to anybody!"

"After the trial I was so happy that I could be together with Daniela at last!"

"I am no longer bothered by Daniela's crying and the large piles of dirty dishes and laundry."

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audience believe that everything is "real", then there are no more doubts that the performance itself is reality whatever it may be.



Nevertheless, this woman admits that it “was the biggest mistake of my life.” We do not get to know how she came to such a conclusion; what we know is only what the journalist lets us read – she tells us that the woman Anastasija is a loving mother, who has been confused, has made a mistake, realised it and now regrets it. At least, readers can feel relief: everything is all right, the mother loves her child, and at least one unwritten conviction about mothers as loving mothers has not been destroyed.

### **Anastasija is a deceived woman**

The story of Anastasija reveals several nuances, which allow readers to come to a conclusion that the main character of this story is a victim of certain circumstances. If only everything had been all right, Anastasija would never have come to a decision of selling her child. But economic and psychological factors had forced her to act this way. At the end of the publication, there is also a statement made by the chairwoman of the Family Court of Tukums<sup>7</sup> saying:

“Anastasija has not had a normal family herself as her parents suffered from alcoholism. Some time ago the Family Court had been considering an issue of depriving her parents of parental rights. Therefore Anastasija has not felt maternal love.”

Anastasija herself is writing in the “letter” that the first reaction of her own mother to her pregnancy has been: “*Get an abortion while it’s not too late.*” In another “letter” Anastasija is blaming her mother that she got drunk while looking after the child:

“It turned out that my mother had got drunk while nursing the child! How could she do this?! (..) For the first time I was so angry that I did not control myself – I slapped her face, and my mother fell.”

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<sup>7</sup> Tukums is the home town of Anastasija.

What we read allows us to understand that Anastasija herself has not experienced a “normal” mother, so in a certain way she was deprived of the opportunity to learn the “right” role of a mother and therefore is only a victim of her own miserable experience.

The second case when Anastasija had trusted someone and later been deceived concerns her relationship with the father of the child. She had been dating Sergejs, who was the father of the baby, for 3 years. Sergejs was “her big love.” “Everything became tangled when Anastasija got pregnant: the guy, who was seven years older, started to smoke weed and drank regularly. All the time she was hoping for the support of her beloved one... In vain.” tells the journalist.

Anastasija writes in her “letter”: “Sergejs wanted a baby so much, and for a whole year already he was asking me to make up my mind eventually. The love towards Sergejs prevailed.” In her later letters Anastasija expresses a contradictory attitude to her boyfriend, who has turned from “the big love” into a hardhearted person at first and later into an indifferent person. Time from time both parents stay together, but Sergejs is the one who comes and goes. Anastasija tells about the unequal involvement of both parents in carrying out their duties:

“I have to bath and feed the child and cook food – sometimes I feel like Sergejs’ servant.”

“Anyway, he wasn’t satisfied with me and the crying baby.”

“I was hoping that Sergejs would come back to me, but no. Moreover, Sergejs has found a substitute for me...”

In one of her last “letters” Anastasija tells that “I have not been looking for Sergejs. Sometimes I see him in the town, but he doesn’t even want to recognise us – when passing us on the street, he turns away.”

The message is rather clear – the girl, who had lacked parental love and care, has trusted her boyfriend, who wanted a baby so much. And then this trust was

deceived. So there is another “mitigating” circumstance why the woman wants to sell her child. She is “forced” to do this as the closest people do not love or support her. Anastasija puts forward a rhetorical question: “Am I asking so much? To be loved and live together with Sergejs and our daughter.”

The third “circumstance” is the woman’s psychological status, which is intensified by economic factors as well. Anastasija is alone and she is constantly in lack of money.

“I have been crying for two days already. I am left alone with my baby. Without normal education. Without a job. Only with children’s allowance, which is 56 lats for me. I am crying because I am left alone and Daniela is also crying. She is probably crying because she feels how I feel. At least the doctor tells me all the time that a baby feels its mother very well. I feel despair that I cannot cope with the crying Daniela.”

“Everyday drives me crazy: all the time one and the same, I see nothing else but Daniela and do nothing else but changing pampers, cooking porridge, walking, eating and bathing the child.”

“I am tired of Daniela, of that fact that all the time I have to deal with everything on my own.” “I am tired of loneliness, of the fact that my whole world is only Daniela.”

Also the unfriendly attitude of authorities promotes Anastasija’s bleak mood. She had applied for social assistance in the local municipality, where she was given an answer:

“Such young girls like you always give birth to babies and afterwards don’t know what to do with them. After that I wanted to die. Today I was thinking of making a suicide – maybe then these endless problems would come to an end?”

### **Anastasija is a victim of politics and economics**

The constant lack of money is considered as an economic factor which has encouraged Anastasija to make the decision.

“Today I received my children’s allowance, paid the apartment rent, bought pampers, porridges and after that I had two lats left. I have to survive with these for the rest month – till the next children’s allowance.”

“This I do have to admit that I cannot cope anymore as I have not a single santim to bless myself with.”

Anastasija has asked municipality for help and made a bitter conclusion:

“Again I ascertained that never ever will I ask for any help! I had overcome my shame, had pulled myself together, and gone to the social department. I know these are only my problems, but I really didn’t have anybody to go to.”

According to what is written, we can judge that people in the Department of Social Affairs<sup>8</sup> treated Anastasija in a fairly inconsiderate and snubby manner. It was Anastasija’s girlfriend, who had been helping the young woman for some time, which had the idea of selling the child.

“Nadja had the idea that if I cannot sustain the child and have nothing to buy food for, we could sell Daniela. (..) Maybe we could find a family that would give Daniela everything that a child could wish to have in childhood.”

Thus, the story about the woman who sells her child because of money, acquires another shade. Anastasija sells her child not to obtain wealth but for reasons of state politics and economic considerations, in a way showing charity by caring for her child’s living and to ensure her own life. From such an aspect, Anastasija is a desperate woman who actually loves her child and does everything she can to ensure this child, but there are “circumstances” that force her to take action. Readers find it easier to accept a confused suffering person –a young woman which faces opposition of the whole world. Parents do not love and support her, her boyfriend deceives and leaves her, municipal institutions refuse help, and as a result of state politics she does not have

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<sup>8</sup> The Department of Social Affairs is an executive unit of the municipality.

enough subsistence for ensuring her and her child's welfare. Although the magazine "Ieva" already in the beginning notifies that it does not support Anastasija's behaviour, finally this behaviour can be explained, and thus the offender is a victim herself and her behaviour is justifiable if not from moral aspect then at least partially from the legal aspect. The court has taken into account all the factors listed, and concluded that they serve as mitigating circumstances. Thus the responsibility is as if divided. Although Anastasija placed an announcement and was ready to sell her child, the "blame" should be taken by those who were directly (child's father, girlfriend who gave the advice) and indirectly (social affairs department, society and the state as a whole) involved.

### **Where the child's father or what is the name of this guy?**

The journalist does not ask questions about the father of the child. She wants to understand what "was going on in the young woman's soul", but the child's father is only one reason in the chain of many factors which eventually lead Anastasija to a decision, which in the opinion of the journalist was absurd. Although in her "letters" Anastasija characterises the image of her child's father, she does not reflect and problematise the unequal gender attitude to herself and the man who has the same relationship status with the child. It seems that pregnancy, birthing, and child care is the concern of a woman only.

Sergejs has not taken part in the birthing process. From the first letter we get to know that "he came to the hospital with me, put my things in the antenatal ward and went away".

Anastasija had hoped that the relationship between her and her boyfriend would be good after giving birth "because the last days with Daņuks [diminutive form of Daniela's name] in my belly were like hell: he came and went away whenever he wanted, he went on a spree with his friends recklessly during the time when I was in fear waiting for the moment that birth would start".

After giving birth to her child, Sergejs' mother, who had visited the new parents, had "told Sergejs a lot of nonsense trying to persuade him that it was not his child as the baby did not resemble him at all." Sergejs believed his mother and started to reproach her "where I could "get the baby" from".

It really seems that neither before nor after the birth the child was related to the man – the child's father. It turns out that a woman "gets the baby somewhere." It is significant that Sergejs' attitude was influenced by another woman – his mother, thus also taking part of the blame in the many miseries of Anastasija.

"Sergejs' mother could persuade him that Daniela wasn't his daughter. He went away without saying anything. He took his things and away he went."

In the next letters, time from time readers are informed about Sergejs, who comes and goes without specific explanations as if having no responsibility for what is going on. In her first letters Anastasija ascertains that she loves Sergejs and waits for him to return, but each time the child's father brings new disappointment. While staying in Anastasija's apartment, according to what has been told he does not participate in any homework or childcare.

"I really wish that Sergejs would help me in doing homework, nursing the baby. In evenings when coming home after the work, he finishes his dinner, leaves the dishes right there on the table, slumps into the sofa in front of TV and spends the whole evening staring at the TV. Time from time, he hisses at me angrily telling me to calm down the child. (..) I feel as if I was Sergejs' servant."

If we believe what has been written, Sergejs had not been involved in keeping the baby also materially. "I asked him to buy pampers and porridge for Daniela as I had no more money. I also asked him to take Daniela with him for an hour at least during holidays. But he told me: "This is your degenerate, so these are your problems, not mine."" When Anastasija finally separates from her child's father, she thinks:

“Sometimes I curse myself for leaving him because then at least I had money. I could have swallowed the bitterness of quarrels, yielded to him and kept my thoughts to myself...”

From what is written we can conclude that in this story Sergejs is only one of the players, while the child's mother has the main role being a criminal person. It is true that it was not Sergejs who placed the announcement in the Internet. However, we also see that the father considers the child a “degenerate”, a “problem” of a woman. Anastasija also blames herself for doing wrong by separating from the child's father. One can add to her general “blame” the “inability” to please the child's father and to “swallow bitterness of quarrels”. It was only Anastasija who was tried in a court and not both parents of the child. As we will see later, news and chat does not either refer to the father as an absolutely equal person with regard to taking care of the child. Practically there is no father. His relation to the child is secondary and optional, while the mother's relation to the child is dissoluble, nonnegotiable, and mandatory. It is obligatory for a mother to take care of her child, it is her obligation to love her child, and she has to be an exemplary mother, while it is only a father's free will to act this way. He can decide whether to take care of his child or not, to give money for pampers or not, to help or refuse help, to call names or not, and to come and go whenever he wants. If a child is sold on the Internet, nobody asks where the father was. The father does not count. This can rather be called double morality. Social conceptions of gender differences reinforce the boundary lines among genders and ensure that what is demanded, what is permitted and what is tabooed for the people in each gender. These prescriptions for those of their gender status get built into individuals' sense of worth and identity as they believe that their society's way is the natural way. (Lorber, 1993:578)

At the end of the publication, there is a statement given by the chairwoman of the Family Court of Tukums about the child's father and his responsibility:

“The father of the child did not pay any subsistence, maybe once in a half-year he bought one package of pampers. This is what he told us: “I did take care, I bought the big package of pampers!” The man does not demonstrate any

interest in the child. The father expressed it only when we were trying to deprive him of parental rights. But afterwards he tried to propose DNS analysis himself and doubted whether this actually was his child. Since that time we haven't seen or heard from this man. Despite the fact that he was summoned to appear at the court, the father of the child did not come attend any court sittings. He has not met his daughter. We have filed a petition to the court for depriving him of guardian rights.”

However, we know nothing more about this man than the fact that his name is Sergejs and that just like Anastasija he is most probably from Tukums, while we know the full name and surname of the woman and the fact that she has been punished, her photos have been published, she could be seen in television, she is expected to give public explanations for her action, and others express public judgements for her behaviour and her as a human being. Anastasija is characterised as an offender who wanted to sell her child, and even more, as a mother who wanted to sell her child. But the child's father is an irresponsible guy named Sergejs. But probably soon nobody will remember the latter fact. The child has not changed this man's life, while the woman has become an offender and a punished person.

**“She is the main judge for herself”**

This is what the publication author writes. The recital of the story reveals obvious dynamics in how a faithful young woman, from the moment of giving birth to her daughter, after facing the many miseries comes to a decision to sell her child, then realises what she has done, is punished (arrested, deprived of her child, and tried in a court), regrets what she has done by punishing herself morally. The story depicts her like an almost religious sinner who has committed a sin, then being overwhelmed by enlightenment she understands how cruel and inhuman her doings were, gets punished by the God and punishes herself by repenting. To a certain extent, readers are witnesses of this “confession” and are addressed by the author with a clear aim “to understand what was going on in the young woman's soul” and with an implied aim to forgive her.



When her girlfriend had proposed the idea to sell the child, Anastasija writes:

“Nadja called my idea stupid to give my daughter to a children’s home. Children’s homes are full anyway, and Dane [nickname for Daniela] would not have a normal childhood there.”

It is pointed out that Anastasija herself had the “right” idea not to sell the child but to give it away. Surely, it was the money which Anastasija could have received for the “normal childhood” of her daughter that turned the behaviour of this mother into a criminal act. Anastasija admits: “Stupid me, I decided to risk; I even don’t know where my common sense was at that moment!”

If this is really a genuine letter written by Anastasija already after the trial and after receiving the sentence, then we can clearly see that thinking retrospectively Anastasija gives moral assessment of her own behaviour. Just like in the opinion expressed by the journalist at the beginning of the article, the idea to sell the child has become stupid and absurd for her. Anastasija tells that her mentality is to blame: she is “stupid” and does not know “where my common sense was.” Her decision already post factum in her own biography is a disgraceful decision and in order to justify it, for moment the woman has to become unreasonable or narrow-minded in judgment of herself. When the potential buyers (policemen) arrived to buy the child, they “suddenly showed their police cards and said they were from police. They took the half-naked baby and took it out of the room and seated me in another car. I was only wearing slippers and home clothes.”

And then an assertion comes: “I could not close my eyes for a single moment as all the time I was scourging myself for what I had done, for being stupid.”

Probably we will never surely know how Anastasija arrived at the feeling of regret and what it is that she referred to as “stupid”. Was it the sudden arrest? A sudden revelation for acting unethically? Even if so, how can we know how the person arrived at the conclusion that selling a child is not a good idea? Was it the irrational and “natural” maternal love, which is attributed to women who have given birth

(Croghan 1991, Sbisá 1996)? Is it a revelation about what the society imposes as the “correct” performance of a mother’s role? Would Anastasija have felt regret so soon if the buyers had not been policemen and she had not been arrested? These are questions that will not be answered as here personal factors are closely connected with the social ones. “To a certain extent our society puts an equal sign between the role played and one’s self, and this self as a role is usually perceived as inherent to its owner, or maybe it resides in the noblest parts of the body and is an element in the psychobiology of a personality” (Goffman, 2001:194).

“I am asking myself all the time where my head was when I placed that announcement?!” Is this her personal question or does she repeat what the prosecution will say later: “How did such an idea come to your mind?”

“The countless trials have driven me so far that I cannot sleep at night. (..) The court keeps asking me what happened and why. I am tired of explaining because I can’t find an answer for myself why I did that.”

If we believe authenticity of what is written, Anastasija cannot explain her behaviour to herself. There are only a large number of various assumptions that different factors have contributed to Anastasija’s behaviour. In the very basis, it could also be the most reasonable answer not to know the answer. However, this is not enough both for the court and the readers, who judge. The keystone of the Western culture is rationalism in cognition, which reached its apogee in the philosophy of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Everything has to be explicable and everything is understandable and comprehensible. Certain are only what can be seen (i.e. understood) clearly and what is obvious. Anastasija lacks obvious explanation of her own behaviour. This must be introduced. It is not without purpose that Anastasija defines herself as stupid, as a person who has gone crazy for a moment. This as if justifies her behaviour. Because if only she had thought about all this carefully, if only she had been wise and reasonable, she would have known that this was a bad behaviour, that she must not do it. Not only would she have known but also acted in conformance with her knowledge, i.e. fulfilled the mother’s role in the “correct” way. Through this knowledge she would have had

more “correct” feelings. Anastasija herself shows this retrospectively. Thus, the author of the publication has confirmed another conviction of Western culture, which is attributed to Socrates, that evil is a consequence of ignorance. Anastasija was just stupid and ignorant; therefore she made “the biggest mistake of her life.”

“In news programmes they said my apathetic facial expression had not demonstrated that I regretted what I had done. But there is no-one who can get inside me and see my feelings.” This I do believe: we cannot get inside her and see her feelings.

### **News about Anastasija**

News from news agencies usually does not contain moral evaluation. News informs about facts. Facts about Anastasija’s case are excerpts of the court verdict. It has been said<sup>9</sup> that in reaching the verdict the court had taken into account “mitigating circumstances”, namely that “the offence was committed due to hard personal and family circumstances; the defendant admitted the factual circumstances of the offence and regrets her offence.”

The reasons were not only

“the hard material and social circumstances but also her process of growing up and development in the family of parents alcoholics, the small life experience, intolerance of the relatives and other society members, and lack of support in a complicated life situation,” but also “the irresponsibility of her child’s father towards his own child and to the child’s mother made a significant contribution to committing the offence.”

Although the woman has been sentenced, the prosecutor, who had insisted on real imprisonment during the trial, had appealed against the sentence at the beginning of October 2007.

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<sup>9</sup> “Sūdzība lietā par mēģinājumu internetā pārdot bērnu” (Complaint in Case for Attempt to Sell Child on Internet), 2 October 2007, 15:30

However laconic and impassive news was, what I read is that the father of the child in the trial is featured as a “mitigating circumstance”. The news does not even tell us the name of the child’s father. He has been mentioned only *inter alia*. Another thing we learn from news is that during the investigation phase Anastasija has been subjected to psychiatric examination by court-appointed experts, which recognised that Anastasija was not mentally ill or mentally retarded. Social workers regularly visit her and she is under supervision of police. We actually get to know that due to her behaviour Anastasija was suspected of being an unreasonable and ill person who herself does not understand what she is doing. Now she is under supervision of institutions of both state security and social assistance. Anastasija is not merely sentenced, she is also stigmatised as a dangerous and insane person. But not a word is mentioned about the father. No-one examines his intellect and his social dangerousness. He is not supervised and guarded. He does not exist in this case at all, he is outside of it, and he is just a “circumstance”. The court verdict says:

“No doubt, this court proceedings and the acquired negative publicity *per se* have become a significant educational means, which has allowed the defendant to reflect on and understand the inadmissibility of her reckless actions, to reflect on her further life and her child’s role in it.”

In other words, we have taught naughty girl a lesson and hope that from now on she will keep in mind what it means to be an exemplary mother and how she must play the mother's role established by the society.

### **Forum about Anastasija**

Right after the trial on 14 September 2007, the portal TVNET published an article of the news agency LETA under the title “Sievietei par bērna pārdošanas mēģinājumu piespriež nosacītu sodu” (Woman Given Suspended Sentence for Attempt to Sell Child). The news article contained information about the court verdict and gave

short description of the case history. The news aroused discussion with 92 comments expressed. The content of the quotations analysed has not been edited. They are made in Latvian and many of them contain spelling mistakes; however, for the sake of clarity of this publication's content, these have been quoted observing spelling rules of English.

Apart from these comments, there are also 15 comments analysed from the publication of 2 October "Sūdzība lietā par mēģinājumu internetā pārdot bērnu" (Complaint in Case for Attempt to Sell Child on Internet); these can be found in the same Internet portal TVNET. This publication informs that the prosecutor, who had, already during the court debates, insisted on real imprisonment of the accused woman, has appealed against the sentence, but the lawyer of the defendant has appealed against the appeal.

Comments on the first news article can be relatively subdivided into those who defend and those who condemn Anastasija. Both groups are approximately equal in size although those who defend her are slightly more. In their comments defenders refer to circumstances which could justify Anastasija's behaviour at least partially. Part of defenders morally do not support and even condemn Anastasija's behaviour, but use the case to express general frustration about the state policy and welfare situation in Latvia.

".., 14 September, 16:00 (2007)

"If there is nobody in this damned country full of thieves who would take care of children, if a children allowance amounts to 8 Ls per month, and there is no place in kindergartens, what should this mother do? (..) What should such mother do who is alone, has no job, has nowhere to leave the kid, and instead of paying a children's allowance the state pays these pennies? BUT I DO NOT SUPPORT THIS KIND OF BEHAVIOUR OF A MOTHER AND DO NOT CONSIDER IT EASY TO UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER IN A WAY IT IS POSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND HER"

"**Līdzjūtība**, 14 September, 22:12 (2007)

A woman who is forced to act this way in order to draw society's attention to the shocking fact of survival with 56 lats! Damn those people because of whom hundreds of mothers have to think how to survive in this country of unlimited arbitrariness..."

Just like in the publication of the magazine “Ieva”, forum participants are also trying to find an explanation and justification for Anastasija’s behaviour, searching for it in the psyche, economic and political factors, in the attitude of closest people or even in a misunderstanding.

#### Psychological factors

“**relakse**, 14 September, 21:38 (2007)

The girl was alone and perhaps it was postnatal depression that encouraged her to make such a step!”

“**Ja kas**, 15 September, 00:23 (2007)

That mother herself is still a child; it's not a surprise that in the moment of despair she does foolish things without realising potential consequences.”

#### Economic and political factors

“**jeiD**, 14 September, 17:33 (2007)

She just attracted society’s attention (though by wrong means), so that the narrow-minded people would finally open their eyes and understand that no way can a young woman survive with those ridiculous state benefits!!! The biggest blame here is in the state system and state attitude because demography must be increased but they do not want provide adequate support for new mothers. ;) (..) Who of you could normally bring up a child when you have no job and the coward, i.e. the husband or boyfriend has left you...??!!!! Depression would soon seize you...”

“**ManaGimene.lv**, 14 September, 16:20 (2007)

What is to blame and accuse here is the government and the state system, which has lead people to such life, although one cannot call it life.”

#### Misunderstanding

“**ezis**, 14 September, 16:50 (2007)

The mother must be exonerated from blame: selling a child via the Internet, this is not serious.”

“**krishulis**, 15 September, 01:35 (2007)

To my mind, there are two different things mixed up. I can also make a joke – a false announcement that I sell a person/child/black person/whatever [insert a title] and now somebody will sue me for this? For the fact that I placed an announcement!? She didn't sell any child, that's why this verdict is ridiculous. The form in which she tried to draw attention to herself has been misperceived by some individuals."

Attitude by her closest people and her own negative experience from childhood

"**Tukums**, 15 September, 00:24 (2007)

The girl has grown up in a family of alcoholics – practically in a hole! Then as a ray of light a guy appeared at the horizon giving hopes that finally she would be able to break away from this nightmare. But as already the majority of comment givers know from their experience, this guy just told the girl stories about the "big love" and what not! (..) So, a baby was born and practically she was alone in the whole world with her child having no actual support from the family court (you see, those ladies just come to CONTROL but cannot help in fact!), the state of Latvia does not need children either (oh yes, still they allot 56 Ls each month!), therefore at the craziest moment of despair the girl went and placed this announcement in the Internet (computer can be used for free in the library!)... Admirable vigilance was demonstrated by the police! (..) She could thank only her lawyer for support – it is unbelievable that the poor thing got such a GOOD lawyer! He was almost the only one who seemed to care for the girl's destiny and, of course, the court did too!"

"**Ru**, 14 September, 20:22 (2007)

*(..) It is important what family the girl comes from!"*

Although they do not support Anastasija's behaviour, many people still acknowledge that the woman has not been given a prison sentence, thus demonstrating their good faith that Anastasija has learned a certain lesson.

"**ievzs**, 14 September, 16:06 (2007)

I would like to hope that the child's mother has understood her mistake and grown better..., although I do not believe... I wish the child endurance!"

"**III**, 14 September, 16:05 (2007)

It is better that a child has a mother who is given a suspended sentence than a prison sentence; the mother is such as it is, maybe she will become reasonable at least a little. It would be a bigger trauma for the child if the mother was in prison; what does this little human being understand?"

Those who condemn Anastasija are rather indiscriminate in their statements; these comments are highly interesting to read as in them we can see the ethical and linguistic spectrum of opinions, which people express about a person/woman/mother who has not acted in conformance with the socially accepted conception about a performance corresponding to a gender or role, when they are anonymous and not specially censored.

Anastasija is called *bitch, wench, dam, gal, heartless person, fool, "mummy", stupid cow, this "woman", stupid yokel, "her head is not completely ok"*. These descriptions indicate the contemptuous attitude of authors of these comments (and at the same time part of society) not only towards the concrete person Anastasija, but also towards a woman and mother who has breached the unwritten roles. The "wrong" or socially unaccepted performance of a role for a certain performer costs him/her lower social evaluation and threatens with public punishment and even ostracism. Gender is related to the self of Anastasija, and "by analysing the self we go beyond the person (..) as he and his body is only a peg on which something made by joining forces will be hung for a moment. And the possibilities and means of creating the self cannot be searched in the peg; actually, they are often indissolubly connected with the social formation" (Goffman, 2001:195). Therefore Anastasija is not only a bad mother and bad woman, but a bad person in general.

**"Zinīte- MurreY**, 14 September, 18:38 (2007)

(..) what kind of woman is it who can do something like that!"

**"Sintija**, 14 September, 18:11 (2007)

Only such wenches who are ready to sell their child can blame the government and small benefits for all..."

Comment givers who strictly condemn Anastasija's behaviour, most probably with a view to emphasise their disdain to the woman, demonstrate contrast between disdainful comments about Anastasija and compassionate comments about the child. The contrast



between the heartless mother and the helpless child emphasises the immorality of the mother's behaviour.

“**Sintija**, 14 September, 18:11 (2007)

Really, I do not envy the little soul which is unfortunate to have such a mother... a heartless person.”

“**Zinīte-MurreY**, 14 September, 18:38 (2007)

(..) for such an act committed against a helpless living creature which is not able to defend itself one must be put in jail. One must take consequences of their behaviour.”

“**cats**, 14 September, 17:03 (2007)

I feel sorry for the little daughter, what kind of future awaits her...”

Two more significant players in the Internet portal forum are the prosecutor and the father of the child. The prosecutor, as we already know, insisted on real imprisonment and confiscation of property. She has appealed against the sentence. Part of those who wrote comments support the prosecutor.

“**Zinīte-MurreY**, 14 September, 18:38 (2007)

It's good that the prosecutor is persistent and doesn't agree with the court decision and will appeal against it (..)”

However, the most interesting is not the decision of the prosecutor but the fact that she is a woman. This fact is the one that comment givers use to express their critics to the decision of the prosecutor. For the sake of truth, it must be said that there are also comments which do not emphasise the prosecutor's gender when condemning both the prosecutor and the system in general:

“**Tā viš i**, 15 September, 07:54 (2007)

That prosecution really needs cleansing. They find a sentence in the Criminal Law about trafficking in human and all of a sudden file you in.”

“**Zhanis**, 14 September, 15:49 (2007)

Here we see this, Themidos' understanding of attempts to sell children. The court says one thing, the prosecutor says something completely different.”

However, some comments connect the prosecutor's evaluation of the behaviour with the fact that she is a woman. This is even more reinforced by a statement said by the prosecutor herself and included in the news. The newspaper “Neatkarīgā rīta avīze”, (15.09.2007) quotes the prosecutor:

““I still consider that the woman has committed a grave crime and she must bear the consequences of what she has done.” The prosecutor has expressed her opinion that as a woman she was extremely shattered by such case.”

It is remarkable that the prosecutor condemns the accused woman in person: as a woman the prosecutor wants to show to the other woman the responsibility of the latter. Some comments also compare two women –one who has violated not only the law, but also the framework of a mother's role, thus acting both legally and morally in a condemnable way, and the other– the prosecutor who not only fulfils her duties and social role as a “prosecutor”, but in this context also belongs to the sex category of women. Because “being a woman” is an aspect of any role, which cannot be dissociated (West and Zimmerman, 1997, Goffman, 2001), also in this case it prevails over the role of a “prosecutor”. Comment gives indirectly compare a woman with another woman and not an accused person with an accuser. They put legal nuances in brackets in order to evaluate the behaviour and personalities of two women. Those who condemn the prosecutor's behaviour, appeal both to the small child, which is featured in this court proceedings as an object, and to the other woman –Anastasija. Both persons may be harmed in case of the prosecutor's activity. This means that if the prosecutor insists on her claim, as a woman she will do harm to another woman and a child. Significantly, it is the prosecutor who as a woman is contrasted to the punished person –a woman– and, through the child, also to a mother.

“ZINĀTĀJS, 6 October, 12:47 (2007)

SUCH A PROSECUTOR NEEDS TO BE REMOVED HER WOMB, SO THAT, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, SHE DOESN'T GIVE BIRTH TO ANY CHILD OF HER OWN!”

“**Igia**, 5 October, 19:02 (2007)

But what does the prosecutor mean by confiscating property in this case? What property or riches did the accused Anastasija have if this entire nightmare occurred due to poverty and desolation? Prosecutor=woman???”

“**Prātnieks I**, 2 October, 20:52 (2007)

The prosecutor herself in my view is a bloody-minded, hardhearted person...”

“**Antons**, 15 September, 08:41 (2007)

*That stupid prosecutor herself must be put in the madhouse.”*

Another performer which comment gives ask rare questions about is the father. It must be taken into account that both the father and mother are equally responsible for the child just because they are in the same status. They both are creators of the child, and equally close related to the child by blood. However, just like in the publication of the magazine “Ieva”, the father of the child is only one of the participants involved, whose responsibility is to almost no extent problematised, and the forum, too, contains only a few comments which “as a voice in the wilderness” ask about the child’s father and remain unanswered. It seems that for the forum participants the father’s role and responsibility in this case do not seem critical at all, the father is not a problem, but he is included in the same list with “the state”, “prosecution”, “social benefits” or “family of alcoholics”. The father is only a “circumstance”, but not a subject of an act or even an equally responsible person in the criminal case. As in both forums there are altogether only eight comments directly or indirectly related to the child’s father, it is important to show the context of these comments.

Part of comment givers express contemptuous and disdainful opinions about the child’s father, thus indicating that he, too, has not performed the role of a father “correctly”.

“**Tukums**, 15 September, 00:24 (2007)

But the guy with a single wrinkle in the ass didn't get it that still, after fucking, children are born!”

“**deza**, 6 October, 00:07 (2007), to fab the dear papa will not be punished because (according to the press data) he had bought the big package of pampers for the little girl, so he did take care of her!!!.....”

“**Vepris**, 3 October, 01:02 (2007)

The papa needs to be beaten in the face.”

One comment indirectly condemns the father of the child, but in the context of the child's mother. The accused Anastasija is one of the “stupid cows” who is not able to choose a partner. That is, as a woman she has to take responsibility not only for the child but also for its father.

“**Real**, 14 September, 17:39 (2007) =>jeiD

And why should my taxes be spent on keeping such stupid cows who cannot even choose a normal, more or less trustful cad?...”

Another comment invokes father's responsibility in taking care of a child; however, the quotation implies that it is a woman's duty to choose a man who participates in taking care of a baby. A woman is the one who has to think why a child is needed at all.

“**x**, 14 September, 16:15 (2007)

It is parents who have to take care of a child, and not a mystical state, society or the bright future. And the father? If there is one? And if there's not, then one must think why the child was needed at all.”

And only three comments contain a conceptual question about a father's role, his involvement in creation of a baby and responsibility for it. Only three comments make it a problem the society's attitude to a woman and a man, the equality and equal responsibility of a mother and a father with regard to their own child.

“**Ja kas**, 15 September, 00:23 (2007)

But the most important thing: can the FATHER of the child in this country watch this so calm and there is no responsibility demonstrated by him for the birth of the child nor its subsistence and education? Why is it the woman

who is always guilty in the end, but this fucker, who made the child, can flee away in the far blue distance and get nothing for it?..."

“**relakse**, 14 September, 21:38 (2007)

Why is there no-one asking where the child's father is?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?! (..) Where were the child's mother and father and, of course, where was the state???"

“**fab**, 2 October, 16:58 (2007)

And why will the dear papa, who permits all this, not be punished, eh? Did the woman get the baby out of the blue?"

### **Anastasija as a Stranger**

There is another aspect which is very interesting in the story about Anastasija. It is the allusion of the story *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger*, or *The Outsider*) by Albert Camus. The story tells about a man named Meursault, who kills a stranger on the beach. Meursault is tried in a court; however, during proceedings the prosecutor and the lawyer emphasise behaviour of Meursault in another life situation, besides the committed crime. Namely, the man's behaviour at his mother's funeral. What they evaluate during the trial is his behaviour at his mother's funeral or, to be more precise, the incompliance of his behaviour to a default but apparently very strict and imperative conception of behaviour in this case.

“Dear jury, on the second day after his mother's death this man was swimming with a woman, involved in indecent relationship with her, and went to a comedy movie to have some laugh. I have nothing else to tell you.” (Camus 1989:61)

His as if apathetic attitude which the accusers see by judging from external expressions, reinforces the severity of the offence, until at some point the character of the story realises that he is no more judged for the crime but for his behaviour at his mother's funeral.

“[The concierge] told that I had not wanted to look at my mother, I had smoked, and next to her coffin I had fallen asleep and drunk coffee with milk.

Then I felt that the whole room had filled with indignation and for the first time I realised I was guilty.” (Camus, 1989:58)

It is similar to Anastasija's case too. In her “letters” published by the magazine “Ieva” Anastasija writes:

“The news broadcasts said my apathetic facial expression did not demonstrate that I regretted what I had done.”

The same is considered in a comment of the portal forum:

“**Zinīte- MurreY**, 14 September, 18:38 (2007)

Well, she doesn't love and won't love that child, she is pretending now, even in the court; I was watching TV news, where she was sitting, smiling, and having fun!”

“We often expect consistency between appearance and behaviour (...)” (Goffman 2001:30), and behaviour like a stimulus warns us about the role of their interaction, which the performer should be playing in the oncoming situation. We expect certain behaviour from the one who we are assessing morally. ““Do” gender is not always to live up to normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity; it is to engage in behaviour *at the risk of gender assessment*” (West and Zimmerman, 1987:136). Gender is “a powerful ideological device which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choice and limits that are predicated on sex category”. (West and Zimmerman, 1987:147) Just like Meursault, who had to refuse from drinking coffee “next to the coffin of his mother, who had given him life” (Camus, 1989:58) in order to hold the role at least to a certain degree, Anastasija also had to at least look shocked, had to cry or maybe cast down her eyes, and by all means she had to demonstrate her regret, blame, fear clearly and unmistakably, which could rehabilitate her for the role of a mother in the eyes of society.

The fact that a person has violated an invisible but tabooed border in performance of a social role becomes a more serious offence for the whole society than physical violence against a person's life by murdering this person. In other words, “acting out of a role” is socially more dangerous and therefore more punishable

behaviour than murder. If a person does not perform his or her role in a socially acceptable way, he or she is already dangerous and has marked himself/herself as a potential criminal.

“I am sure, my lords, – he [the prosecutor] added raising the voice – that you will not consider it too daring for me to say that the man who is now sitting in the dock is also guilty of the murder which we will be hearing tomorrow.” (Camus, 1989:66)

“**to cats**, 14 September, 17:06 (2007)

Well, what kind of future can there be; when the child grows older, she will try to sell her daughter to a brothel. No way can the child be left with such a mother, no way.”

“**mele**, 14 September, 20:18 (2007)

Admirably... and the child was given back... Maybe later, when everything settles, she can get more money...”

### **For discussion**

Anastasija is a person which is legally found an offender. In the foreground of the society’s everyday life stage<sup>10</sup> she is, even more, a criminal because she has breached the borders of her social role of a mother and has not acted in compliance with the conception of a “decent” woman. Irrespective of the court decision, the society has sentenced her. In the beginning, by marking her as an in compliant, “improper” woman and mother, then searching for justifications of her behaviour in various factors, including her intelligence, so that it would be possible to accept (or at least endure) both her behaviour and herself as a person. And eventually, by jointly constructing the story, which would allow the society to get on with the deviance and allow getting over xenophobia towards an individual whose spontaneous behaviour is a threat to the foundations of moral convictions of society itself. If the woman Anastasija has “acted

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<sup>10</sup> E. Goffman refers to “foreground” meaning “the part of an individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed way to define the situation for those who are watching the performance” (Goffman, 2001:29).

out of the role” or arbitrarily “stepped out of the role”, then for the sake of society’s health and security, by joint efforts this person must be got back to the conventionally established normality. Therefore members of society are interested in controlling and supervising one another, so that all together they would form a “normal society”.<sup>11</sup> “An individual (..), by stating directly or indirectly that he/she is a person of a certain type, automatically imposes moral requirements to others, making them to treat and evaluate him/her in a way that such type of persons have right to expect” (Goffman, 2001:21). Also Anastasija herself has realised her “mistake” of not so much selling the child, but of destroying the accepted order of things, performance of habitual and accepted roles, which would let others treat her with respect. She punishes herself morally and from now on she will most probably be “the ideal prisoner”.<sup>12</sup>

“I know that nothing from what has happened will ever repeat again! I want to prove to others and mostly to myself that I can be a good mother. I know the time will come when I will tell Daniela about what had happened. I would like to hope that she will be able to understand and forgive me.” (“Ieva” 03.10.2007)

In the end, I would like to quote a fragment from the abovementioned story by Camus, which could just as well be a fragment from the story of Anastasija, and may this be ironic as it is, but to a certain extent it reflects another attempt of writing femininity.

“I can tell that both the indictment speech and my lawyer’s speech for the defence said much about me, and maybe more about me than my crime. (..) In a way I got an impression that my case was considered without me. Everything went on without my intervention. My destiny was getting settled (..)” (Camus, 1989:63)

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<sup>11</sup> In the sense of a concept used by Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984).

<sup>12</sup> In the sense of the notion used by Bruno Bettelheim (1903 -1990).



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