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C. Akça Ataç

Introduction: Truth, Truth-Telling and Gender

- 1 The American presidential election of 2016 almost contributed a woman president to the global women's movement, feminism activists, women's rights networks and the agents of political feminism all around the world. Hillary Clinton, though her capacity to represent feminism is not unquestionable, came forward as the first woman presidential candidate of a major party and pursued a feminist- and LGBT-friendly campaign. In that sense, she was a great hope for the future of feminist politics in terms of women's participation in electoral politics –particularly officeholding. A woman president governing one of the hegemonic powers of the international system such as the United States (US) was a historic chance for women's attempts at claiming politics. To incorporate the neglected experiences and discourses of women into the mainstream practices of high and low politics by a feminist American president would have repercussions not only for the US, but the rest of the world as well. Low politics, which are the issue areas not inevitable for the survival of the state, are more open to the women's participation. High politics with issue areas such as foreign policy and security are more directly related to the survival of the state and generally exclude women, their discourse and values from the policy-making procedures. A woman president would have integrated both the high and the low politics in the way to make feminism influential even, or especially, in matters of survival.
- 2 Nevertheless, Hillary Clinton's rather vague, ironic, implicit and sometimes misleading responses to the questions for which she was urged by the public to tell the truth dominated her presidential campaign and created an air of "mistrust"¹ among the voters. Particularly, during the FBI interrogation about her emails as Secretary of State, her negative image reached a peak of historic unpopularity. Her "self-knowledge, steadiness, and composure" -attributes she is famous for- could not prevent her loss of

the election, as her opponents' accusations of her being a liar did not cease until the election day. The 'Hillary' experience in that sense demonstrates the integral necessity of truth and truth-telling in political feminism in terms of elections, voting and officeholding; and therefore, encourages us to revisit the feminist standpoint theory in our assessment of what happened.

- 3 This paper seeks to examine Hillary Clinton's political career, especially the 2016 presidential campaign, from the perspective of her attitude towards truth and her practices of truth-telling. Before doing that, however, it will dwell on the politics of truth-telling within a historical context with particular reference to the feminist standpoint. From time immemorial, women as the first victims of knowledge withheld by the privileged ownership of the patriarchal authority have not ceased their pursuit of truth. To fight against women's deprivation and exclusion, the feminist standpoint theory, in the 1980s, advocated for "a conceptual trinity of experience, reality and truth" through which knowledge with transformative power could be produced. Despite the later essentialist criticisms that it has received, the standpoint theory's early version provides us today with the opportunity to empower women against patriarchal mendacity, maybe even more than before. Although the anti-essentialist approach has opposed to the use of 'women' as a category of analysis on the grounds that it was dismissive and inadequate, it might be the time to reconstruct this term once again to create a common ground for the fight against patriarchy.
- 4 Historically, politically, and socially men have been the producers, distributors, and sellers of knowledge. Women, by contrast, have been hurt by the use of this knowledge –be it by an inaccessibility to it, its manipulation, or its distortion to a lie. Since the onset of the feminist standpoint theory, how the male control of knowledge had been a predominant reason for women's insurmountable subordination has been emphasized.² Within this context, "knowledge is power" has been a dictum, which reveals that knowledge in circulation is a social construct, reinvented "in accordance with norms of authoritativeness; thus it both embodies and furthers the values and interests of the powerful."³ The powerful by default have been men and knowledge in their hands has been reconfigured to support and perpetuate their exclusive authority. Nevertheless, in the cases in which authority tends to be progressively more authoritarian, the lack or distortion of knowledge begins to hurt men as much as women.
- 5 From Metis to Wonder Woman, heroines in mythology and fiction have stood up against patriarchal hegemony over knowledge. And yet there are many real women whom these legendary figures have inspired and empowered. Against the regimes harboring lies in the public sphere similar to those of the authoritarian governments of the Second World War, the struggle for truth and knowledge grows out of the context of women's emancipation and becomes a matter of humanity and human dignity. Under such circumstances, women's historical existential expertise, gained as a consequence of their painful struggle to be rightful and "rational knowers,"⁴ could contribute to the entire society's elevation to freedom from oppression and lawlessness. Such an approach would not only contribute to political feminism, but also to "contemporary scientific, philosophic, and political discussions more generally."⁵ It is not a coincidence that truth-telling gained acceptance as an essential practice in the progress of second-wave feminism, as it grew under the shadow of a colossal governmental lie, Watergate.⁶

- 6 Women, freeing themselves from the patriarch's accusations of wrong-doing and practicing truth-telling to unearth experiences, feelings, and of course the knowledge that were hidden from them by the agents of patriarchy, have gained a natural epistemological position against governmental lies. President Nixon's lie, which was unprecedented in US history, spilt over the public sphere with traumatic impact on the American people's firm belief in the constitution and civil rights. At that time female thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and Sissela Bok had reacted to the matter publicly. The American presidential election of 2016 also deserves particular attention in this context, because for the first time in history a female candidate from a major party has run for presidency, but while fulfilling the political feminism's greatest dream, in the meantime she has had to confront the claims that she herself promoted a lie. The long-anticipated emergence of a female president in the American political scene to fight against the lies of male authorities, as does the original 1940s version of Wonder Woman, has thus been overshadowed by accusations of lying and dishonesty.
- 7 When the feminist standpoint theory first emerged in the early 1980s, it challenged the established historical parameters on what was considered universal about truth, knowledge, and epistemology, partaking of the spirit of the time, which was the postmodernist critical interrogation of everything past and present. The all-male "true" reality" was deconstructed by theorists such as Nancy Hartstock, Sandra Harding, and Dorothy Smith later to reveal the "relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power."⁷ In the end, the truth expected to be attained, even if it is a women-only approach, could emerge as a concrete contribution to the universal epistemology of the human condition. This pre-supposition considered women's standpoint privileged, because their primordial struggle against oppression throughout centuries had bestowed on them the experience that would help men as well on their occasional fight against the suppressive patriarchal authority and the ideologically manipulated knowledge that it spreads. The "partial and perverse perspective"⁸ of the hegemonic ideology offered as true knowledge victimizes the entirety of a particular society.
- 8 Despite Susan Hekman's criticism of the feminist standpoint as ignoring many different female standpoints by using the term '*the* standpoint,' and for producing a counter-hegemonic discourse only to become the new claimants to universality,⁹ this paper chooses the 1980s version of the feminist standpoint theory to approach the problematic of women and lie as a vital concern for humanity. The feminist standpoint theory has most insistently elaborated on how "the male supremacy and the production of knowledge" are interrelated, and how it could still help venture into a "knowledge that is more useful for enabling women to improve the conditions of our lives."¹⁰ To that end I consider appropriate the focus on the historical, political, and philosophical aspects of the grand narrative of gender and authority from the feminist standpoint.
- 9 It is true that women's similar experiences in varying political, economic, and social contexts produce differing epistemologies and the feminist standpoint theory has revised itself by taking such differences and relevant criticism into account.¹¹ The existence of differing standpoints, however, does not exclude the possibility of a common feminist interest in topics such as the detrimental power of a patriarchal lie. It is a context where "there is a generalizable, identifiable, and collectively shared experience of womanhood."¹² Martha Nussbaum's call for the re-emphasis on the

notion of one common humanity¹³, which would provide a firm unshaken ground for the ethics and feminist theory to build on, has become a significant attempt toward possible universality after much debate on differences and multitude. The feminist standpoint theory's criticism of the historical and structural relations between "the production of knowledge and practices of power"¹⁴ similarly offers my research the theoretical background required to pin down a singular women's attitude towards political lies intended to harm women's human and citizenship capacities. The assessment of the 'Hillary' experience from that perspective would contribute to the accumulative knowledge that women collect as they proceed along history's path.

A Historical Overview: From Metis to Wonder Woman

- 10 Women's perspective of the world and the universal has been absent from the discussions of world order, which recount "a merely partial story of the world as told by men to know."¹⁵ In mythological narrative, the disappearance of women from the realm of knowledge can be traced back to Zeus's swallowing his wife Metis, who was in possession of a special type of knowledge that appeared difficult for Zeus to control. The myth of Metis, in effect, is a very apt context to understand the primordial tension between "the dominant world view and alternative, 'other' epistemologies." Metis's knowledge, which was confiscated by the patriarchal authority, consists of wisdom, perception, intuition, human emancipation, trickery, and potential for change. Such a promise for transformation and progress manifested itself as "chaotic and threatening to the patriarchal mindset."¹⁶ Philosophers such as Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell argue that unless "men remove this fear [of Metis] from their psyches, women will continue to be victimized."¹⁷
- 11 With the aim of controlling all pieces of information and all sorts of knowledge to secure its supremacy, first against women then against all opponents, the patriarchal mindset removed *metis* from mainstream epistemology and created *arcana imperii*, the state's secrets as one of the most influential concepts of male human authority in controlling the flow of knowledge. The disappearance of *metis* and the silencing authority of *arcana imperii* have become the mytho-historical beginning of the quest for knowing by the repressed. The lies told and secrets kept by the patriarchal authorities profoundly interfere with the nature, sources and limits of knowledge in the public sphere. The notion of *arcana imperii* has justified such interference and, in its most extreme uses, reduces men together with women to the status of "failing to be knowers."¹⁸ One of the notorious examples of the sort is Leo Strauss's *The City and Man* (1964) in which, though inferior to noble truth, the author embraces the idea of the noble lie as a noble necessity. The rise of neo-conservatism during the Bush administration and the 'big lie' about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq owed much to this Straussian Machiavellism (or Straussian realism) for its theoretical justification.
- 12 As a recent contribution to the grand narrative of women in pursuit of truth and truth-telling, historian Jill Lepore has discovered a missing link between the first wave feminism and truth-chasing, which, interestingly enough, is the comic book character Wonder Woman. In her book, which is praised by Cynthia Enloe as "a meticulous and fascinating account of the invention of Wonder Woman,"¹⁹ Lepore argues that the birth control pioneer and the founder of Planned Parenthood, Margaret Sanger may have

inspired the creation of this most famous fictional "goddess of truth."²⁰ Olive Byrne, the niece of Sanger, was the girlfriend of the Harvard-trained psychologist William Moulton Marston, who is best known as the author of *Wonder Woman* under the pseudonym Charles Moulton. Wonder Woman, whose super power is to make liars tell the truth, first appeared in 1941 when there was a public need for a new fictional inspiration in the fight against evil during the Second World War. As the standpoint theory suggests, women's empowerment depends on "a distinctive kind of knowledge," which could only be acquired and used, in Harding's words, "through political processes."²¹ Although Wonder Woman was a fictitious character to acquire such specific knowledge of empowerment enshrined by the truth, the female readers expected her contours to have reflected on the real political processes in the much awaited image of the first female president of the US in the coming years.

- 13 Wonder Woman's creator Marston was also a prominent member of the team who discovered the Lie Detector while working on the physical symptoms of deception as an undergraduate in 1915.²² Throughout his lab work on deception, truth and gender, he arrived at the conclusion that women were naturally endowed with greater power in the fight against lie in public space. If fighting against deception is an integral part of the struggle for freedom, women, as the first wave movement might show, possessed the progressive discipline that is required to break "the bonds of those who are slaves to evil masters."²³ Superman (1938) and Batman (1939) before her could not stop the war but, as the Wonder Woman theme song sings, "Now the world is ready for you, And the wonders you can do, Make a hawk a dove, Stop a war with love, Make a liar tell the truth." One of the most evil enemies of Wonder Woman is the Duke of Deceptions who owns an advertising agency called the Lie Factory, the business of which is merely to produce "plots, deceptions, false propaganda, fake publicity and personality camouflage."²⁴ Wonder Woman's epic fight against male deception made her, as Lepore beautifully puts it, a "Progressive Era feminist charged with fighting evil, intolerance, destruction, injustice, suffering and even sorrow on behalf of democracy, freedom, justice and equal rights for women."²⁵ Her legacy was greatly treasured by the second-wave feminists in the United States, namely by Gloria Steinem. The first issue of her magazine *Ms.* appeared in 1972 with Wonder Woman on its cover, calling on her to run for president.
- 14 Quest for truth emerges particularly in times of uncertainty and deception in the public space, as it is the moral way to attach responsibility to the wrong-doer.²⁶ Wonder Woman was a character of absolute ideals, certainty and solid-proof convictions during the troublesome and painful days of the Second World War, when nothing represented the truth.²⁷ All male authorities' prolonged, destructive war over patriarchal supremacy, in Marston's eyes, had proven the crucial requisite for women's participation in ending the deception and exhibiting the big lie preventing access to truth. Wonder Woman, in that sense, overcame the perennial imposition on women to fulfill themselves "through the development of a man" by claiming the right to "self-development"²⁸ and criticizing men. It must not be surprising to see all emancipating practices of women to appear first "in myth and fable"²⁹ and then in real life. The first woman to challenge patriarchy with truth was Metis; the first women to stand against men's thirst for war were those in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*; the first woman to risk her life in the pursuit of truth was Wonder Woman. Their standpoints have resonated in real life and become the realities of real women. The revival of the Wonder Woman's visibility during Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, in that sense, could not be

mere coincidence, since Wonder Woman has been *the* comic book heroine associated most with women's empowerment in the US politics. How Senator Elizabeth Warren expressed her wish to have Wonder Woman's lasso of truth in her speech at Harvard University on 8 April 2016 testifies to this connection.³⁰

- 15 If a regime of freedom could be achieved only through the "interior practices of 'self-knowledge, self-interrogation and the liberation of an inner truth,'"³¹ as the standpoint theory suggests, women would have the upper hand because of their centuries-long struggle against the systematically disadvantaged situations in life. Among their most hurtful experiences, lack of knowledge or the prevention of their access to knowledge has been the most predominant. Throughout the historical process in which women have fought for the rediscovery of the feminine principles, "ignorance masked as knowledge"³² has been proven to be the worst form of deception for them. Generation after generation, women have strived to retrieve the insight they lost due to deprivation of truth and knowledge. Within this context, as the second wave feminism emerged as a political movement in the second half of the 1960s, women who had been "the object of the inquiries of their actual or would-be-rulers,"³³ prepared to reverse this role to become the inquirers of those authorities as well as of their own lives. Before assessing Hillary Clinton's presidential bid from the perspective of truth and truth-telling, it is necessary to continue with this focus on the second waves' struggle with political lies, as the first ethical definition of a lie emerged in the 1970s during the Watergate.

Watergate and Sissela Bok's Definition of A Lie

- 16 Following the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement and Watergate, the beginning of the 1970s and second wave feminism coincided with the US government's particularly enhanced attempt at concealing the truth and withholding information from the public. Since the invention of *arcana imperii*, all matters, directly related or not, when categorized under national security have fallen out of reach of the public scrutiny.³⁴ If the truth is "how things are," then the extreme and frequent reference to national security by the governmental authorities serves to create an atmosphere of 'how things are not,' which is fundamentally detrimental to people's capacity to make the right decisions affecting their own lives. Most of the time the person for whom the lie is intended "has a right to know the truth."³⁵ History has taught us that such suggestion is valid for the relation between the government and public; on the issues that the government lie, public generally has the right to know. The political atmosphere in which the American second wave feminism gained momentum was significantly conflictual because of the successive lies of the presidents under the pretext of national security. Although the feminist movement has always been troubled by the risk of overgeneralizing all women's issues by ignoring the differences of race, class and geography, among these issues there exist some categories of analysis, which allow "to generalize about many aspects of inequality."³⁶ Pursuing the truth must be considered as one of them. Standing against the patriarchy's lies women were likely to demonstrate a stance that, in Harding's words, could "transform a source of oppression into a source of knowledge and potential liberation."³⁷
- 17 A real life wonder woman, Sissela Bok, came forward against this background of the Pentagon Papers and Watergate to define philosophically and ethically what a

government lie was as well as to show the ways to remain unharmed by such a lie. When the Pentagon Papers leaked to the New York Times in 1971, the American public was outraged by the fact that the US government had purposely exaggerated the security threat to justify intervention in Vietnam. The US Defense Department's seven-thousand-page dossier of the history of Vietnam decision-making during the administrations of Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson was more than enough to reveal a government intrigue.³⁸ Hannah Arendt wrote her renowned essay, 'Lying in Politics,' to dissect and analyze this major public crisis of trust by elaborating on the concept of the modern lie harbored by governments with immense destructive power.³⁹

- 18 The subsequent outbreak of the Watergate Scandal proved that lying was no longer an *arcana imperii* type of exception, but became acute and structural in American high politics. Those were the times of the twentieth century defined rather generically in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* as follows:

Never has our future been more unpredictable, never have we depended so much on political forces that cannot be trusted to follow the rules of commonsense and self interest –forces that look like sheer insanity, if judged by the standards of other centuries.⁴⁰

- 19 Whenever "the distinction between fact and fiction" and "the distinction between true and false"⁴¹ continuously blur in the hands of governments, the human need to detect a lie becomes urgently vital. A governmental lie with an overspread outreach would distort the past of its people and destroy the reality of today by "replacing it with an entirely fabricated alternative," which would soon become the new reality.⁴²

- 20 The famous second-wave feminist Betty Friedan had criticized Gloria Steinem's promotion of Wonder Woman in *Ms.* in July 1972 on the grounds that women did not need to be super women to be feminists.⁴³ Yet, it took a woman to defy the male epistemology's unproblematic historical relation with the necessary lies of governments under the pretext of national security and public benefit. Sissela Bok, daughter of two-times Nobel Prize winner feminist Alva Myrdal, approached Richard Nixon's 'big' public lie, which would later be known as the Watergate Scandal in a manner reminiscent of the clash between Wonder Woman and Duke of Deceptions. The "shabby deceits of Watergate," in Bok's words, were purposely fabricated by the Republican government through "the fake telegrams, the erased tapes, the elaborate cover-ups, the bribing of witnesses to make them lie, the televised pleas for trust"⁴⁴ to manipulate the adverse public opinion and legal opposition. When President Nixon, who retrospectively came to be called the "wizard of the dark arts,"⁴⁵ spectacularly denied that all those acts were actually within his knowledge, the emerging political crisis resulted in the American society's collective questioning of the virtue of truth telling.⁴⁶ Bok began by defining what a lie was. To her surprise, she saw that the *Index of the 1967 Encyclopedia of Philosophy* did not provide a definition for "lying or deception," but instead a catalogue search with the keyword "truth" hit "over 100 references."⁴⁷

- 21 Nixon's secret tapings of 3432 hours during his presidency between February 16, 1971 and July 12, 1973 constitute one of the most significant abuses of power in American history. One of the tapes openly proves the US President's order of the Brookings Institute break-in. ⁴⁸In the face of a political scandal of such range, Bok alone, as a moral philosopher, chose to respond to the crisis by "confronting urgent practical moral choices."⁴⁹ After the Vietnam War and Watergate, society had lost its sense of

truth, truthfulness, lie and deception and Bok conducted "an ethical conversation"⁵⁰ with herself to offer her standpoint as well as practical solutions to this confusion and disillusion. The restoration of trust in the private and public spaces bore utmost importance to her on the grounds that "[w]hatever matters to human beings, trust is the atmosphere in which it thrives."⁵¹ A lie is "an intentionally deceptive message in the form of a statement"⁵² with an ultimate consequence of destroying the habitat of human development. Human development fails when "individual choice and survival" is "imperiled," such as when a government statement that is intended to be a lie is transmitted. The society "whose members were unable to distinguish truthful messages from deceptive one, would collapse."⁵³ These are the reasons why, according to Bok, "a respect for veracity" must be observed in both "our personal choices" and "the social decisions."⁵⁴

- 22 Deception through lie is a coercive act, because it gives power to the deceiver who could not have acquired such power democratically in the absence of that lie. Deceit and lying, therefore, are "deliberate assaults on human beings."⁵⁵ Generally, the governments' excuse for a deliberately deceiving statement would be the necessity of averting an immediate crisis and acting in the public interest. Nevertheless, Bok in her book demonstrates how "lies in times of crisis can expand into vast practices," how the crisis to be averted becomes "less and less immediate" and how, in the end, those lies are followed by even more cover-up lies told for "increasingly dubious purposes to the detriment of all."⁵⁶ Again as a general political rule, leaders who are accustomed to deceive the public intentionally first under the pretext of national security, then of anything that falls into the category of crisis, become less and less sensitive to "fairness and veracity."⁵⁷ They steal "the moral autonomy and the right to choose of the voter."⁵⁸ Democracy could only function as long as the governments "promote the general welfare," which could only happen when "the public has accurate information about the policy matters."⁵⁹
- 23 With her book *Lying*, Sissela Bok stood against the rationalization and normalization of Watergate by the patriarchal keepers of knowledge; such was also the case with the Bush administration, Iraq and Leo Strauss.⁶⁰ Yet, she also challenged philosophically the male epistemology, which accepts the urgent and necessary government secrets and lies as an undisputed norm since Plato.⁶¹ Bok's moral philosophy of truth and truthfulness has paved the way for the coming generations of politics, both theoretically and practically, and helped them venture into uncharted territories such as a more "democratic conception of national security,"⁶² "broader public interest in disclosure,"⁶³ "transparency" and "openness,"⁶⁴ and "withholding information," "concealing information" and "half truths."⁶⁵ Because of Bok's argument that the lying politician usurps "the moral autonomy and the right to choose" of the citizen, the acts of a lying politician, at least philosophically, have come to be seen as acts of violence..⁶⁶ Bok was also among the first scholars who provided a legal and theoretical definition for "whistleblowing," as a "new label generated by our increased awareness of the ethical conflicts at work."⁶⁷
- 24 The polls measuring American public's reaction to the Watergate Scandal did not reflect the same immediate response that Bok puts forward as the ethical normative standard. In 1973, fifty-three percent of the Americans who had heard of Watergate considered the affair "just politics," whereas only thirty-one percent called it "a very serious matter." The Harris and Gallup polls conducted from the outbreak of the

scandal to Nixon's resignation, for example, demonstrated "how slowly and reluctantly" Americans came to terms with the situation.⁶⁸ In this case, too, the political practice fell short of the theory and philosophy. Bok's definition of a lie, however, has transcended its own time when she complained that lying and deception "have received extraordinarily little contemporary analysis."⁶⁹ According to her, if one intends his/her statement to mislead, then it is a lie.⁷⁰ This definition is still honored today as the most apt, simple and neutral reference. By the same token, politicians' "telling untruths for what they regard as a much 'higher' truth"⁷¹ is a political lie.

- 25 Bok's feminism may not have been as overt a version of this perspective as that of the second wave muses –even found as "unfeminist"⁷² when compared to her mother– but has inspired and guided the female standpoint especially within the context of moral philosophy. Establishing trust by truth-telling was a subject, deliberately or not, ignored by the moral philosophers throughout history. Among the followers of this creed, who were "minimally influenced by women" with the exception of Hume, Hegel and J.S. Mill, Bok is the first philosopher to tackle the issue most directly against the background of a 'big' patriarchal lie.⁷³ Her influence on the coming generations of feminist study in Ethics is highly visible.⁷⁴ She has encouraged women to become conscious of their standpoints and thus to interrupt moral philosophy, one of the perennial streams of patriarchy. Bok's works have also provided the theoretical foundation for the "transnational women's movements for peace and social justice."⁷⁵
- 26 Bok's moral philosophy offers four concrete norms to be observed at all times by all democratic governments. These are "truth-telling and non-deceptiveness, promise-keeping, constraints on violence and limits on secrecy."⁷⁶ These are not "culturally relative;"⁷⁷ on the contrary, they are the most necessary conditions for any standpoint to survive and offer an alternative order of things without the manipulation of the knowledge in the hands of the patriarchal hierarchies. The feminist standpoint, too, above all relies on the unraveling of the relation between power and knowledge.⁷⁸ The dismantling of such complex and secretive interdependence requires a defining event in history such as Watergate and an incessant political struggle to follow. Women's political struggle against secrecy would eventually enhance their "resistance to the irrational and the pathological," which has been historically presented as the norm and the moral by the governments.⁷⁹ A female US president, a real-life Wonder Woman, could be the highlight of this political process aiming at truth, knowledge, justice, and women's standpoints to produce a more accurate account of life and being alive.

Wonder Woman for President? Clinton's Presidential Bid

- 27 In 2016, the United Nations (UN) announced Wonder Woman to be its ambassador for the gender equality goals of 2030, whereas Hollywood heralded the shooting of an all-female-cast movie of Wonder Woman for the coming year. It should not be a mere coincidence that the return of Wonder Woman from *Themyscira* to empower girls and women in our contemporary world preceded the 2016 US presidential elections in which, for the first time in history, a woman became the candidate of a major party. Nevertheless, that moment of a possible victory for women's hard struggle for gaining maximum influence and visibility to challenge patriarchal politics has gone quickly, as the UN withdrew the Wonder Woman campaign because of a petition of 45,000

signatures protesting the inappropriateness of "[a] large-breasted white woman of impossible proportions"⁸⁰ such as the 1960s Wonder Woman to become a UN spokeswoman; the movie fell short of the Wonder Woman fans' expectations of spreading real "feminist inspiration" other than "busting balls,"⁸¹ and, of course, Hillary Clinton lost the election to Donald Trump.

- 28 The 1960s depictions of Wonder Woman have evidently distorted Marston's philosophy of women's emancipation through truth and created a perception completely divorced from the original heroine. Nor did Hillary Clinton's ambivalent attitude towards truth and truth-telling support the second wave's analogy between Wonder Woman and the first female president. Particularly, the email controversy involving an FBI interrogation irretrievably damaged Clinton's campaign as it severely damaged public perception of her trustworthiness. On that account, the first time the women's rights movement would be blessed with the combination of a superhero, a woman president, and the feminist standpoint to disrupt the interwoven politics of patriarchy, secrecy, and deception, has also failed. Although Clinton does not overtly identify with the feminist movement and one "could vote against her without voting against feminism," her loss would mark a colossal setback for the future of the women's movement.⁸² In a world where the feminist politics is already being treated as "irrelevant, unnecessary or passé" and the high politics, especially foreign policy, with the exception of Sweden and perhaps Canada, globally tends to adopt "postfeminist discourses" with the aim of "undermining material feminist politics,"⁸³ the feminine future is drifting away from the current generations to a too distant point to be grabbed in their lifetimes. The 2016 US election marks a significant backlash in the promotion of feminist ideals and practices in politics.
- 29 Hillary Clinton, evidently, may not be the most appropriate candidate to represent political feminism. The facts that she was "subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury; and previously, her open involvement in her husband's campaigns as well as her public policy influence during his [her husband's] terms as Arkansas Governor and United States President"⁸⁴ caused her to suffer eternal image problems. Her attitude of denying any misconduct in the ethically difficult incidents such as Whitewater and the health-care plan or her resistance to apologize for offending women in charge of traditional home-making, as in the cases of "Stand by Your Man" or "Baking Cookies and Hosting Teas" earned her the incorrigible nickname "the Hillary Factor."⁸⁵ Nevertheless, despite the occasional lowest levels of likeability and trustworthiness reflected by the public opinion, Clinton, as the "former first lady-turned-senator-turned presidential candidate"⁸⁶ has reinvented herself each time she was accused of being inauthentic, controversial, inappropriate, too progressive, too masculine, too feminist and so on. Her extraordinary capacity to persist has made her the first woman to pursue a presidential campaign, which is unprecedented in American women's rights history.
- 30 Hillary Clinton, though not directly involved in the second wave moment, was definitely a child of the political transformation of the time. Upon her graduation from Yale Law School, she first worked for *Children's Defense Fund* in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and then joined the team advising the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives on Nixon's impeachment subsequent to the Watergate Scandal.⁸⁷ One of her opinion pieces from 1974 would later be blamed for promoting radical feminism by the Republican Patrick Buchanan on the grounds of its defending "the ability of children to sue their parents."⁸⁸ Clinton's appearance on the political scene as

First Lady took place in 1992, which was the UN's Year of the Woman. Her contribution to the 1995 Fourth World Congress on Women in Beijing with the words "Human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights" became a monumental moment in the history of women's rights.⁸⁹ Hillary Clinton would, twenty years later, announce that her 2016 candidacy was intended to finally launch the 12-part plan for women's empowerment she had proposed in Beijing.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, she is also known to have voted for the Patriot Act in 2001, the authorization of the Iraq War in 2002, and the Wall Street bailout in 2008; none was compatible with the ethical feminist standpoint. It would take her thirteen years to admit that her Iraq vote as a senator was a mistake.⁹¹

- 31 When compared to the patriarchal one, feminist politics is still a fresh vocation lacking the millennia-old experiences, established practices, and globally uniformed claims on policy-making. It has its struggles, contradictions, and failures, but each time the agents of feminist politics, such as the current Swedish government, surmount a difficult, dilemmatic decision, they create precedence by charting the uncharted waters and provide experience for the coming generations of feminists. Those experiences, as the feminist standpoint theory promoted in the 1990s, would be "summoned by what women can find they have in common" and could be "translated into the universalizing discourse of a movement making political claims across a variety of fronts."⁹² Hillary Clinton's experiences, in that sense, both straightforward and complicated, have been real enough to shed light on the making of the feminist future. As it is one of the main arguments of the feminist standpoint, experiences generate knowledge for the present and coming generations. Even though Clinton has suffered from her own contradictions, ambivalence and sloppiness while reinventing herself in high politics, to many, who has followed her throughout this process, her "most authentic moments" were considered to be "her feminist commitments."⁹³ Authenticity does not necessarily entail perfection; it sometimes requires humane attributes such as the cognitive flexibility that would allow one to reposition herself within a changing context.
- 32 Foreign policy is one of the areas in which the feminist standpoint finds it hard to influence. The complex nature of foreign policymaking involves various forms of coalitions, bargaining, behavioral patterns and action preferences, all of which significantly influence or constrain the decision-maker. The secretary of state, despite being the most prominent actor in the US foreign policymaking, is subject to these factors and so was Hillary Clinton. Her intention to shape the state's agenda of foreign policy could be traced back to 1995, when, as First Lady, she launched a world tour to promote human, as well as women's rights, consequent to Beijing.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, her controversial visit to the Middle East, especially her hug-in-tears with Suha Arafat on the West Bank, forced her to tone down.⁹⁵ Her capacity to exercise her personal influence on the American foreign policy as the Secretary of State was not significantly expanded either. Although her initial position during the Libya crisis was non-intervention, her negotiations with the Arab League, G8, UN Security Council – particularly Russia-, and the US allies convinced her to intervene, because the possibility to be in solidarity with the Arab world and Moscow gained priority within the context of global peace over Clinton's personal standpoint.⁹⁶
- 33 Attempts at bringing women's standpoints into the most historically and structurally male-dominant areas such as foreign policy and national defense have met with hard resistance by the authorities of the world system. This is why Madeleine Albright, the

first female secretary of state in the US, said that the first female president, because of being the first female commander-in-chief at the same time, "would be a true revolution."⁹⁷ Feminist foreign policy, inspired by first Bok then the feminist standpoint, puts forward three principles, which are not "culturally relative" and, therefore, could be translated into action all around the world. In that sense, a foreign policy relying on "cooperation, altruism and quiet success" supported by "truth-telling, promise-keeping, constraints on violence, and limitations on secrecy" reflect the principles that all governments committed to harmonious co-existence in the international system could execute.⁹⁸ This, however, is a process still in very little progress.

- 34 As this study argues, truth and truth-telling are attributes that the feminist standpoint thrives on, but the patriarchy lacks. Yet, especially within the context of her email controversy with the FBI, this aspect has been neglected in Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign to such an extent that one could question its feminist character. In her own words, "[c]overage of [her]... emails crowded out virtually everything else [her]... campaign said or did."⁹⁹ As Gloria Steinem admitted, because of the FBI interrogation, Clinton sunk "from being frequently elected the most admired woman in the world to a trustworthy rating that is something like Richard Nixon's."¹⁰⁰ One of the reasons why her career, which was launched at Nixon's impeachment, has been transformed into one that is like Nixon's is the ambivalent attitudes that it has harbored towards truth. Even though her actions were found "within the law,"¹⁰¹ each time she went through an interrogation, the perceptions of Clinton convinced the public otherwise.
- 35 According to the FBI, Hillary Clinton logged into her private home server on her prized Blackberry during her mandate as the Secretary of State; thus she sent, received, and erased state-owned classified emails through her personal email account in addition to the official one. Out of 62,320 emails, FBI Director James B. Comey insisted that there were 110 emails, which were definitely not supposed to be found on Clinton's server. Although the FBI in the end recommended that no charges be brought on the former Secretary of State, the interrogation had already taken its toll on her presidential dreams.¹⁰² Her dismissive and blame-shifting responses to the questions directed at her on the issue reflected poorly on her ratings of trustworthiness. Clinton's answer to the question whether she "wiped the server" saying "like with a cloth or something?"¹⁰³ aptly demonstrates her precarious stance against truth and truth-telling. In her own account of the email affair, she would later admit that she "even told a bad joke," because she "never found the right words."¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the fact that she took the matter lightly made the impact of a lie on the public questioning her honesty.
- 36 The feminist standpoint strives to promote truth, transparency and good knowledge in order to enhance the "resistance to the irrational and the pathological,"¹⁰⁵ which receive approval in the contemporary male politics to their extreme. The analysis of Clinton's presidential campaign from that perspective suggests that an uncompromised accountability and reliability alone is the way to partake of such resistance. Otherwise, again in Hillary Clinton's words, the "abnormalization" of a decent, joyful, and feminism-friendly political campaign would be quick and easy, as it was during the 2016 election campaigns.
- 37 Susan Bordo's book, *The Destruction of Hillary Clinton*, demonstrates the academia's interest in Clinton's presidential campaign as something bigger than a current affair of American politics –something that would set the path for the coming generations of

female politicians. The deterioration of Hillary Clinton's image from "an extraordinarily well-qualified, experienced, admired, accomplished candidate" to "a tool of the establishment, a chronic liar, and a talentless politician"¹⁰⁶ bears lessons for all women seeking prominent governmental positions. The "mistrust" associated with her has played a definite role in her loss of the elections.¹⁰⁷ It is true that the fake news published by the *National Enquirer* or Donald Trump's attacks such as calling Clinton a "world-class liar" have built on the negative perceptions of Hillary Clinton in public.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, what Bordo fails to bring into the debate is Clinton's inconsistent and conflicting practices of truth-telling, which did equal damage to her image as a woman presidential candidate. As Mariana Valverde argues, there is, of course, not "a rock-solid truth" among women to depend on; but it is definitely "the process of truth-telling," which would improve the women's condition on every level and in every context.¹⁰⁹ Hillary Clinton's career has unveiled once again that truth-telling is crucial in reclaiming women's epistemological authority in politics.

Conclusion: The 'Hillary' Experience

- 38 As history and politics have taught us, the male epistemology has presupposed that only a privileged few males could handle the truth and therefore have access to knowledge. The struggle for knowledge, in that sense, has become the struggle for power between genders. Particularly, the traditional patriarchal recourse to lie in the form of *arcana imperii* has alienated women from government, power-sharing and public space, hence preventing their empowerment in its full sense. In the cases when "the secrets of politics" overlap with the secrets of politicians who could maintain their power only in a thick mist of lies,¹¹⁰ women and men together suffer from the withholding of the truth by the patriarchal authorities in the public space. The greater the influence the corrupt politician exerts on the law-making processes, the faster the public space is transformed into a venue for "the pursuit of frauds under the cover of high ideals."¹¹¹ The pretext of national security and defense ranks top among such high ideals, which legitimize the non-legitimate ways of withholding knowledge.¹¹²
- 39 The feminist standpoint theory claims that empowerment requires "a distinctive kind of knowledge" and "only through political processes" could such knowledge be acquired.¹¹³ If women achieve high-level empowerment through their version of truth and reality, it would serve the improvement of the entire society and all genders. Within their historical, social and political contexts, as Susan Harding argues, "feminist issues could not be pigeon-holed and ignored as only women's issues," they belong to the greater whole of humanity. In this vein, the standpoint theory seeks to demonstrate how "a social and political disadvantage can be turned into an epistemological, scientific and political advantage."¹¹⁴ Women's standpoint in the face of a 'big' government lie in public space has been significantly different from that of the patriarchal paradigm as it aims to be able to "generate less false stories"¹¹⁵ not only about the social but also political world. Women's conception of knowledge and practices of inquiry propose to compel the government to reveal the truth, whereas patriarcha's historical faith in the necessity of state secrets reinforces the limited public access to knowledge.
- 40 As the civil rights ascend, citizens develop a "broader public interest in disclosure" by governments and do not easily consent to "withholding information that properly

belongs in the public domain."¹¹⁶ In cases of intense opacity in public space, mostly in the form of national security requirements, citizens of all genders are deprived even of the minimum information about the real intentions of the government. Although the real intentions of governments could not be fully known, still, through transparency and accountability, citizens could gain sight of what is central to policy makers and react knowledgeably and accordingly. After all, as Bok contends, even though "the whole truth is out of reach," there is always a choice to make between "to lie" and "to speak honestly about what to say and what to hold back."¹¹⁷ When government secrecy under the pretext of national security becomes a norm rather than an exception, the Straussian justifications of a government lie as noble and necessary lose potential value even for the male proponents who once believed that the patriarchal authorities' "intellectual superiority entitles them to rule over the bulk of humanity by means of duplicity."¹¹⁸ Such was the case in the aftermath of the US occupation of Iraq in 2003.

- 41 Mythologically, Metis was the first woman in pursuit of the truth that was withheld from her by the first male authority in the universe. Fictitiously, Wonder Woman chased after the knowledge with her super powers and fought against the evil of the Duke of Deceptions. Historically, the moral philosopher Sissela Bok provided the academia with the first philosophical definition of lying. In terms of concealing a public truth through a government lie, the Watergate Scandal has become a defining moment in political history and Bok's standpoint demonstrated that when a government lost its respect for veracity, not only women but the entire society suffered. Historically oppressed and deprived of knowledge, women have an advantage in the pursuit of truth. If not distorted or manipulated by the "masculine bias,"¹¹⁹ women's standpoint promises a truer understanding of politics, society and environment, because this standpoint has emerged consequent to a continuous struggle against the male authorities and their big lies. "Feminist truth-telling," Mariana Valverde claims, "can help to reconstruct a community united both through shared memory and through common hopes."¹²⁰
- 42 Bok believes that individuals and societies experience an erosion of the "sense of ethical coherence in everyday life;"¹²¹ contemplating on topics such as lying, secrets and peace could help them regain that sense which stimulates human development. As standpoint theory suggests, this is a process, not a given, but one that is achieved through effort, awareness, and time. As Clinton's presidential bid reveals, the need to achieve the feminist standpoint is even more urgent and complex in high politics. The feminist standpoint theory, since its emergence in the 1980s, has developed and expanded to integrate all women's experiences as well as to avoid the imposition of one single, fit-them-all, truth. Such a detailed interrogation with too many narratives of difference, however, has today resulted in "excessive personalizing,"¹²² which hinders the political struggle against the suppressive patriarchal structures. In that sense, it is helpful to revisit the early version of the feminist standpoint epistemology to once again gain a common ground fortified by truth and truth-telling. Otherwise, too many standpoints fragmented with too many narratives will allow the abnormalization, absurdity and irrationalization of the patriarchal agents to taint the feminist politics' claim for authenticity through practices of truth-telling.
- 43 Assessing Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign from the feminist standpoint provides us with the opportunity to once again grasp the inevitability of truth, truth-telling, and accurate information in women's political struggle. Hillary Clinton lightly

remarks that since Wonder Woman is “a movie about a strong, powerful woman fighting to save the world from a massive international disaster,” it is “right up [her] ally.”¹²³ However, a more up to date adoption of the authentic philosophy behind the creation of this most aspired female super hero, which is truth and truth-telling, could have brought greater success to Clinton’s campaign. In their study of female politicians’ image in the post-feminist political culture, Anderson and Sheeler contend that US politics feel greater affinity to “fictional and potential women presidential candidates” than the real ones.¹²⁴ Learning from the ‘Hillary’ experience will provide the aspiring feminist politicians with valuable knowledge to transform the fictitious image of a woman president into reality.

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ABSTRACTS

Among the highest goals to be achieved by political feminism, a female US president has held an elusive but prominent place. Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, which coincided with Wonder Woman's new post as the United Nations ambassador, has been the closest moment for this goal to be achieved. Clinton's inattention to truth-telling, the email interrogation pursued by the FBI against her and her failure to win the election, however, have in part resulted in the passing of that moment. This study, on this account, probes Hillary Clinton's candidacy for president in terms of women's historical relation with truth-telling and feminist standpoint. It argues that if Clinton had been more committed to the truth-telling principles and practices, her presidential campaign would have been a substantial contribution to historical and political feminism.

INDEX

Keywords: truth-telling, Wonder Woman, Sissela Bok, Hillary Clinton, Feminist Standpoint

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