

GENDER STUDIES

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All correspondence should be addressed to: Reghina Dascăl,

Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies,

English Department, University of the West Timișoara

Bld. V. Pârvan, no. 4-6, 300223 Timișoara

Phone/fax (+ 40) 256 452 224;

e-mail: reghina_dascal@yahoo.co.uk

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**GENDER ASPECTS OF SHAKESPEARE'S
WORK AND AGE**

**“CONTENDING WITH THE FRETFUL ELEMENT”:
SHAKESPEARE AND THE (GENDERED) GREAT CHAIN
OF BEING**

GYÖRGY E. SZÖNYI

University of Szeged; Central European University, Budapest

Abstract: E. M. W. Tillyard's short but seminal book, *The Elizabethan World Picture* made its appearance as a ground-breaking work in the mid-1940s. It successfully adapted Arthur O. Lovejoy's discovery of the Great Chain of Being as the central idea and metaphor of the premodern world picture for English Renaissance culture and literature, offering a key to understanding the often unfamiliar and obscure natural philosophy and metaphysics behind its works of art and literature. The concept of the Great Chain also led to Shakespeare being seen as a supporter of a conservative order in which religious, moral, philosophical, and scientific notions corresponded with each other in a strict hierarchy. The poststructuralist turn unleashed a severe attack on Tillyard and his legacy. As Ewan Fernie in a recent book on the Renaissance has diagnosed: "Now, after the theoretical overhaul, the notion of an ultimately authoritarian Renaissance has been thoroughly revised. In place of Tillyard's full-fledged and secured physical, social and cosmological system, more recent critics tend to posit a conflicted and constantly negotiated culture with no essential pattern". But what has happened to the idea of the Great Chain of Being, which, without doubt, played a major role in the Renaissance world picture and provided a basic knowledge about the elements? In my paper I am going to revisit some aspects of this world picture and examine how Shakespeare related to this (more often than not) in a subversive way, while still remaining within the boundaries of this organic and proto-modern system. Since the concept of the elements had gender aspects, too, I will also focus on the question of how proto-modern natural philosophy theorised about the dichotomy, antagonism, and the cooperation of male and female principles.

Keywords: gender, Great Chain of Being, premodern natural philosophy, romances, Shakespeare, theology

I

Shakespeare saw the relationship of humans to the elements in a variety of ways, ranging from hopeless struggle to glorious and dignified victories. When Lear stands against the storm he seems to combine both

attitudes while

Contending with the fretful elements;
Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,
Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main,
That things might change or cease; tears his white hair,
Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,
Catch in their fury and make nothing of;
Strives in his little world of man to outscorn
The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.
This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,
The lion and the belly-pinched wolf
Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,
And bids what will take all. (King Lear 3.1.4-15)

The playwright's views seem to have been motivated on the one hand by his own personal disposition, which underwent radical changes during his career. On the other hand, equally importantly, he was confronted by the received theological, philosophical, and scientific ideas of his time which he treated sometimes with approval, sometimes subversively. From all this it follows that one should not expect a homogeneous worldview to emerge from the study of "Shakespeare and the elements"; rather, what follows will corroborate what Fernie recently summarized as follows: "the twenty-first century Renaissance has to come to be envisaged as an intensely turbulent period, in which construction of class, race, and gender were negotiated, in which doubts and anxieties freely circulated" (Fernie 2005:1).

This current view has radically displaced E. M. W. Tillyard's position in *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943), which was considered to be ground-breaking in the mid-1940s. It successfully adapted for English

Renaissance culture and literature Arthur O. Lovejoy's (1936) *history of ideas* and his concept of the "Great Chain of Being" as the central notion and metaphor of the premodern world picture, something that would offer a key to understanding the often unfamiliar and obscure natural philosophy and metaphysics behind the works of art and literature (on Lovejoy's concept see Wilson 1987). The concept of the Great Chain also led to Shakespeare being seen as a supporter of a conservative order in which religious, moral, philosophical, and scientific notions corresponded to each other in a strict hierarchy.

The poststructuralist turn launched a severe attack on Tillyard and his legacy. As Fernie diagnoses: "Now, after the theoretical overhaul, the notion of an ultimately authoritarian Renaissance has been thoroughly revised. In place of Tillyard's full-fledged and secured physical, social and cosmological system, more recent critics tend to posit a conflicted and constantly negotiated culture with no essential pattern" (Fernie: *ibid.*). But what has become of the idea of the Great Chain of Being, the links of which, without doubt, played a major role in the Renaissance world picture and provided a basic knowledge about the elements?

In my paper I am going to revisit some aspects of this world picture and examine how Shakespeare related to it – more often than not in a subversive way, while still remaining within the boundaries of this organic and proto-modern system. Since the concept of the elements had gender-aspects, too, I will also focus on the question of how proto-modern natural philosophy theorised about the dichotomy, antagonism, and cooperation of male and female principles.

II

The most convenient starting point is to revisit Tillyard's key propositions. According to the author's own description, *The Elizabethan World Picture* was a by-product of his other book, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944), in which he tried to describe the political order of the Elizabethan age, only to soon discover that this notion of order was much more general – through the idea of the chain and correspondences it connected the world of humans to a larger, cosmic system. It should cause no surprise that today Tillyard's analysis of the history plays is also severely attacked and labelled as exhibiting a false essentialism, having been forged among the last efforts of British imperialism and in the context of a nationalistic upsurge resulting from the struggle against Nazi Germany in the 1940s (see for example Holderness [1992]).

Undoubtedly, Tillyard was looking for “the notions about the world and man which were quite taken for granted by the ordinary educated Elizabethan; the utter commonplaces too familiar for the poets to make detailed use of except in explicitly didactic passages, but essential as basic assumptions and invaluable at moments of high passion.” (Tillyard 1943: vii-viii). The programme of the book was accordingly:

My object then is to extract and expound the most ordinary beliefs about the constitution of the world as pictured in the Elizabethan age and through this exposition to help the ordinary reader to understand and to enjoy the great writers of the age. (*ibid.*)

Today's readers may sceptically gloss this ambition by remarking that the utter commonplaces are not necessarily the most enjoyable aspects of the great writers of the past. It remains a fact, however, that when one is reading literature from remote periods, alongside local and occasional humour, it will

always be the references to world view and scientific ideas that will be the least accessible to the modern reader or theatregoer. In this respect Tillyard is still useful as an easy introduction to the theological, philosophical and scientific theories of the early modern period. After all, the notion of predestination, the medical concepts about the four humours and the temperaments of humans, and the correspondences between the macrocosm and the microcosm are not readily available to the modern and postmodern audience.

Recent Renaissance and Shakespeare criticism has taught us to realise in what subtle and intricate ways the great masters of the period were subverting the received ideas of the age. At first reading Tillyard seems to have neglected these subversions and to picture the Elizabethans *en bloc* as traditionalists and conservatives. I think it is time to admit that this criticism is not entirely fair. In fact, one of Tillyard's recurrent concerns is to prove that their thinking and behaviour was far more manifold and versatile, even paradoxical, than we might imagine. When Tillyard wrote, there was a tendency to interpret the English Renaissance as a primarily modern and secular age, so he tried to pinpoint its strong religious and theological concerns as well, highlighting that under the banner of a unifying ideology very contrarian ideas and activities could be accommodated. For example, "Queen Elizabeth translated Boethius, Raleigh was a theologian as well as a discoverer, and sermons were as much a part of an ordinary Elizabethan's life as bear-baiting" (*The Elizabethan*, 3). After the vogue of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, one has to recognise that these aspects have again been forgotten about, or at least that everything that occupied the Elizabethans has been interpreted in the context of a racial, gender, and ideological power struggle in which no place has been left for the desire and ambition to attain peace, harmony, understanding, or good will.

In this respect Tillyard's book is a useful reminder. And, furthermore, it is also not entirely true that he was completely blind to subversive tendencies against the received, commonplace ideas of the age. He repeatedly emphasised that the serious ceremoniality of the Middle Ages had by the time of the Renaissance often degenerated into farce, and that though "the general medieval picture of the world survived in outline into the Elizabethan age, its existence was by then precarious" (*ibid.*, 8). Among the new challenges he listed the new, subversive political ideology proposed by Machiavelli, the scientific revolution heralded by Copernican astronomy, and the new commercialism that was hostile to medieval stability.

All this is not enough to absolve Tillyard from under the charge of having created a "grand narrative," and having by and large disregarded many intriguing features of the Elizabethan world picture. The problematic nature of saying anything definitive about this period has become dramatically visible recently, since the Early English Books Online project has made available the full text of all English printed books up to the end of the seventeenth century. While EEBO is an invaluable research tool and has democratised early modern cultural and literary research, its existence has created two main problems. Firstly, as anyone can now access a rare book library of over a hundred and thirty thousand works on his/her computer, even the illusion of gaining a relatively comprehensive knowledge of the printed works of a period has vanished. From now on one can never be sure how the content of *these* books which *are now readily available* in EEBO ought to have modified the results of earlier research projects carried out at a time when, because of the physical limitations of the previous researcher could not be checked. From this uncertainty follows another necessity. From now on any interpretative analysis has to be accompanied by an extremely meticulous documentation of the consulted sources, and one has to bear in

mind that the results have their validity only within this circle of sources. All in all, the information boom has not only widened, but at the same time also limited, our epistemological possibilities.

III

Compared with the almost limitless source materials burdening the cultural historian of the Elizabethan Age, the Shakespeare scholar is in a relatively easy situation since his/her primary sources are limited to – more or less – 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two longer epics and a few other poems. It is a manageable amount of text in which to look for references to the elements, their cosmic order and their influence on human nature. The hard part is to identify their proper contexts, and one should bear in mind that the identification will never be independent of the biases of the interpreter.

With the help of a concordance program it is easy to collect the occurrences of the word “elements” in Shakespeare’s oeuvre. We have 23 items, out of which 8 have meteorological meanings, referring to the wild elements, that is stormy weather. The obvious examples are from *King Lear* (“I tax not you, you *elements*, with unkindness,” 3.2.16) and from *The Tempest* (“You are a / counsellor; if you can command these *elements* to / silence, and work the peace of the present, we will / not hand a rope more,” 1.1.20-22). Likewise, when Pericles mourns over the dead body of Thaisa, he breaks out: “the unfriendly *elements* / Forgot thee utterly” (3.1.57-8).

The rest of the occurrences refer in one way or another to the four elements which – according to the premodern world picture – were the building blocks of the material universe. It should not be surprising that Shakespeare’s frame of reference is the received protomodern system in which there are only four elements – earth, water, air, and fire – whose pre-

ordered place is at the bottom of the Great Chain of Being. Since they are the constituents of the whole visible and material universe as well as the human body, they are of the utmost importance in establishing the links and correspondences between the macro- and microcosms. This is what Pericles recognizes when he welcomes his newborn daughter, Marina, into this world:

Thou hast as chiding a nativity
As fire, air, water, earth, and heaven can make,
To herald thee from the womb. (Per 3.1.32-34)

So also Toby Belch asks in *Twelfth Night*: “Does not our life consist of the / *four elements*?” (2.3.9-10).

The structural role of these elements in the premodern world picture can be seen in countless Renaissance illustrations, from popular almanacs and calendars to complicated works of natural philosophy. **FIG. 1** dates from the Middle Ages.



FIG. 1 Isidore1472-Tetrad

It is the famous tetrad of Isidore of Seville, representing the four elements, the four qualities (moist–dry–cold–hot), the four seasons and the four human temperaments (sanguine–choleric–phlegmatic–melancholic).

According to this world view, the human temperaments are the consequence of the different proportions of the elements and qualities in the individual body.

One of the popular schoolbooks of Shakespeare's time, Robert Recorde's *Castle of Knowledge*, described the four elements as follows:

And these four, that is, earth, water, ayer, and fyre, are named the four elements, that is to say, the fyrste, symple and originall matters, whereof all myxt and compoude bodies be made, and into which all shall tourne againe. (Recorde 1556: 6)

Henry Peacham in his emblem book, *Minerva Britanna* (1612), also described the composition of the human body as consisting of four elements (**FIG. 2** – some more books by contemporaries of Shakespeare explaining the system of the elements and humours: Davies 1603; Walkington 1607; Nemesius-Wither 1636; etc.):

Of heate and cold as is the Aire composed,
So likewise man we see breath's hot and cold,
His bodie's earthy: in his lunges inclosed,
Remaines the Aire: his braine doth moisture hold,
His heart and liver, doe the heate infold:
Of Earth, Fire, Water, Man thus framed is,
Of Elements the threefold Qualities. (Peacham 1612: 190)

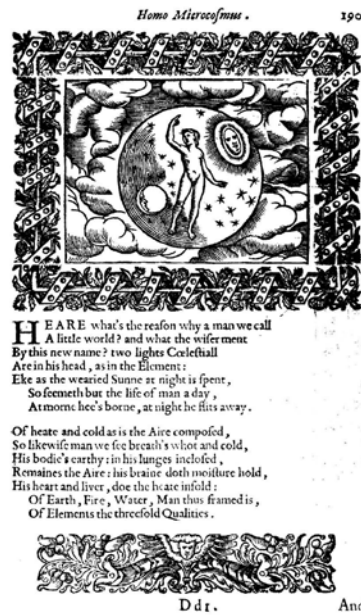


FIG. 2 Peacham1612-Homo microcosmus

Apart from the meteorological connotations, Shakespeare's references to the elements are all related to the system of the abovementioned tetrads which result from the combination of these four constituents. But since Shakespeare is not primarily interested in natural philosophy, rather in the human condition, the elements and qualities are important for him as markers of psychological character and temperament. One of the most elaborate and finest examples may be found in Sonnets 44 and 45. The former is about earth and water:

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
 Injurious distance should not stop my way;
 For then despite of space I would be brought,
 From limits far remote where thou dost stay.
 No matter then although my foot did stand
 Upon the farthest earth removed from thee;

For nimble thought can jump both sea and land
As soon as think the place where he would be.
But ah! thought kills me that I am not thought,
To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,
But that so much of earth and water wrought
I must attend time's leisure with my moan,
Receiving nought by elements so slow
But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.

Earth and water, the “dull and slow elements”, make up the body, as opposed to air and fire, which pertain to thought and intelligence. While the body cannot defeat distance “to jump both sea and land” in order to be with his lover, Sonnet 45 assures the lover that

The other two, slight air and purging fire,
Are both with thee, wherever I abide.

Air corresponds here to thought and fire to desire. And as the two escape to the lover, the speaking self, composed of the four elements but left with only two, “Sinks down to death, oppress'd with melancholy.”

Melancholy results, according to contemporary medical theory, from the disturbed balance of the elements and humours of the body. As Timothy Bright wrote in his treatise on melancholy – just a few years before Shakespeare appeared on the English stage:

It was declared that the quantitie of melancholie should be least in the just temper of bloud of al the other parts, saving cholera, which naturall proportion and rate when it exceedeth, then is the bodie turned into a disposition melancholicke by humour. (Bright 1586:25)

Another contemporary, Jacques Ferrand, a French physician, whose book, *Erotomania, or a Treatise Discoursing of the Essence, Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks, and Cure of Love, or Erotique Melancholy* was published in English, discussed the specifics of love-melancholy. About its symptoms he wrote:

Yet I grant that love is the ground and Principall cause of all our Affections, and the Abstract of all the Passions and perturbations of the mind. [...] By reason of these perturbations, the bloud becomes adust, earthy, and Melancholy, as in all other violent passions, except joy, by which meanes diverse have fallen into strange and desperate diseases, growing Melancholy, Foolish, Mad, Cynicall, Wolvish: as the learned Avicen reports, in his caput de Amore. (Ferrand, 10-11)

In this context we could immediately examine Jacques, Hamlet, or Malvolio; however, let me return to Shakespeare's sonnets. In Sonnet 45 the speaking self recovers from his melancholy state when he is reunited with his missing two elements:

Until life's composition be recured
By those swift messengers return'd from thee,
Who even but now come back again, assured
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me...

But, of course, a person in love cannot be cured so easily. He deliberately brings himself down, because his passion compels him to send his better elements back again to his lover: "I joy; but then no longer glad, / I send them back again and straight grow sad." Yet, there is hope. Because, as

we know from Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost*, love catalyses the workings of the elements in the body to achieve wondrous powers:

But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,
Lives not alone immured in the brain;
But, with the motion of all elements,
Courses as swift as thought in every power,
And gives to every power a double power,
Above their functions and their offices. (LLL 4.3.326-32)

Most of Shakespeare's references to the elements refer to the composition, balance, or disturbance of these four in humans, thus determining their character and temperament.

His life was gentle, and the *elements*
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world 'This was a man!'

says Anthony about Caesar over his dead body (JC 5.5.73-75). When Cleopatra commits suicide and calls to the already dead Anthony, the image she uses is very similar to that of Sonnet 45 mentioned above:

husband, I come [...]
I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life. (Ant. 5.2.287-90)

But the same image can also be used about an animal. When Lewis the Dauphin in *Henry V* praises his horse, he says,

It is a beast for
Perseus: he is pure air and fire; and the dull
elements of earth and water never appear in him, but
only in Patient stillness while his rider mounts
him: he is indeed a horse... (H5 3.7.20-24)

The four elements not only provided the foundation for early modern medicine and through the humoral system for psychology too, but also connected to astrology and alchemy (the latter nicknamed as “inferior astronomy”), these two “cosmic sciences” being closely connected with theories about man’s spiritual and bodily well being, fate and fortune. On the title page of the already mentioned schoolbook, Recorde’s *Castle of Knowledge* (**FIG. 3**), the fortress – its strength signified by the keyholes to which the student has to find the proper keys – is flanked by two allegorical female figures, Destiny and Fortune. These are the rulers of life, unless one, by the help of knowledge and wisdom (Urania), can overcome Fortune’s power:

To KNOWLEDGE this Trophy set,
All learnings friends will it support,
So shall their name great honour get,
And gaine great fame with good report.
Though spitefull Fortune turned her wheele
To staye the Sphere to Uranye,
Yet doth this Sphere resist that wheele,
And fleeyth all fortunes villanye.



FIG. 3 Recorde1556 Castle of Knowledge

Premodern notions of alchemy relied heavily on the theories of the four elements as well as the Great Chain of Being. The transmutation of the elements from a base and corrupt state to a purified and perfect one (the Philosopher’s Stone, or *quinta essentia*) also meant ascension along the chain of being. Furthermore, it is interesting to notice how references to sexuality, bodily and spiritual union were also embedded in these speculations, thus opening up a gender aspect in these cultural representations.

The English mystical philosopher, Robert Fludd, one year after Shakespeare’s death published his monumental *Utriusque cosmi historia* (*The History of the Two Worlds* – i.e. macrocosm and microcosm, Oppenheim, 1617) in which one of his meticulous diagrams describes the elemental connections of the Great Chain of Being as follows (**FIG. 4**, Fludd 1617: 4-5): the cloud, representing God, is chained to a beautiful naked woman, who is the allegorical personification of Nature, standing on two

elements: earth and water. In the middle of the cosmic spheres there is a small globe on which a monkey sits, chained to Lady Nature. The ape stands for Art, which is capable of imitating Nature by the help of the human sciences and “Artes liberaliores,” surrounding the Ape-artist. Shakespeare also uses the “Nature’s Ape” image when he introduces the Italian Julio Romano as the creator of Hermione’s “statue” in *The Winter’s Tale*:

A piece many years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape: he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer. (WT 5.2.106-112)

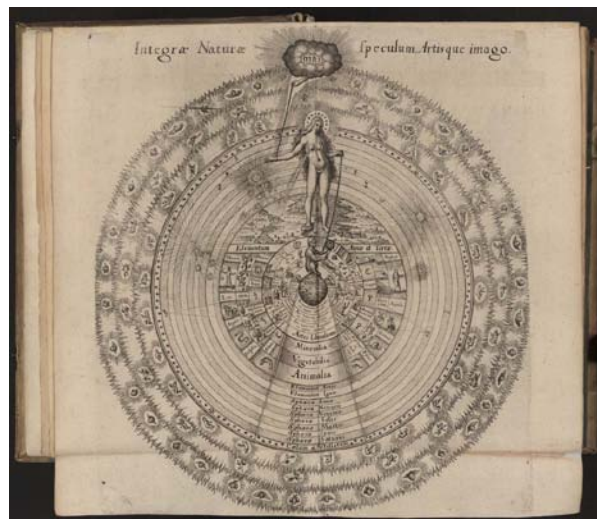


FIG. 4, Fludd 1617 Nature-Art

This artistry also demonstrates that the sculptor is like an alchemist; he can translate the base element earth (in the case of a statue: stone, *mineralia*) into composite and living human tissue – at least according to the

fiction of the play and Pauline, the director-woman of the scene, who presents this magic to the stunned king, Leontes. The magical parallel to the miracle of the sculptor is the creation of the Golem in early modern Jewish mysticism (Scholem 1987:101-3; Idel 1988:100-24; 260), or the idea of the homunculus in the works of the magical doctor, Paracelsus (1976: vol 2, 120, 334). As Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, summarized Paracelsus' notion:

That there is an artificial way of making an Homunculus, and that the Fairies of the woods, Nymphs and Giants themselves had some such originall, and that these Homunculi thus made will know all manner of secrets and mysteries of art, themselves receiving their lives, bodies, flesh, bone, and blood from an artificiall principle. (More 1656:46)

Medieval and Renaissance alchemy consisted of two practices. One was the chemical transmutation which aimed at changing lower quality elements through purging and purification into higher ones (from iron to copper to quicksilver to silver to gold). The other type of alchemy was spiritual, programmed to purify, transform, and elevate the soul into the state of *exaltatio* (Calian 2010). As is clear from Samuel Norton's illustration of the hermetic transformation in his *Mercurius redivivus* (Frankfurt, 1630, **FIG. 5**, reproduced from Jung 1980:240): the raw material is represented by the roots of the tree being anchored in the elements – in the human microcosm it is the body, the *corpus*. The transmutation turns the quadrat of the elements into a spiritual triangle (roofed by *spiritus* and *anima*), which, exalted, will bring forth the beautiful flowers at the top. (The roses indicate that we here encounter a Rosicrucian-inspired symbolism.)



FIG. 5 Norton 1630

In George Ripley' *Compound of Alchemy* (1471, published in London, 1591) a description of the chemical exaltation is described in language that could be either religious or that of a Shakespearean play:

For like as soules after paines transitorie
 Be brought to Paradise where ever is joyfull life,
 So shall our Stone (after his darknes in Purgatorie)
 Be purged and joynd in Elements withouten strife,
 Reioyce the whitenes and beautie of his wife...
 (quoted by Nicholl 1980:203)

The expression “wife” reminds us that paradigmatically these alchemical transformations were described as sexual *exaltatio* and visually the process was represented as different phases of *coitus* (**FIG. 6: *Rosarium philosophorum***, MS from 1550, reproduced from Roob 1997:453).



FIG. 6: Alchemy-Rosarium-1550-11-K&Q fermentation

All throughout Shakespeare's career we find various references to chemical and spiritual alchemy. In *Romeo and Juliet* the Friar speaks the language of Paracelsian natural philosophy when calling the earth "Nature's mother," which brings forth "children of divers kind" (cf. *Rom* 2.3.8-27 – for this and the following references I rely on Nicholl 1980, *passim*). In Sonnet 5 the destructive working of Time is represented by the image of Nature turning from Summer to the bareness of hideous Winter, yet an alchemical type of distillation can preserve the essence of summer – instead of roses we have rosewater perfume:

Then, were not summer's distillation left,
A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
Nor it nor no remembrance what it was:
But flowers distill'd though they with winter meet,
Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet.

This preserving act of distillation and producing the “essence” of things can be achieved in three ways. One is alchemical transmutation which aims to produce the mystical *quinta essentia*. Another procedure is procreation, which carries on the essence of the parents as a result of the sexual union:

Then let not winter's ragged hand deface
In thee thy summer, ere thou be distill'd: [. . .]
That use is not forbidden usury,
Which happies those that pay the willing loan;
That's for thyself to breed another thee, [. . .]
Then what could death do, if thou shouldst depart,
Leaving thee living in posterity?

– asks Shakespeare in Sonnet 6.

As Charles Nicholl has argued, alchemical symbolism, even alchemical-emblematic theatricality, become most complex and dense in the last plays, the romances. In *The Chemical Theatre* he analysed in detail the cave-scene in *Cymbeline* (4.2 – Nicholl 1980:225-36), where Imogen in disguise seemingly dies of a magical potion; in the meantime the two princes in disguise kill the wicked Cloten in disguise – wearing the clothes of Posthumus, Imogen's husband –; and when Imogen wakes from her sleep, she thinks the beheaded body of Cloten is that of her beloved and smears his blood onto her face and embraces him in a deadly sexual hug. This is the beginning of the alchemical transmutation: Imogen enters the cave in the forest, penetrates matter and finds her disguised royal brothers. The discovery and the ensuing horrifying events (in the alchemical narratives: regicide followed by copulation in the coffin [FIG. 7 – Johannes Mylius, *Philosophia*

reformata, Frankfurt, 1622 – reproduced from Klossowski de Rola 1988:174] followed by death and regeneration) will lead to the final recognition and restoration when the Philosopher's Stone, or the *elixir*, or the *quinta essentia* is produced.



FIG. 7 Alchemy-Mylius-Philos Reformata-1622-K&Q in coffin

In Leonhard Thurneisser's alchemical study, *Quinta essentia*, the main catalyzer of the Work, the spirit of Mercury (quicksilver), is a beautiful naked woman (**FIG. 8** – reproduced in Jung 1980: 189). In *Cymbeline* Imogen is this *Anima Mercurii* who brings about the transformation of all the male characters: the king, his sons, Posthumus, Bellarius, even the wicked Iachimo.

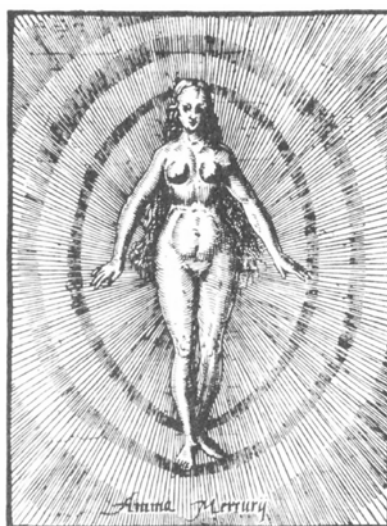


FIG. 8 Alchemy-Thurneisser-Qessentia-1576-Anima mercurii

As has been mentioned, in alchemy there are two parallel processes taking place. On the one hand the elemental matter is transmuted into gold or elixir, on the other hand, the operator, the alchemist, also goes through a spiritual transmutation. The gender roles in the process are traditional: the active, male principle is in focus, represented by the King, the bridegroom, the Sun, gold, the lion, – and the alchemist himself is invariably a man. The female principle is also essential in the process as foundation (earth, Nature), or catalyzer (the Queen, the bride, Moon, silver, the virgin, the whore). The most elaborate allegorical narrative of these processes is to be found in Johann Valentin Andreae's *Chimische Hochzeit* (1626, English translation by E. Foxcroft, 1690) and Michel Maier's *Themis aurea* (1618, English translation 1656), but of course, as mentioned above, one could also rely on native English alchemical texts, such as Ripley's *Compound of Alchemy*, [Pseudo] Roger Bacon's *The Mirror of Alchimy* (1597) and many others finally republished in the huge anthology of Elias Ashmole, the *Theatrum*

Chemicum Britannicum (1652). All of these transmitted the above mentioned traditional approach to gender hierarchy, and Shakespeare was no exception when he used alchemical imagery.

It is all the more interesting that on one occasion the Bard radically subverted the traditional understanding of alchemy, in a way similar to his technique of transgressing tradition-based emblematic imagery (on this see Szönyi 2003: *passim*). At the end of *The Winter's Tale* there takes place a magic transmutation of the "stone statue" of Hermione into a living, organic being: "Who was most marble, there changed colour" (5.2.89). There is a certain irony in the situation concerning Leontes: the King/Lion who comes to be exalted into Sun/Gold when he does not notice the trick played on his senses. But if we take the emblematic setting seriously, we are satisfied to see that he comprehends and accepts the moral lesson:

I am ashamed: does not the stone rebuke me
For being more stone than it? O royal piece,
There's magic in thy majesty. (5.3.37-9)

Who is the Royal Piece then, the Magnum Opus? Hermione, the perfect woman who did not need to change at all, and who represented superiority from the beginning. And who is the alchemist then, the operator, who also undergoes spiritual *exaltatio*? In this Shakespearean scene the two functions, the active operator and the spiritually transmuted person, are separated, or doubled. There is the male king who badly needs renovation and regeneration, but on the other hand the operator is again a woman, Paulina. It has been noticed by several critics that at the end of *The Winter's Tale* Leontes in fact is definitely pushed into the background behind the dignified and celebrated female interactions among Paulina, Hermione, and

the lost-found Perdita.

IV

Because of the constraints of this paper I cannot pursue further examples; rather, I will try to come to some conclusions. It is well known regarding Shakespeare that he used the commonplace ideas of the premodern world picture in a creative way, often arriving at perfect ambiguities, by which he at the same time asserted and subverted the received knowledge. As for his attitude to the elements, the Great Chain of Being, or chemical/spiritual transmutation, he does not seem to have challenged the theories of Aristotle, Galen, and the medieval alchemists. Although in this paper I could not discuss this aspect, he also seems to have believed in forces greater than humans determining their lives: fate, providence, and fortune. At the same time, his attitude is by no means submissive or fatalistic. Some of his characters try to outwit nature as much as others abide by her rules. And the poet is on neither side; he can equally endorse both attitudes.

When Shakespeare comes to subvert received ideas, he often uses the emblematic way of expression, using well-known images *in bonam partem* and *in malam partem* (see Daly 1993; Szönyi 2000 and 2003). This is how Richard II is associated with the setting sun, or the daughter of Antiochus in *Pericles* turns from the “fruit of a celestial tree” and a “fair glass of light” into a “glorious casket stor’d with ill,” not to mention being “a fair viol [...] played upon before [her] time, / Hell only danceth at so harsh a chime” (1.1.22, 76-85). As we have been able to see in the case of *The Winter’s Tale* (and further examples could be multiplied from other plays), Shakespeare skilfully used this subversive technique to undermine traditional gender hierarchies too.

Contra many (post)modernist opinions, I think that Shakespeare is exciting and inspiring even today, precisely because he manages to do two things in parallel: while subverting and uncovering the falsity of a disintegrating world picture and the hypocrisy of its value system, he presents these with such poetic power that it evokes a feeling of nostalgia, and of admiration too.

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MARITIME FANTASIES AND GENDER SPACE IN THREE SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDIES

WAI FONG CHEANG

Chang Gung University, Taiwan

Abstract: Laden with sea images, Shakespeare's plays dramatise the maritime fantasies of his time. This paper discusses the representation of maritime elements in *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest* and *The Merchant of Venice* by relating them to gender and space issues. It focuses on Shakespeare's creation of maritime space as space of liberty for his female characters.

Keywords: Shakespeare, maritime space, gender, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice*

As a crucial constituent of the planet Earth, the sea has always had some influence on socio-cultural aspects of human life, especially for islanders surrounded by water. Great works of world literature, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, manifest human beings' deep involvement with the vast expanse of water around their lands. Not unlike the Greeks, the English, as islanders, have a long history of involvement with the sea. The English Renaissance was a period during which real and imaginary ambitions beyond seas boomed, stimulating rich literary productions reflecting this cultural-historical reality.

The huge fantasies of the English regarding sea adventures during the Renaissance were triggered by excitement arising from the discovery of new lands and trade routes and the legends of successful pirates. "Chronicles of New World explorers," such as updated Jamestown narratives, "appeared regularly in London bookshops" and were read by "an eager public" (Woodward 2009:5-9). Water formed a part of the life of Londoners, as they

constantly witnessed the arrival of ships loaded with foreign goods in the River Thames. The theatres were very closely involved with water, since crossing the river was needed for city-dwellers to attend the theatres, most of which were located in the Liberties on then other side of the Thames. As an English Renaissance playwright, William Shakespeare's fascination with the sea is apparent in many of his plays, such as *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest* and *The Merchant of Venice*, which employ sea adventures as pivotal plot elements.

Renaissance maritime culture traditionally conceptualised the sea and sea-crossing vessels as male domains. Sea crossing for conquest and trade was often regarded as exclusively men's business. "The world of the seafarer," as Anne Chambers, Dian H. Murray and Julie Wheelwright write, "is both a world unfit for ladies and one where women's presence leads to disaster" (1995:11). Marcus Rediker, a student of eighteenth-century Anglo-American maritime culture, points out that "seafaring was an occupation sharply segregated by sex" and that "women" did not ordinarily go to sea (1987:155). Margaret Lincoln also writes in her study of naval wives and mistresses in eighteenth-century England that "seafaring is a predominantly male profession" (2007:16). If this was so even in the eighteenth century, women must surely have been excluded from seafaring in Renaissance England. During the Elizabethan era, the traditional concept of the sea as a male domain was reinforced by laws and sermons that contributed to a general culture of women's domestication.

Nevertheless, a certain degree of liberty or licentiousness could still exist for women within certain domains, such as theatrical space. There is a well-known funny story in H. Pecham's *The Art of Living in London* about a woman who went to the theatre after being warned about pickpockets by her

husband but still lost her purse. When her husband inquired where she had put her purse, she told him that she had put it “under her petticoat, between that and her smocke.” Then her husband asked whether she had felt anybody’s hand under her dress. “Yes, quoth shee, I felt ones hand there; but I did not thinke hee had come for that” (1642:6). The story shows the licentiousness and liberty that existed in the Renaissance theatrical space and what a female theatregoer would expect from her trip. Yet “women from every section of society,” as Andrew Gurr writes, “went to plays” (1987:67).

In a certain sense, the world of the seafarer is rather similar to that of the theatre, as the seafarers have their adventures via the ship’s “wooden world,” (as Isaac Land calls it, 2009:16), while the players offer their audience imaginative adventures in their “wooden O.” It is generally assumed that “players,” as R. E. Pritchard writes, “needed to be beyond the reach of the City authorities” (2010:190). The outskirts of London, called the Liberties, which housed the theatres, were an “ambiguous realm,” a “borderland”, which was “‘free’ or ‘at liberty’ from manorial rule or obligation to the Crown, and only nominally under the jurisdiction of the lord mayor” (Mullaney 1988:21). It was a site where the city authorities could seem to be far away. There were calls for the brothels there to be closed, for instance, but the moves against these immoral institutions “always fell short” (Greenblatt 2004:176). Hence, just like the sailors’ “wooden world,” which could seem to be far from the jurisdiction of countries, the licentious Liberties of the players’ “wooden O” could seem to be beyond the jurisdiction of the city fathers.

For female audiences who were in reality excluded from the seafaring business, plays about the thrilling dangers of sea adventures, and especially about female characters’ involvement with sea –crossings, could be extremely appealing. Hence, the imagination of the sea as an open space full

of opportunities not just for men but for women as well, as presented on stage, resembles the liberties for both men and women offered by the London theatrical space. In this licentious “wooden O,” imagination could suspend the social reality that women were excluded from seafaring ventures. In the vicinity of brothels, dance halls, bear-baiting pits and scaffolds, playgoing could be an exciting and licentious event. And there was always a sense of adventure and danger involved, real or imaginary, as the cutpurse’s hand under the female playgoer’s dress suggests, that thrilled theatre goers.

The Tempest, which begins with “a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning,” as the stage direction indicates, vividly presents the imminent dangers of seafaring. Shakespeare has a ship-master, a boatswain and mariners trying to control their ship in a storm. Lines related to how to handle the ship, such as “Take in the topsail” and “Down with the topmast! Yare! Lower, lower! Bring her to try with main-course” (*Tempest* 1.1.6; 1.1.34-35), simulate the scenario of ship-steering. The sailors are so occupied that they do not answer Alonso’s question, even though he is the King of Naples. The boatswain simply asks the king to “keep below”, and when Antonio again asks the boatswain where the master is, the boatswain replies, “You mar our labour: keep/ your cabins: you do assist the storm” (*Tempest* 1.1.11; 13-14). The boatswain even says, “What care these roarers/for the name of King? To cabin: silence! Trouble/us not” (*Tempest* 1.1.16-18). This initial scene shows not only the threatening power of the sea but also the professional dignity of sailors. The ship becomes a space where the usual power relationship between a king and his subject is subverted.

The sea as shown in the opening scene is undoubtedly an enemy to the men onboard. In a later scene, Francisco describes what happened to Ferdinand: “I saw him beat the surges under him,/And ride upon their backs;

he trod the water,/Whose enmity he flung aside..." (*Tempest* 2.1.110-13). The word "enmity" highlights the relationship between the sea and those fighting for their lives against it. When Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo and others finally land on an island, Gonzalo encourages the others to be merry:

...our escape
Is much beyond our loss. Our hint of woe
Is common; every day, some sailor's wife,
The masters of some merchant, and the merchant,
Have just our theme of woe; but for the miracle,
I mean our preservation, few in millions
Can speak like us... (*Tempest* 2.1.1-7)

These words accentuate how common it is for the sea to take people's lives. Moreover, it also suggests that the sea is a male domain, as sailors' wives have their theme of woe, which implies that sailors are men. Sebastian also says after the shipwreck that "Milan and Naples have/mo widows in them of this business' making/Than we bring men to comfort them" (*Tempest* 2.1.128-30). By referring to the making of more widows in their thwarted sea-crossing business, Sebastian's words echo Gonzalo's in conceiving of the sea as a male domain. Moreover, the person who commands the tempest that sinks the ship is Prospero, a patriarchal figure.

At the beginning of the play, when Prospero summons the tempest, Miranda expresses her disapproval. Sympathetic towards the sufferers on the ship, Miranda says to her father: "Had I been any god of power, I would/Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere/It should the good ship so have swallow'd" (*Tempest* 1.2.10-13). Nevertheless, she possesses none of

her father's power to command the sea. And though she says she desires to sink the sea within the earth, she is fascinated by what the sea brings forth to the island. She comments that the ship is "a brave vessel" (*Tempest* 1.2.6), and Ferdinand who lands on the island after the shipwreck, is "a thing divine; for nothing natural/I ever saw so noble" (*Tempest* 1.2.421-22). For Miranda, the malignant force of the sea in the form of the tempest may be dreadful but the benevolent force of the sea in bringing to her attractive elements from outside her small island is welcome. These conflicting features of the sea from Miranda's perspective can be considered as being a reflection of ordinary English people's ideas about the sea during the Renaissance. At a time when trade with foreign countries was becoming more and more frequent and the discovery of new lands and new trade routes was stimulating the development of more seafaring businesses, fear of sea-crossing dangers and fascination with new horizons inevitably coexisted.

Ariel's song for Ferdinand's ears, which begins "Full fathom five thy father lies" (*Tempest* 1.2. 399-404), echoes this kind of fear and fascination with the sea. Though the beautiful depiction of a sea death for Ferdinand's father is a hoax, the song reinforces the image of the sea as dangerous. "In symbolic terms" as Steve Mentz puts it, "the song represents the transforming powers of oceanic magic" (2009:7), a theme that is reinforced by Gonzola's comment about their garments which "hold, notwithstanding, their freshness/and glosses, being rather new-dyed than stained/with salt water" (*Tempest* 2.1.60-62).

The employment of a shipwreck as its basic plot frame renders *Twelfth Night* rather similar to *The Tempest*. Even though the play does not dramatise a shipwreck at the very beginning of the play, with mariners shouting instructions on how to handle the ship, in Act 1 Scene 2 it does

dramatise the aftermath of a shipwreck, and it puts into the mouth of a sea captain a vivid description of how Sebastian struggled for his life after the ship split: “I saw your brother/Most provident in peril, bind himself/... To a strong mast that liv’d upon the sea” (*Twelfth* 1.2.11-14). In a later scene, Antonio, another sea captain, says he had rescued Sebastian “from the rude sea’s enrag’d and foamy mouth” (*Twelfth* 5.1.76), thus personifying the sea and highlighting how dangerous it is. When Sebastian describes the shipwreck which he thinks has taken his sister’s life, he also personifies the sea. He says his sister “the blind waves and surges have devour’d” (*Twelfth* 5.1.227). By poetically linking the salt water of the sea with his tears: “She is drown’d already, sir, with/salt water, though I seem to drown her remembrance/again with more (*Twelfth* 2.1.29-31), Sebastian presents not only the dangers of the sea but also the interconnection between human misery and the sea in the form of salt water.

Not unlike *The Tempest*, which endows the mariners with professional dignity, *Twelfth Night* depicts mariners in a favourable light. The captain who speaks with Viola after the shipwreck is a friendly character. His soothing words comfort Viola and the information he supplies about Illyria starts her on her bold venture. Viola compliments him: “There is a fair behaviour in thee, captain” and she adds that “I will believe thou hast a mind that suits/With this thy fair and outward character” (*Twelfth* 1.2.47; 50-51). When Viola asks him to conceal her identity and present her to the duke of Illyria as a eunuch, the captain readily promises to do so, in a heroic tone: “Be you his eunuch, and your mute I’ll be:/When my tongue blabs, then let mine eyes not see” (*Twelfth* 1.2.62-63).

Likewise, Antonio befriends Sebastian and even lends him his purse with all his money. He is probably a wanted pirate, as he tells Sebastian that

it is not without danger that he walks in town because he once served in a “sea-fight ‘gainst the Count his galleys” (*Twelfth* 3.3.26). Moreover, when Orsino meets Antonio, he addresses him as “Notable pirate, thou salt-water thief” (*Twelfth* 5.1.67). But Antonio replies, “Be pleas’d that I shake off these names you give me:/Antonio never yet was thief, or pirate” (*Twelfth* 5.1.71-72). Interestingly, there is no further discussion about what exactly Antonio is, and this blank may be understood within Renaissance maritime history. It is generally known that to empower the English in their conflict with Spanish sea power and expansion in the New World, Queen Elizabeth “let slip her sea dogs” (Konstam 2008:37). According to Augus Konstam, “one country’s privateer is another country’s pirate” (2008:37). This humorous description sheds light on why Antonio can defend himself boldly against Orsino’s accusation.

Pirate or not, Antonio shows his valour when he comes immediately to the rescue of Viola, who he has mistaken for Sebastian, when Viola is being attacked by Sir Andrew. He readily draws his sword and declares to Sir Andrew: “If this young gentleman/Have done offence, I take the fault on me;/If you offend him, I for him defy you” (*Twelfth* 3.4.319-321). In Antonio’s own words, he has given Sebastian “[his] love, without retention or restraint,/All his in dedication” (*Twelfth* 5.1.79-80). Not unlike the favourable image of the mariners in the opening scene of *The Tempest*, Antonio’s friendship and valour command respect. In making a captain, who is allegedly a pirate, command respect, Shakespeare probably has the topical issue of the Queen’s sea dogs at the back of his mind.

A common denominator of *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* is the shipwreck that makes possible the coming-together of the main protagonists. Yet *Twelfth Night* swaps most of the gender roles of *The Tempest*. Instead of

a hero who lands on the island after the tempest, *Twelfth Night* focuses on a heroine who survives a shipwreck. Viola becomes a counterpart of Ferdinand in their roles as new arrivals on the island, while Orsino becomes the counterpart of Miranda, as both are safe in their home but are powerless in their desires. In addition, the character who holds power on the island turns from Prospero, a patriarchal figure, to Olivia, a countess whose immediate male relatives have all died and who is hence left to command her own household. Though Orsino is the Duke of Illyria, he is not a patriarch like Prospero. The play begins by presenting Orsino's love-sickness.

This weakening of male power is strongly contrasted with the empowering of female characters. Olivia chooses to reject a suit from a most suitable candidate and instead follows her heart's desire in loving a man supposedly below her social rank; Viola chooses to disguise herself as a man to serve a duke whose story fascinates her. These wilful female characters seem to be rather different from the subservient female image one would usually expect of Renaissance women. Yet a close scrutiny of Miranda's part in *The Tempest* reveals her wilfulness as not greatly different from that of Olivia or Viola. After Ferdinand showers compliments on her, Miranda asks him straightforwardly: "Do you love me?" (*Tempest* 3.1.68). And she proposes to him: "I am your wife if you will marry me;/If not, I'll die your maid" (*Tempest* 3.1.83-84). This kind of forwardness is not greatly different from that of Olivia, who after she has mistaken Sebastian for Cesario and found him less resistant than before, summons a priest and arranges an immediate marriage. She tells Sebastian, who she thinks is Cesario: "If you mean well,/Now go with me, and with this holy man,/Into the chantry by" (*Twelfth* 4.3.22-24). In a rather similar fashion, Viola follows her own desires. When she is commissioned by Orsino to woo Olivia, she says to

Orsino: “I’ll do my best/To woo your lady” (*Twelfth* 1.4.39-40) but then she says in an aside, “yet, a barful strife!/Whoe’er I woo, myself would be his wife” (*Twelfth* 1.4.41-42).

Compared to the wilful female characters, the male characters in *Twelfth Night* are relatively powerless and innocent. Orsino never discovers that the young man close to him is in fact a cross-dressed woman, and Sebastian simply agrees to marry Olivia when she proposes, though he finds his good luck rather incredible. When Olivia says, “would thou’dst be rul’d by me,” Sebastian replies, “Madame, I will” (*Twelfth* 4.2.63-64). These lines signify the reversal of gender roles from traditional male dominance to women on top. Even in the subplot that dramatizes what is going on in Olivia’s household, Maria, Olivia’s waiting gentlewoman, is full of wit and tricks Malvolio, Olivia’s steward, into believing that Olivia loves him. The prank provokes a good laugh at the expense of Malvolio, whose image resonates with the other powerless and innocent male images in the play.

Even though there is a real Illyria on earth, in the play this setting seems a dreamland. When Viola first arrives on the island and learns the name of the place from the captain, she says, “And what should I do in Illyria? My brother he is in Elysium” (*Twelfth* 2.1.3-4). Illyria’s link (through alliteration) with Elysium gives the island a surrealistic touch. Moreover, with reversed gender roles on the island, Illyria resembles the island on which Prospero rules—a fictive land in a faraway place across the seas where the usual order and the usual relationships are reconfigured. What makes the protagonists’ adventures possible is sea travel, and *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* share a shipwreck as their common denominator. The sea that causes the disastrous shipwreck at the beginning is eventually proven to be benevolent. As soon as Viola hears Sebastian’s name on Antonio’s lips,

she begins to suspect that he is still alive and says: “O if it prove,/Tempests are kind, and salt waves fresh in love” (*Twelfth* 3.4.393-394).

The dangers of seafaring are also crucial to the development of the plot in *The Merchant of Venice*. Even though there is no actual staging of shipwrecks, Shylock offers a picture of how vulnerable ships can be on the sea:

But ships are
but boards, sailors but men, there be land-rats, and
water-rats, water-thieves, and land-thieves, (I mean
pirates), and then there is the peril of waters, winds,
and rocks. (*Merchant* 1.3.19)

What eventually happens in the play proves that Shylock is quite correct. The failure of Antonio’s ships to return creates a violation of the bond that makes Shylock demand a pound of Antonio’s flesh, as stated in their agreement. It is noteworthy that when Shylock proposes the uncivil terms of having Antonio agree to pay a pound of flesh as eventual penalty, Antonio readily agrees, though Bassanio tries to stop him. Antonio says “Why fear not man, I will not forfeit it” (*Merchant* 1.3.152). Antonio’s complacency is eventually proved to have been foolish.

The Merchant of Venice opens with a discussion of the mental burdens of seafaring for merchants. Antonio is sad but says he does not know why he is so sad, to which Salerio replies: “Your mind is tossing on the ocean” where your “argosies” are sailing (*Merchant* 1.1.7-8). Solanio says,

Believe me sir, had I such venture forth,
The better part of my affections would

Be with my hopes aboard. I should be still
Plucking the grass to know where sits the wind,
Piring in maps for ports, and piers and roads:
And every object that might make me fear
Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt
Would make me sad. (*Merchant* 1.1.15-22)

Salerio adds: “My wind cooling my broth,/Would blow me to an ague when I thought/What harm a wind too great might do at sea” (*Merchant* 1.1.22-24). He elaborates further on how an hour-glass would prompt him to imagine that his ship was docked in sand, and how the stones of a church would make him relate to the “dangerous rocks” in the sea. This vivid description of the mental burdens of a merchant with ships at sea illustrates the risks involved in seafaring. But Antonio denies having such worries and says, “My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,/Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate/Upon the fortune of this present year” (*Merchant* 1.1.42-44). But what he says at this point is not the whole truth, because when Bassanio approaches him to borrow money, Antonio says, “Thou know’st that all my fortunes are at sea” (*Merchant* 1.2.177). These words contradict his earlier comment that his whole estate does not depend upon the fortune of that year. And then what happens next is Antonio staking his own life on the risky ventures of his ships. He says to the worried Bassanio, after he has agreed to go to the notary’s with Shylock to seal the bond, “Come on, in this there can be no dismay,/My ships come home a month before the day” (*Merchant* 1.3.176-77).

When compared to Solanio and Salerio’s description of their excessive worries about their ships, Antonio’s confidence about the return of his ones is naive. The perils of seafaring in the Renaissance, in the absence of

modern nautical equipment, far exceeded those of our own era. Reports of misfortunes at sea were common in Shakespeare's time. William Strachey's *A True Reportory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight, upon and from the Islands of the Bermudas: His Coming to Virginia and the Estate of that Colony Then and After, under the Government of the Lord La Warr, July 15, 1610* is a good example. "[Strachey's] account of a shipwreck on an enchanted isle," according to Hobson Woodward, was the inspiration for *The Tempest* (2009:182). Since it is generally believed that Strachey's work inspired Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, it is reasonable to think that reports of this kind also contextualised *The Merchant of Venice*. Therefore, even though Antonio may think that the penalty Shylock is proposing is "overwhelmingly likely to remain uncollected" (to borrow Spencer's words 1988:102), Bassanio's concern is more realistic than imaginative, and Shakespeare has already created the atmosphere for such a worry early in the play by including Solanio and Salerio's description of merchants' mental burdens for their ships. Moreover, by choosing Salerio as Antonio's messenger to Portia's home, the play reminds us of what Salerio had said at the beginning of the action about the dangers of seafaring.

Nevertheless, the sad news from Salerio is later proven to be incorrect. Near the end of the play, Portia gives Antonio a letter and tells him the good news contained within it: "There you should find three of your argosies/are richly come to harbour suddenly" (*Merchant* 5.1.276). This late information of the recovery of three of Antonio's ships reminds one of how unpredictable and unmanageable the seafaring business is. How Portia has acquired the information and the letter remains unknown, as she states that "You shall not know by what strange accident/I chanced on this letter"

(*Merchant* 5.1.279-30). John Russel Brown's annotation comments that "this beautiful example of Shakespeare's dramatic impudence has been severely criticized by some pundits" (1964:138). Yet the fact that it is Portia who has this information adds a magical touch to her role. Earlier in the play, when she cross-dresses to help Antonio out, she has already manifested her good logic. The joke she plays with Bassanio's ring is rather similar to the tricks Prospero plays via Ariel to those shipwrecked. In a sense, Portia's knowledge and wit make her almost a female counterpart of Prospero. Even though she does not have any power to command a tempest, she has information about ships which even their owners have lost track of. Yet she differs from Prospero in her heartfelt forgiveness for her husband after he has given away the ring she had given to him as a love token. According to Auden, Prospero "has the coldness of someone who has come to the conclusion that human nature is not worth much" (2003:57), but in Portia no such coldness exists. While Prospero's magic to command the tempest may signify man's wish to dominate the sea, Portia's unexplained information about Antonio's ships symbolises a mysterious relationship between woman and the sea.

The quintessential plot element in *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice* is the danger of seafaring. In *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*, the female characters cross-dress for reasons related to a shipwreck. Even in *The Tempest*, where a patriarchal figure like Prospero holds royal power, Miranda benefits from what the sea brings to her. One of the most interesting things about women's relationship with the sea in *The Tempest* is that the journey which takes the king's company onboard a ship is for the king's daughter, Claribel. This absentee from the play, who marries the king of Tunis, is the cause of the sea-crossing from Italy which gives an

opportunity for Prospero to sink the ship. After the shipwreck, the king laments,

Would I had never
Married my daughter there! For, coming thence
My son is lost, and, in my rate, she too,
Who is so far from Italy removed
I ne'er again shall see her. (*Tempest* 2.1.103-107)

The king's words reveal that distance across seas creates great obstacles to the meeting of people who live far away from each other. In *The Tempest*, when Antonio is encouraging Sebastian to usurp his brother's crown, he says that the next heir of Naples after Ferdinand is Claribel, Queen of Tunis, but she is not to be feared because: "she that dwells/Ten leagues beyond man's life; she that from Naples/Can have no note" (*Tempest* 2.1.241-43). Again, this shows the barriers the sea can create between the rightful queen and her inheritance. Though the reason why Claribel marries the ruler of a faraway country across the seas is not mentioned in the play, the marriage stimulates imagination about her adventure. Moreover, it is this absentee who initiates the trip that is crucial to the plot. So after all, Claribel's marriage overseas in *The Tempest* signifies a new possibility for women.

To conclude, even though in the Renaissance the sea was a male domain, Shakespeare would not allow the enormous fantasies of the English during his time regarding sea adventures to exclude women in his theatrical space. Within the imaginative space of Shakespeare's "wooden O," maritime space is dramatised as a space of liberty and opportunity for women. This aspect may have appealed powerfully to his female audience because whereas

in reality they found themselves excluded from an extremely fascinating element of their own culture, they could find their comfort from the wild imagination of theatrical space. This wild imagination also harps on a “supreme irony” of the time, which, to borrow Carol Hansen’s words, is that “a woman, Elizabeth I, was running the whole show, or to be more precise, the whole country” (1993:4). She was the one who commanded the navy and the privateers, her sea dogs. Not unlike Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, who knows about the fate of Antonio’s ships, Queen Elizabeth commanded information about ships at sea. Not unlike Claribel, who was the reason for the king’s sea-crossing in *The Tempest*, Queen Elizabeth commanded many activities on the sea, including her most famous triumph, that over the Spanish Armada.

It is notable that Queen Elizabeth’s great triumph over the Spanish Armada was the result of “a great tempest” (Kay 1992:104). Shakespeare’s career as a dramatist began, “in the years immediately following the defeat of the Spanish Armada” (Kay 1992:104). It is hence reasonable to believe that Shakespeare would remember the significance of the tempest in his Queen’s glorious triumph over the Spanish. Though in *The Tempest* Shakespeare creates a *male* character who commands the tempest, it is rather interesting to link the positive outcome of the tempest for Miranda with what the tempest meant to Queen Elizabeth in the war against the Spanish Armada. The imaginative world of Shakespeare’s theatrical space reflects the historical reality of his time - the tempest has impacts not just on men on board ships, but on women too. Yet there is a great difference between Shakespeare’s imaginative world and historical reality when it comes to the marriage issue. In the three comedies related to seafaring, the female characters end up with good men to marry, while Queen Elizabeth did not.

It is well known that Queen Elizabeth carried on many marriage negotiations but never married. Many reports of Elizabeth's actions, as Ilona Bell comments, "disturbed conceptions of sex and gender and challenged the patriarchal assumptions underlying politics and marriage" (2010:xii). The attack of the Spanish Armada could even be considered the result of Queen Elizabeth's failed marriage negotiations with King Philip of Spain, as he was her first 'husband candidate' when she became queen but she refused his marriage proposal. According to William Camden, when the Spanish Armada withdrew from the English seas in 1588, "the Queen with a masculine Spirit came and took a View of her Army and Camp at Tilbury," and she rode about "sometimes with a martial Pace, another while gently like a Woman" (1970: 326). The description pinpoints the Queen's embodiment of both masculine and feminine traits. It is perhaps presumptuous to argue that Shakespeare has the self-styled virgin Queen in mind when he wrote these comedies about women crossing the seas and cross-dressing for love and for marriage, but it is undoubtedly interesting to forge the imaginative link.

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**PATTERNS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF
SHAKESPEAREAN LOVE: HUBRIS, INFATUATION, AGAPE
IN *HAMLET***

BIANCA FOGHEL

University of the West, Timișoara

Abstract: The more conceptually elusive love has proven to be, the more it has whetted humanity's appetite to try to narrow it down. Could one say that Shakespeare is one of the few personalities that managed not only to exemplify almost all recurrent patterns of love, but also to recreate them, in his case, within his plays? Is love weak, or is it so strong that it gives life to a character, only to overwhelm and destroy him/her later? Are there any archetypal emotional stages, or is it a fiery combustion? These are all questions which this paper will attempt to discuss with regard to *Hamlet*.

Keywords: Agape, gender stereotypes, Hubris, love dynamics, women between virtue and evil

Shakespeare's genius has proven to be a source of endless discussions, critical publications and stage representations that have clearly placed him at the head of any list of playwrights, not only in England, but in the whole world. The celebrated figure Shakespeare has become has much to do with the celebrated individuals in his plays.

The present work deals with what is generally accepted as one of Shakespeare's most famous plays, without paying special attention to chronology or other structure-related issues, but focusing much more on matters of emotional interest in Shakespearean drama, the coexistence of the two genders, its evolution or involution, whether it is constructive or destructive. Alongside these major divisions, I have begun the paper with a brief introduction to the concept of *love*, as this is the starting point and the favourable environment for the development of inter-gender relationships.

As mentioned earlier, this analysis focuses on the problematic issue of *love*, which has at times a very abstract meaning, a meaning that medieval or Renaissance philosophers tried to reshape into a more palpable concept, even though they could never attain the incontestable complexity and depth of Shakespeare, one of the most celebrated figures of the Elizabethan age. It is clear that the patterns revolving around love are construed according to other, broader paradigms, such as that of the social and historical context that to a great extent shape gender dynamics. The deviations that may occur at any paradigmatic level are due to more subtle social co-ordinates such as epistemology, ethics and metaphysics. However, Hamlet's solitary self is set against social custom, which makes him a very early instance of Modernism. Modern interpretations of the play propose strong psychological motivation for him and Freud has taught us much about such contradictory states of mind (since Hamlet both asserts and denies his love for Ophelia), but in part

he is responding to Renaissance stereotypes of women. Eve or the Virgin Mary: women were seen either as extremely flawed or as paragons of virtue. Since few real women approach perfection, they are seen as evil, especially vulnerable to the Devil and his wiles, situated between the virginal ingénue and the villainous temptress, but always at an extreme. Ophelia must therefore head for the nunnery, or she will inevitably be corrupted and Gertrude has already fallen:

If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for
thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as
snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a
nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs
marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough
what monsters you make of them. (Jonathan / Rasmussen 2007:1959)

“Women in early modern England, as elsewhere in Europe, benefited from a limited range of scripts as specific contexts in which they lived or as descriptors of their status or character. [...] Female categories were either domestic, with a moral connotation – virgin, wife, mother – or antisocial – scold, whore, witch” (Percec 2006:190).

During the Middle Ages, the Church was the decisive pillar for most societies; thus, however paradoxically, affective freedom was “dictated” by restrictions and theories that did not always have a positive effect upon people’s morale. Sexuality was not seen as an implicit part of a marital relationship, but rather as an act devoid of pleasure and clearly oriented towards leaving heirs and closing a financial deal between the two families involved. By the end of the 11th century, the church was the exclusive owner of marriage.

During the Renaissance, philosophers such as Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) developed highly elaborate theories relating the idea of *love* to psychological concepts, much closer in meaning to the contemporary perception of the notion. For that period, Ficino's perspective, which sees love as a game of knowledge as well as an unconscious overlapping of our inner self and the external image of the loved one, brings fineness to the concept, breaking with tradition and setting it on a much higher level in the hierarchy of values. The Renaissance period focuses on the singularity of the individual and so does Ficino. Men and women are equally entitled to express themselves through art, feeling and emotion. The patriarchal society of the Middle Ages was no longer as common in the Renaissance, since this era took both genders into account, feminine beauty and sexuality being as inspiring as masculine. In this context, where order is constantly asserted, the fact that it is a woman who is seen as

the cause of the excess and deficiency in the play [...] takes on further resonance, seeming to echo another fundamental drama of psychic experience as described by Freud. This is the drama of sexual difference where the woman appears as the cause of just such a failure in representation, as something deficient, lacking or threatening to the systems and identities which are the precondition not only of integrated artistic form but also of so-called normal adult psychic and sexual life (Rose 1985:96).

This is how the idea of the destructive power of love upon the human soul is introduced. Hamlet experiences this collapse, runs it through the filter of his mind, articulates it through his ambiguous language, but is unable to figure out strategies for solving it, because the troubled relationships between men and women are the consequence of a constant interpretation,

misinterpretation and reinterpretation of each other's feelings and their reliability. The various meanings of words build a linguistic maze, just like the emotional maze built by gender discrepancies, where the Shakespearean heroes lose their way, and hence the opposition between the signified and the signifier, thus the irreversibility of the situation, the final collapse and the hope that the irreversible will become reversible, at least at a spiritual level. It seems that these Shakespearean psychological patterns have continued to reverberate up to the present day, without having lost their applicability to human nature.

The patterns of love in particular are extremely complex and intricate, display enormous powers of representation. Their timelessness is certainly due to their accuracy and psychological reliability: traits and behavioural propensities, even though often deviant, never seem unnatural or without motivation. The reader or the spectator comes to relate to the characters in such a profound way that she/he senses the motivational triggers behind each histrionic act or discourse.

In the case of Hamlet, Ficino has given us the theory of the pathological consequences of love that underlines the essence of the play, the state of mind of the protagonist and the influence of love upon him. Hamlet's constant melancholy is not only the result of the evil eye, his love for Ophelia, but also a consequence of the loss of his ability to love, thus his disgust for femininity and sexuality and his desire for vengeance. Melancholy, hubris and the associated loss of contact with reality take over Hamlet, forcing him to remain on the path of vengeance throughout the play and to experience all its symptoms, namely anomalous behaviour, emotional instability, and an inevitable and gradual loss of sanity. He expects perfection from the other, as he presumably believes himself to be capable of delivering it; Ophelia in

particular is burdened with such an expectation of perfection, and Hamlet associates her physical beauty with lecherousness:

That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should
admit no discourse to your beauty. (Jonathan / Rasmussen 2007:1958)

Hamlet experiences his greatest peril when he feels betrayed by Ophelia's love and he himself becomes unable to love and falls into the trap of unfathomable hubris, allowing his idealistic urge for vengeance to take over his entire soul, casting aside any possibility of achieving *agape*, the only redeeming form of love. *Agape*, the Greek term for pure, spiritual love, is meant to designate the supreme feeling, fiery and serene at the same time, but always authentic. It represents pure Eros, the ascension of the soul towards the supreme union, "beyond all forms of love that are possible in a human's life, therefore a type of love that has nothing to do with marriage" (Percec 2006:235). Ophelia tells of how she witnessed Hamlet uttering a sigh that seemed to "end his being". An end that could also have been considered a beginning: the birth of a new man dedicated to the proposition that the opposite of reason is not madness, but true feeling. However, the clear-mindedness necessary for attaining *agape* and overcoming his ego eventually eludes him because of his irresolution and inaction. He knows that authenticity of feeling is paramount, but since everything around him seems to reek of betrayal, he cannot devote his extreme self-consciousness to moulding his character powerfully enough. Owing to his highly developed intellectual powers - and his broad and many-sided sympathies, Hamlet can never take a simple view of any question - but always sees a number of different aspects and possible explanations for every problem. A given course of action has never seemed to him unequivocal and obvious, so that in

practical life his scepticism and reflective powers have paralysed his conduct. He thus stands for what may roughly be called the type of an intellect overdeveloped at the expense of the will, held up as a warning example of losing oneself in abstract trains of thought at the expense of contact with reality. He does not even accept that someone else can feel a sorrow as poignant as that he himself experiences; when Laertes bewails the premature death of his sister, Hamlet swiftly intervenes:

What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane. (Jonathan / Rasmussen 2007:1990)

And in the same passage he reasserts his love, a love that has undergone too many extreme stages of metamorphosis, from utter abandonment, to denial, rejection and reacceptance:

I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her? (Jonathan / Rasmussen 2007:1991)

Misogyny, another pattern in gender dynamics, becomes omnipresent in his relationship with women, Ophelia now being constantly rejected, treated with arrogance, insulted and disrespected, while Gertrude is denied as a mother-figure and seen as an incestuous being who is unworthy of his filial affection. Since for the common societal frame sexuality entails danger and “violates property, Gertrude’s impropriety (‘her ‘o’erhasty’ marriage’) [...] provokes a crisis which overturns the sexual identity of the central male

character of the drama. Hamlet, in response to his mother's 'flagrancy', projects the same flagrancy onto the image of the innocent Ophelia" (Rose 1985:97). For Hamlet, Gertrude's blatant sexuality makes her less than human, lacking "discourse of reason" (III. ii. 150), being the victim of infatuation and lust for power.

Therefore, Ophelia is the person that suffers longer-term, since her conflict with Hamlet is not her only problem, her father's death being another reason for her grief. The death of the loved person is the only possible end to the path of vengeance. The prince does not stop until he has destroyed Ophelia, since all he can perceive now in the essence of femininity is the lack of this essence, namely "nothingness". It is as if Hamlet had eradicated a feeling that was potentially going to evolve from sheer infatuation to a pure and requited love. He disrupts with his spite the naturalness of a gradually growing intensity, and everything in his perception converges around the *void* that remains after Ophelia's love is thrust aside, which he naively hopes to fill again by avenging his father. The love-vengeance association is an archetypal one, and as history and literature have taught us, this is not the first time that the latter has prevailed, stirred by inherent hubris. It seems that the love between Hamlet and Ophelia was a mere combustion that once ablaze burned itself to ashes. Polonius warns Ophelia about the transience of mere infatuation:

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,
Even in their promise, as it is a-making,
You must not take for fire. (Jonathan / Rasmussen 2007:1978)

The two women, Gertrude and Ophelia, are equally important for Hamlet's existence, but they differ and are actually opposites in terms of their personalities: one is weak and transparent, while the other is powerful. They both end up dying for the protagonist's sake, for his understanding of the true meaning of things, for the ending of all his questions and dilemmas. However, is Hamlet really in love with Ophelia? And conversely, does Ophelia ever say or do anything to indicate she loves Hamlet or is it all a matter of egocentric infatuation?

Hamlet tells the story from the standpoint of the *void* itself. The mysterious opacity, the central recalcitrance which baffles and resists interpretation, is none other than woman and desire. In *Hamlet* that opacity, while closely related to female sexuality, is quite evidently the protagonist himself, whose enigmatic nature is legendary in world literature. The particular form of negativity which Hamlet experiences is melancholia, augmented by hubris which, rather like paranoid jealousy, drains the world of value and dissolves it into nauseating nothingness:

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self- slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world. (Jonathan / Rasmussen 2007:1978)

What Hamlet has importantly lost appears to be less his father than his mother, who has committed at least two grievous errors: she has revealed herself capable of desire, a scandalous thing in a woman, let alone in a mother, and that desire is not for Hamlet himself, but for another man. Once

the imaginary relation between Hamlet and Gertrude has been ruptured by the entry of Claudius, Hamlet teeters hesitantly on the brink of the *symbolic order* (the system of allotted sexual and social roles in society), unable and unwilling to take up a determinate position within it. Indeed he spends most of his time eluding whatever social and sexual positions society offers him, whether as chivalric lover, obedient avenger or future king. This inner being, as he coldly informs Gertrude, evades the mask of the signifier:

Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly. These, indeed, seem;
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passes show –
These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (I .ii.77-86)

Hamlet's reluctance or inability to re-enter the symbolic order, and his revulsion from the sexuality which reproduces it, are in one sense regressive states of being. His Oedipal attachment to his mother fragments his being, since it swerves round all determinate objects (Ophelia, filial duty, political power) that cannot be represented other as a lack. But this psychological regression is also, paradoxically, a kind of social progressiveness. Hamlet is a radically transitional figure, stretched out between a traditional social order to which he is marginal, and a future epoch of achieved bourgeois individualism which will succeed it. Because of this we can glimpse in him a negative critique of the forms of subjectivity typical

of both these regimes. It is his regressiveness which makes him so modern: eccentric to the traditional order but still oppressed by it, unable to transgress its definitive limits into a fully alternative style of being. This is why many commentators have discerned something peculiarly “modernist” in Hamlet, apart from being one of the earliest representations of the Freudian Oedipal complex and its somewhat extreme manifestations. The French critic Henri Fluchère, who sees *Hamlet* as “the first Shakespearean drama which can lay claim to both extremes in personality and universality”, interprets the play as a symbolic representation of the battle between man and his destiny, his temptations and contradictions. (Johnson, *A Lecture on Shakespeare’s Hamlet*).

The character of Hamlet could easily be placed in a distant sphere of the incomprehensible and the unknown, since to understand Hamlet is to reflect on the constitution of the human mind. Being a victim of mere meditation, Hamlet has lost his capacity, his natural power of action, thus becoming the drama of a man who does not hesitate to confront his own imperfections and who refuses illusions and idealistic appearances:

What piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me [...] (Jonathan / Rasmussen 2007:1970)

– Hamlet’s response to his friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, when he realises that they are acting on the King’s behalf. Hamlet associates the human immanent imperfection of character with that of love, thus rejecting this only redeeming feeling. The tragedy, Fluchère tells us (Johnson,

Lecture on Hamlet), takes place above all in Hamlet's consciousness, as all the events which form the play's framework are reduced to a symbolic representation, to an internal unrest which no action will resolve and no decision will quell. The deepest theme, masked by that of vengeance, is none other than human nature itself, confronted by the metaphysical and moral problems moulded by love, time, death, perhaps even the principle of identity and quality, not to say *being and nothingness*.

The troubles encountered by the young Prince are not only the result of his discovering the murder of his father and the incest committed by his mother and uncle, but also stem from his idealism that causes him to link the whole of humanity to the flaws of those around him. Throughout the play, Hamlet teaches the audience the depths of his depression through soliloquies that convey a very embittered and cynical outlook on life. The foremost cause for his exasperation is repulsion towards his mother's actions, as he cries out – "Frailty, thy name is woman". The Prince develops a burning hatred that goes beyond his mother and extends to women in general. It is this furious mindset that is responsible for his terrible treatment of sweet, innocent Ophelia in Act III.

However, it is not always like that. Hamlet is theoretically very much in love with Ophelia up to that particular point. The only problem is that we do not see that stage of their relationship, "the very ecstasy of love"; we see neither Hamlet as a lover, nor Ophelia expressing her affection for the Prince of Denmark, because the days when he supposedly expressed his love were before the opening of the drama, before his father's spirit revisited the earth. We only see him as drowning in a sea of trouble, of perplexities, of agonies, of terror. It is as if the reader or the spectator is presented with the ashes of a love prematurely buried in the ground of human flaws.

It has been stated that “in the case of love, the object’s image is corrected at the innermost level because of the subject’s desire to harmonize it with their most secret aspirations” (Percec 2006:227). What is somewhat sinister is that Hamlet’s idealism paradoxically exhibits nihilistic hues, since although powerful enough to create almost palpable associations in his mind it is blinded by hubris and thus lacks the power to redeem Ophelia in his eyes. He admits to Ophelia:

I am myself indifferent honest;
but yet I could accuse me of such things that it
were better my mother had not borne me: *I am very
proud, revengeful, ambitious*, with more offences at
my beck than I have thoughts to put them in,
imagination to give them shape, or time to act them
in. What should such fellows as I do crawling
between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves,
all; believe none of us. (Jonathan / Rasmussen 2007:1958, my emphasis)

This excessively idealistic ambition might actually be a representation of the Greek term *hamartia*, a term more properly understood as an error in action rather than as a fatal weakness of character. To think of the tragic hero as afflicted with a ‘fatal flaw’ is to simplify and misunderstand the complex problem of the tragic protagonist and the society with which he or she is in conflict. “Defining the tragic hero mainly in terms of a flaw makes it too easy for us to pigeonhole the experience of a complicated character and thus insulates us from complicity in that character’s responsibility or guilt.” (McDonald 1996:169). Hamlet is frequently described as flawed by an inability to make up his mind, but the Prince of Denmark is a staunch seeker after truth, a subtle thinker who wants to know the facts and then to act

rightly on the basis of what he knows. The play represents the collision between the hero's admirable aim and the traps and obstacles that the world places in his way. Hamlet's hesitation may derive from a "laudable moral repugnance at undertaking the role of the avenging son. [...] But his idealism carries a tragically high price – the death of Polonius, the suffering and suicide of Ophelia, and the entrapment of the hero in the very world he has set out to oppose" (McDonald 1996:170).

During the Middle Ages and subsequently, in the Renaissance period, many questions were asked regarding the human being. On the one hand, the focus of these questions were men and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola considered that when God said man was free to decide for himself about the way in which he wished to live, He was referring to Adam only. Women were considered filthy and were associated with sexuality and sin by the Fathers of the Church, who thought Eve was to be blamed for the original sin. Men who longed for atonement had to stay away from women and women had to stay away from themselves (Verdon 2009:50). Tertullian answers the question "What is a woman?" by listing a long series of vices (the enemy of friendship, a necessary evil, the essence of evil, the primal temptation).

It was very frequent at that time to make a Manichean distinction between the sexes: active-passive, soul-body, good-evil, valuable-useless, and although this distinction was diminished, for Aristotle, woman was considered an error of nature, while for Thomas Aquinas she was "an imperfect man" (Verdon 2009:51). Both Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle thought woman played a very important part in the house, always depending on male authority; the fact that women were indispensable did not mean they were equal.

However, in Shakespeare's dramas women play an important role. Love is a matter that brings about conflicts and interior tensions, but it is

definitely needed in order to show the humane side of the characters in general and the protagonist in particular. Hamlet falls in love with the beautiful Ophelia despite the fact that this unleashes a battle between sexes, between Hamlet's highly rational life and Ophelia's instincts, between his philosophical judgment and her romantic vision.

Ophelia is generally considered the victim of the play. She is a victim of her own weaknesses first of all, a victim of Hamlet, of Gertrude, of her father Polonius and even of King Claudius - Claudius' killing of Hamlet's father brings about Hamlet's scheme to make people think he is mad which brings about the death of Polonius, which leads to Ophelia's death. Her death also raises questions - was it an accident or a suicide?

She is a rather static, one-dimensional character; she is manipulated by most of the people she cares for and although she has the potential to become a tragic heroine, she does not manage to overcome fear and instead crumbles into insanity, becoming merely tragic. Like King Lear, Ophelia finds that in madness she can think and say things that would be impossible in the sanity of a supposedly ordered society. Does she use the language of flowers to attack Gertrude and Claudius? Ophelia's madness, brought on by her frustrated love and the bizarre way her father was killed by her loved one, seems less ambiguous than Hamlet's for her language and behaviour are clearly irrational. Gertrude is, more so than any other character in the play, the antithesis of her son, Hamlet. Hamlet is a scholar and a philosopher, searching for life's most elusive answers. He cares nothing for this "mortal coil" and the vices to which man has become slave.

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,--
O wicked wit, and gifts that have the power

So to seduce!--won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen. (Jonathan / Rasmussen
2007:1978)

The philosophy of Shakespeare's plays is a careful observation and meditation upon human beings, life and a kaleidoscope of human relations, "by the assimilation of the ancient wisdom; morals is conveyed either in laughter or in the moments of solemn resignation, hesitation or despair. Shakespeare wrote for people's most secret tastes for comedy and tragedy, man's ascent and decline" (Olaru 1976:398). And "the rest is silence".

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“IN THE HEAD OF THE WORTHIEST WOMEN”:
AMAZON QUEENS AND PERFORMING HEROINES IN
JACOBAN COURT MASQUES

MICHELE DE BENEDICTIS

Università degli Studi di Cassino

Abstract: Queen Anne of Denmark's role – as actress and patroness – in emancipating womanliness onstage by direct performance is strictly connected to the emerging trend of fashioning masques in the early Jacobean court. My paper will focus on the connection/contamination of this dramatic phenomenon with the current imagery of acting warlike heroines, conflicting Anne's policy for entertainments with masculine and royal anxieties.

Keywords: Amazons, Ben Jonson, Jacobean court, masques, Queen Anne

THESEUS Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, with revelling.

(William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I.i.16-19)

In Act I scene II of *Timon of Athens*, Shakespeare – probably with Middleton's collaboration – introduces on stage his sample of disguised Amazons as masquers for upper-class entertainment. During the banquet, a group of dancing ladies, halfway between modern showgirls and classical prostitutes, enact a licentious spectacle of flattering sensuality before the euphoric Timon, while Apemantus's asides condemn them as emblems of the corrupt debauchery of contemporary Athens, since he perceives contact with their revelling bodies as an infective source of physical and moral contagion for society (Fulton 1979:288-90). There are no stage directions or textual details for their costumes and specific movements during this teasing show, but the routine prejudice against female performers for displaying their moving (theatrical) bodies as magnets for pleasing male gazes seems here partially lessened by the fact that actually these Amazons, apart from the dramatic diaphragm provided by the stage, were not women at all (in

Jacobean revenge tragedies by Webster and Middleton, female characters attending court festivals and masquing revels are often charged with over-indulgence in dissolute pastimes and sexual incontinence. Cf. Butler 2008:128-29).

Indeed, in English Renaissance drama all female roles were canonically filled by professional male players suitably cross-dressed: formally, the acting stage was forbidden to real women, who did not at that time put their own identities and reputations at risk in common playhouses in order to attract attention as theatrical artefacts, even if within a fictional context. Their appeal as fetishised objects of male desire proved to be less tangible in theatres precisely because of the concrete absence of real female bodies on display.

This angle, projected towards theatrical seduction, proves to be further complicated if we consider that Amazon imagery already includes many ambivalent elements that lie on the borderline between genders, often with implications of repulsion (Carney 2003:117-18). Commonplace sources, ranging from classical mythography to Early Modern accounts from exotic lands, describe them as unruly women committed to transgress those formal codes imposed by men on their sex, subverting a (supposed) natural and patriarchal order in exercising male prerogatives. Thus Amazons were generally portrayed as aggressive un-domestic women, cruel devotees of hunting and war, fiercely proud in their self-seclusion from male communities, and free to exercise their androgynous chastity or brutish lust without men's consent. Their femino-centric attitude was commonly branded as a barbarous instance of rebellion against the precepts of a traditional civilisation which was still dependent on the ideal paradigm of passive women, subjected to male control and bereft of "performative" places to exhibit their warlike virtues through an antagonistic stance.

During Elizabeth I's reign this paranoid bias against the unwomanly monstrosity inherent in Amazonian tropes had been reduced by the crucial impact of a powerful female ruler - remembered as *divina virago* for her celebrated speech at Tilbury on the eve of the battle against the Spanish Armada, and retrospectively depicted as an Amazonian queen (during her lifetime, probably to avoid any allusive inconvenience, Elizabeth I was never officially compared to, or associated with, Amazon warriors, both in panegyric works and public entertainments).

These bellicose masculine elements related to Elizabeth's virtues enhanced her popularity, yet without impairing her womanly identity. Amazons no longer met with scornful overtones, while their militant heroism was progressively rehabilitated through oblique correlations with the Tudor sovereign (Jackson 1988:49-52). In this period diverse entertainments offered as official tributes to Elizabeth featured Amazons in a more favourable light, though their roles were still performed by male actors as in public theatres (Schleiner 1978:163-68).

James's accession to the English throne by 1603 – as a king well-known for his misogynistic attitudes and strategic hostility to war – justified the tendency to invert this process, and Amazons were increasingly re-perceived as a symbolic threat to ruling male sovereignty, and accordingly condemned for being agents of disorder/subversion who fostered male anxieties about gender hegemony through their illegitimate appropriation of manly privileges – as well as evoking by parallel the nostalgic spectre of Elizabeth's militant heroism, so dangerous for James's policy of self-propaganda (Orgel 1990:123-26).

Theatrical Amazons in Shakespeare and Fletcher's Jacobean tragicomedies, after a riotous preamble of conflict, are conventionally tamed to be re-shaped as respectful consorts, subaltern to their triumphing

husbands and rulers (see, for instance, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1614) and *The Sea Voyage* (1622), once they have shed their inborn warlike attitudes to fulfil a romantic happy ending of familial reconciliation and incorporation (Carney 2003:121-26). The first relevant encounter between Shakespeare's drama and mythical Amazons, however, dates back to his comical production in Elizabethan period. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the character of the warrior-queen Hippolyta anticipates that condition of obedience to her husband (Theseus) recurring for Amazons in future tragicomedies. (Cf. Carney 2003:119-21)

Those who try to resist this scheme are doomed to ill-famed banishment giving way to self-destruction, as in the tragic case of Fletcher's Boadicea, the martial Queen of the Iceni fighting against the Roman occupier, protagonist of *The Tragedie of Bonduca*. Her defiant and Amazon-like attempts to subject the enemy (male) soldiers to an emasculating form of disarmed captivity turns out to be condemned even by her countrymen as an immoral war crime; militant heroism seems here to repel women's deviant intromission into warfare, previously regarded as exclusive territory for male authority (Crawford 1999:362-66). Obviously, this attitude, once transposed from the stage to the contingent self-assumption of kingship, could properly conform to James's absolutistic and misogynistic perspective of patriarchal rule, imposed as a norm on all his subjects, including his restless wife (formerly princess of Denmark, and Queen of Scotland when her husband had reigned there as James VI) Queen Anne. Nevertheless the queen consort – the first after more than fifty years in England, and actually James's first loyal subject and closest courtier – did not acquiesce in submissively accepting this position, and now and then reacted to this autocratic male

policy with strategic acts of resistance, more or less implicitly, always circumventing a strenuous posture of overt antagonism.

The first auxiliary channel elected by Anne to counterbalance a super-imposed male-centric scenario at court consisted in the cultural activities promoted by her own private circle and household, a centre of influence and political identity alternative to that of the King. The Queen was surrounded by eminent scholars and artists in her private court; she was universally renowned as a patroness of culture, extending the promotion of her power and dignity through the renowned contribution of cultural innovation. This dynamism could be plainly ascribed to the contingent interplay between different circles within the Jacobean court which, far from being a monolithic structure of uniform interests, actually involved a complex network of factions competing for primacy in influence and lustre. Furthermore, during their years in England, Anne gradually lost a conspicuous amount of James's esteem and attention – carnally too – becoming gradually detached from his private life, to be replaced by his male favourites, and barely tolerated for her meddling in the King's public affairs. In this context of increasing distance and disaffection she sponsored a particular type of dramatic entertainment to voice her (female) authority and disturb, without a direct offensive, the rhetorical monologue of James's masculine assertiveness (Lewalski 1993:19-23, 43).

By 1603 the court masque was a theatrical genre still uncoded and open to experimentation. Being considered an instrument for royal propaganda, whose task consisted in allegorically celebrating the royal majesty at suitable annual festivities and state events, these court entertainments were commonly deemed direct emanations from the throne, liable to mirror its inherent priorities within a context of stately revels. Nevertheless, Queen Anne strove to modify this implied canon, aiming

primarily to promote her royal *persona* in opposition to previous standards, taking part in a radical re-contextualization of conventions for masques which can be seen as evidence of female influence over court activities (Wynne-Davies 1992:80-82).

The usual formula of court masque provided a dramatic interaction between professional actors playing speaking parts and mute gentlemen disguised as masquers. Elaborate dances and songs matched their acted performances, which canonically culminated in inviting the noble audience to an inclusive ritual of revels, alongside the feasting banquet. Generally, the initial section of these ceremonial exchanges between playing characters and the noble audience respected a specific gendered etiquette: each gentleman masquer took from the onlookers a (pre-selected) noble lady – married or not – to involve her in dancing, according to the eminence of their position or factional partnerships (a complete analysis of the ritual scansion of masque in specific choreographic phases is discussed in Barroll 2001:84-88, 94-97).

Beyond political concern, this ritual of union symbolically celebrated the prolific alliance between the two sexes, a harmonious instance of heterosexual integration projected to symbolise fertility and social continuity through generative conjunction. The official occasions for masques were also often associated with strategic marriages among the prominent members of the nobility (Lanier 1999:328-31). The first source of sensual desirability in this practice, however, depended strictly on the exclusive ability of masquing lords to show their bodily skill in extremely refined dancing – reserved to male courtiers – and combined with the elaborate pomp of their theatrical costumes: the overall extent of female display, in this case, was overshadowed by the Lords' performative preeminence, and circumscribed barely to complement this affected parade of male masquers, through the modest hubris of a deferential attitude (Ravelhofer 2009:108-11).

When, as main patroness, Queen Anne appointed Samuel Daniel and Ben Jonson as official dramatists for writing court masques, this fashion evolved into an innovative multi-gendered perspective during the following decade, the period remembered for Anne's leadership in court entertainment. This cycle began with Samuel Daniel's *The Vision of Twelve Goddesses* (1604), the first court masque – and likely also a public theatrical work in Renaissance England – to include a group of women playing a series of female characters. Differently from England and according to the sixteenth century tradition of Scottish court entertainments, female performers were already tolerated on public occasions, which James and Anne directly enjoyed during their regency in Scotland. (Cf. McManus 2002: 68-90)

These performers weren't ordinary courtiers, but the choicest ladies of the Queen's circle, playing the part of twelve ancient deities – among them Venus, Diana and Astraea – before an audience composed of the highest ranks of the kingdom along with eminent diplomatic guests (McManus 2002:101-105). Anne chose for herself during the staging the independent role of Pallas/Athena, the warlike and virginal goddess reputed to represent wisdom and learning: she deliberately rejected the part of Juno, queen consort of Jupiter in Olympus, to give specific emphasis to her autonomous image, once disconnected from the ordinary conjugal subtext intended to celebrate the royal couple.

In his dedication to Lucy, Countess of Bedford, Daniel did not omit to illustrate how worthily Pallas's part was played by 'the magnificent Queen' also remembered for her 'heroicall spirit' (Daniel 1981:25) in embodying this mythical figure. In the main masque, moreover, her praiseworthy profile is enhanced by the description of the armed Anne/Pallas, as viewed by her charmed audience, who shows off onstage supplied with all the symbolic paraphernalia typically related to this goddess,

including veiled allusions to the Elizabethan imagery of the warrior queen, whose militant aura Anne seems here to inherit as figurative echo. Probably Anne adapted for this masque an old dress from Queen Elizabeth I's wardrobe as costume for Pallas, exactly to express a sign of female continuity inside the English court by re-embodiment the features of her illustrious predecessor. (See McManus 2002: 107-109)

She feels more inclined to be inspired by the previous Queen's divine attributes than to mirror any simplified version of male heroism within a womanly dramatic body:

Next war-like Pallas, in her helmet dressed
With lance of winning, target of defence:
In whom both wit and courage are expressed,
To get with glory, hold with providence.
(*The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, ll. 294-7)

No longer marginalised to (co-)operate merely as ideological support for complementing royal male agency, through Anne's involvement, the noble ladies in the guise of silent performers achieved an unprecedented centrality in court entertainments by exposing onstage their moving bodies to signify their self-sufficient priorities and virtues evoked by a female-only pantheon. This opportunity permitted them to establish a physical contact directly with spectators' senses unprecedented for court gendered theatricality, upsetting even the traditional sequence of taking-out for revels, because in this case ladies were assigned to invite their lords to dance. Moreover, this re-arrangement of masquing roles enacts a dual display of performance never allowed to noblewomen till then: at once they could both

interpret a fictional part and represent their own stately identity as illustrious ladies in public events of lofty prestige (Gossett 1988:96-97).

These features were significantly expanded and amplified by Anne's creative partnership with Ben Jonson for his first exploits in the composition of court masques. Prefaces and dedicatory addresses to the Queen are explicit in the published version of these scripts: Jonson himself declares that Anne's contribution to the dramatic invention was determining as an agent of inspiration for topical choices (on Anne's self-assumed authorial agency over the text, contrasting with the exclusive notion of male writer/printer, see Wynne-Davies 1992:79-80; and Bernadette 1999:247-49).

No inert patroness limited to raising funds for the staging, the Queen became involved in conditioning the parameters of theatrical representation, adding new ideas and imprinting her personal contribution of female authorship on the overall production: her interventions in the conceptualisation of masques ranged from the supervision of scenery, theatrical properties and the styling of costumes to the selection of players and the tactful policy of official invitations. Anne's scrupulous regard for these spectacles is further substantiated by her personal involvement in the rehearsals and scenic tests before the "debut" of her masques (Lewalski 1993:36-37), signalling the crucial weight of a successful exploit in these events for the Queen's renowned status, which clearly also depended on the theatrical arena of court entertainments produced by herself.

The first outcome of this fruitful collaboration with Jonson took place at Whitehall, in the Banqueting House, for *Twelfth Night* 1605 (see also Barroll 2002: 99-104). In the *Masque of Blackness* the Queen and her ladies are downgraded from Daniel's goddesses to the semi-divine degree of fair Nymphs of the River Niger, who introduce themselves onstage with a distinctive remark, self-evident at first sight: by explicit order of Anne, all the

Nymphs appeared disguised as blackamoors, their faces and skin painted with dark makeup to embody exotic origins from sunburned lands.

Needless to say, this provocative novelty was planned to disappoint the traditional expectations of the audience, by stirring their routine sense of decorum coupled with the aesthetic agenda of court entertainments: is it legitimate for a woman, especially for the Queen, to embody the signifiers of ambiguous “otherness” as ciphers of her royal beauty before a public of illustrious guests? Does it seem appropriate to show off her arms and shoulders naked to express freely the fertile sensuality of the royal consort’s body – six months pregnant during those weeks – in a black hue? Dudley Carleton’s contemporary response, in his famous epistolary accounts of this masque, witnessed the occurrence of anxious and hostile perceptions in reaction to such an innovative stance. Carleton associated the lady masquers more with dissolute courtesans than with pure nymphs, and finally turned to blame the ugly sight of blackness as unworthy of noble individuals, above all if they were representatives of the English court before visiting diplomats (Carleton 1972:68).

Apart from prejudicial embarrassment about gendered etiquette, Carleton’s remarks signal the difficulty of digesting Anne’s unorthodox approach to theatrical femininity, which implies a provocative transgression of codes here defied by new forms of aesthetic misrule imposed by a (ruling) woman, who compensates for the denial of speaking parts with the eloquent rhetoric of mute bodies, put in evidence onstage by their spectacular revision of female beauty. Instead of a mannered form of Amazonian bravery, the *Masque of Blackness* proposes a thorough management of womanly – and unstable – beauty as a major resource/weapon for stating the militant voice of highborn ladies outside a male-only chorus of agreement (Aasand 1992:278-80). In Anne’s dramatic project of self-fashioning, femaleness thus collides

implicitly with previous representation of royalty and, besides, thanks to their emblematic entry, her mute masquing ladies collapse the canonical dichotomies of beauty (black/white, exotic/native) to put into question even the central authority of male personifications in a context where female expressive energy tends to prevail (Bernadette 1999:252-56, 264-67).

Finally, the miraculous Sun, as allegory for the King, is theatrically ineffectual and removed to the margins: he doesn't bleach the Nymphs' skin as promised, and leaves their problematic quest for definitive beauty unresolved. Moreover, as usual in Jacobean royal masques, James didn't establish any bodily contact during the final revels because he refused to dance in public, thus showing, as static observer, his different condition from the Queen's multimediatic poetic, fulfilled by means of visual agency and kinetic measures of dancing. The key characters and living celebrities onstage remain therefore women playing other women, who generously lavish the spectacle of their polymorphic grace within a theatrical frame.

Three years later, a new masque sponsored by Queen Anne and written by Ben Jonson was staged at Whitehall: the *Masque of Beauty* (1608) takes up the same Nymphs as the previous scenario, who this time appear already whitened, completing their progress towards another form of beauty applicable to their flexible royal status. The cathartic process of bleaching has occurred off-stage and the effective merit has been ascribed to the moon goddess Aethiopia, who prevailed over envious Night in a single-gendered conflict between female deities which, even if not represented, represents the turning point in the dramatic structure of this entertainment verging on the redemptive force of chromatic metamorphosis. In her essay about confessional dissimulation and chromatic disguising in masques, Molly Murray intriguingly argues for a metaphoric connection between cosmetic mutability and masking of religious sectarianism – above all

considering Anne's recent (and delicate) conversion to Roman Catholicism (Cf. Murray 2007: 437-43; and Schwarz 2000:119-20).

To confirm women's dramatic priority in this sense, in one of the closing songs, Jonson emphasises the dignity of the masquing ladies by commending the importance of female performance within that cosmic harmony here theatrically adumbrated:

SONG

Had those that dwell in Error foul,
And hold that Women have no Soul,
But seen these move; they would have then
Said, Women were the Souls of Men.
So they do move each Heart, and Eye,
With the World's soul, true harmony.

(The Masque of Beauty, ll. 307-12; see Jonson 1969:73; for all quotations from Jonson's masques in this essay the reference edition is Orgel's complete collection reprinted in 1969).

Each gentleman masquer has to acknowledge his dependence on the prestigious contribution of women for the dynamics of court society: only impious people may believe women have no souls, while it is repeatedly demonstrated that, by permeable influence, they represent men's soul instead, out of their faculty for inspiring lively movement and noble vocations. This ideal faculty can be translated figuratively to the dramatic body of the Queen's masques as well, where woman's acting constitutes the animating principle, the proper soul of masque, that gives life to magnificent delight and "moving" the senses of the involved audience with the appeal of performative transport (Tomlinson 2005:19-20, 29-30).

A more striking approach to gender issues is exposed in Jonson's third contribution to the Queen's masque, entitled the *Masque of Queens* and presented for Candlemas 1609. Anne asked Jonson for a 'spectacle of strangeness' for the sake of variety, a grotesque prelude of (attempted) disorder and subversion working as introduction to the virtuous queens impersonated by her ladies; something similar to a foil conceived to exalt their positive qualities by contrast. This successful formula, baptised as antimasque, from then on became an indispensable element in the structure of court masque. In this case the antimasque features a meeting of ugly witches trying – rather ridiculously and vainly – to subvert natural order and conformist ethics to disrupt the king's official celebrations. Their bizarre movements and deformed appearance, although purposely unrealistic, disclose that utmost degeneration of female dignity much feared by the other sex in a preposterous milieu (Ravelhofer 2009:190-94).

As conventional for speaking parts, all the roles in this antimasque were assigned to professional male actors, fitly cross-dressed in the frightful guise of twelve malicious witches as emblems of chaotic indecorum. What Jonson combines here through the *Masque of Queens* – for the first time in English court entertainments – is a duplicitous stance of femininity that takes place onstage, where the negative pole is figured by lower class players disguised as women, with their systematic abuse of dramatic license in their manners or speeches. On the other hand, facing this theatrical turmoil, the ideal paradigm of positive femininity belongs exclusively to the real cast of aristocratic ladies performing historical and mythological Amazon-warrior queens, although without speaking parts. This strategy of theatrical juxtaposition contributes to complicating any standard perception of a single femaleness, whose fluid exegesis reveals, nonetheless, how the different representations of gender have been fluidly interpolated by the artificial

filter/layers of those dramatic devices – intensely encouraged by the Queen – the audience is fully aware of, but fascinatingly perplexed by as well.

To enact a brief interlude of male intervention between these (seeming) polarized extremes of femininity, as well as to exorcise womanly hegemony in this masque, Heroic Fame appears onstage in the garments of Perseus, who does not miss the chance to vaunt his execution of Medusa – as embodiment of archetypical feminine Terror to be obliterated by masculine heroism. This linear form of implicit triumph, however, does not succeed in concealing all the ambiguities pertaining to Perseus’s alleged single-gendered victory when untied from womanly influence. On the contrary, the classic myth demonstrates how Perseus mediated between two greater forms of female power only to strengthen the more virtuous one (about Perseus’s troublesome relationship with female paradigms of power in mythology, see also Orgel 1990: 128-9; and Butler 2008: 139-40; for the feminine implications of the Gorgon’s archetype, see Meskill 2005: 198-202).

Accordingly, he was usually portrayed as mere human agent of the will of Pallas, who presided over the achievement of his mission; after slaughtering the Gorgon, he offered the spoils of Medusa’s head as a votive gift to Pallas, and it promptly became an emblem of female power once it was appropriated by Pallas and incorporated into her powerful shield – the *Ægis* (Schwarz 2000:122-23).

Heroic Fame/Perseus’s dramatic task in the *Masque of Queens*, analogous to a theatrical scarecrow, consists of dispelling the anarchic Sabbath imported by the witches, in order to make room for introducing the majestic setting of the House of Fame, where the twelve heroic queens reside, whose epic reputation has been declared sublimate by male poets and historians. The names of these queens evoke glorious deeds over the centuries: it is her Majesty’s grace to offer their Amazon-like spirits the

chance to revive onstage by pervading the acting bodies of twelve illustrious ladies, including the Queen herself.

The composite array of these heroines heralded by Perseus includes, among the eleven women monarchs, the evocative name of Penthesilea – the proud Amazon Queen – whose fame still resounds as leading figure amongst the Trojan army for her brave duel against Achilles; Artemisia, militant regent during the absence of her husband, and always celebrated for her chaste fidelity; the noble queen Boadicea, eulogized for the tenacious defence of her people's freedom in wartime; the bold Valasca, legendary queen of Bohemia, leading the rebellion of a triumphant female-only army against male unjust tyranny. The (pseudo)historical nature of their deeds precludes a restrictive reading of these figures limited to the allegorical dimension of masque: the evidence of narrated facts testifies to the eminence acquired by the queens, whose belligerent and androgynous spirit has bereft men of their typical sphere of rhetorical exercise in warfare (Lewalski 1993:37-39).

The sum of these exemplary queens is achieved by the twelfth one, Bel-Anna, the ultimate reference for all heroic queens, the all-embracing embodiment of womanly majesty epitomised in the actual uniqueness of the living Queen Anne, who here interprets herself as repository of female militant virtues and great contemporary myth – at James's expense, even when, 'far from self-love', she is described as honouring her husband's solar magnificence as primary dispenser of her radiant worth:

PERSEUS. These [*Queens*] in their lives, as fortunes, crowned
Of womankind, and 'gainst all opposite voice, [the choice
Made good to time, had, after death, the claim
To live eternized in the House of Fame.
Where hourly hearing (as, what there is old?)

The glories of Bel-Anna so well told,
Queen of the Ocean; how, that she alone
Possessed all virtues, for which one by one
They were so famed.

(*The Masque of Queens*, ll. 386-96) Jonson 1969: 136.¹

After Perseus's announcement the last scene begins, during which the Queens proceed descending from the House of Fame to sanction directly their celebrative grandeur. They mount three chariots drawn by fanciful beasts and by the witches, now yoked to the service of the Amazon sovereigns, but taking part in the general revelling thanks to Bel-Anna's fascinating power, which seems here able to conflate into a single collective form the negative feminine, associated with these inoffensive witches, and the noble womanhood of warlike queens, by incorporating low class players of antimasque – still disguised as horrible hags – into the final dances without a hint of conflict or challenge (Tomlinson 2005:31-33). This inclusive instance of silent, and heterogeneous, sisterhood materialises into a theatrical vision the moving outcome of women's political agency in the masque, when all surface polarisations of femaleness are dissolved to allow the coexistence of disturbing factors coalesced against patriarchal conformism (Cf. Wynne-Davies 1992: 84-65; and Orgel 1990: 131-34, for an interpretation more in accordance with James's final (and fulfilled?) need of preponderance over womanly self-assertion, at the closure of this masque).

The suggestive import of transgression enacted previously by the witches does not disappear at last, but turns out to be inherent within the frame of heroic queenship which, on the other hand, has already displayed its predisposition to visual sensationalism through the conscious eroticism of the

noble ladies' Amazon-like bodies, clad in see-through dresses embroidered with martial symbols.

It is interesting to discern in these masques the controversial position of Ben Jonson, a dramatist well-known for his misogynistic satire, and pressed at court between James's – who was anyhow his principal sponsor for those entertainments not organised by the queen consort – and Anne's concerns for theatrical control of masque content (and styling). Jonson afterwards attempted an inconsistent policy of partial mediation to contain Anne's theatrical exuberance by suppressing some gendered elements that had seemed to him too conflictual during the performance to be tolerated again, especially in the published retrospective of these masques. His prevailing textual stratagem here consisted in subtly erasing part of the ladies' visual magnificence in order to endorse James's obscurantism about female worth.

As already said, being silent characters, the lady performers had to circumscribe all their signifying stances on the figurative plan. Yet, while masque-writers such as Daniel and Campion reserved detailed descriptions of rich costumes worn by gentlewomen during masques as organic to their solemnity – either textually in their authorial report of the show, or by the indirect accounts by speaking characters within the masque – Jonson put to silence these fashioned elements by employing only brief and deferred hints about the ladies' acting bodies or wardrobe, the extant information about which today is deduced mainly from Inigo Jones' graphic sketches or from the reports written by viewers who attended the performances. In place of women's meaningful clothes, Jonson's descriptive sections focus more on stage machinery, symbolical devices and allegorical tropes. This restrictive unease appears more problematic if we consider how much attention the Queen and her ladies devoted to selecting materials, garments, colours and

the style of costumes to personify their figurative priorities onstage (McManus 2002:122-33).

What is more, a biographical and scholarly summary, with notable deeds and worth of the Amazon-like rulers in *The Masque of Queens*, is barely appended to the margin of the edited text in the form of erudite footnotes and glosses: in practice, during the performance, their heroic depth was only slightly – and intuitively – inferred by their legendary names, but no detailed allusion took place in the dramatic speeches. All the martial narrations related to their virtuous acts remained actually unbreathed and implicit during the staging, which rather relied on the audience's cultural background and swift aptitude in meta-historical associations.

For almost a decade Queen Anne's theatrical "alliance" with masque writers tried to resist a male form of despotism in taking over the management of court entertainment: yet, James's notorious homoerotic fondness for gentlemen highly skilled in dancing represented a continuous threat for women's agency over dramatic spectacles. It is not a coincidence that the increasing influence of royal favourites over James, such as Robert Carr and George Villiers, contributed to gradually suppressing the presence of female performers within court masques. After 1612 the Banqueting House, as main location for court masques, became the sole property of a homosocial coterie celebrating the King's delight, whose emasculated priority took pains to remove from the Whitehall stage the masculinised and Amazonian valour of performing ladies, now displaced by the effeminised rule of the King's "pet" courtiers.

Queen Anne's gradual withdrawal from court entertainments proceeded parallel to the twilight of her political and cultural influence. Daniel's *Tethys' Festival* (1610) and Jonson's *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly* (1611), both patronised by Anne, still contain noble ladies as

masquers: their main function in these spectacles, nevertheless, consists in honoring Prince Henry's official investiture into the world of adults, or in eulogising James's redeemed ability as ruler of his country (Butler 2008:36-37). The claim for womanly self-sufficient authority onstage was subordinated to the contingent (but illusory) sense of a united royal family.

Nevertheless, a few masques featuring noble ladies as performers were staged after Anne's climatic zenith, although, in these cases also, their topical pattern was not oriented to a militant *revanche* of female theatrical heroism. Thomas Campion in his *Lords' Masque* (1613) included eight female statues brought back to life by an almighty male *deus ex machina*, whereas Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford, the Queen's chambermaid and performing lady in Anne's previous masques, paid homage to her – here remembered as Pallas again – through a masque written by Robert White and entitled *Cupid's Banishment* (1617). This spectacle, which emphasised the chaste beauty of gentle love, was exceptionally enacted by the students of the Ladies' Hall, in Deptford, generally considered the first girls' school in England: its staging took place at Greenwich Palace, the country residence of Queen Anne, a more informal and private location than Whitehall court, as an alternative site of factional authority dislocated from James's theatrical regimen of supervision. Probably *Cupid's Banishment* featured the first dramatic verses spoken in public by an English woman – Ann Watkins in the role of Fortune (for an exhaustive study of *Cupid Banishment* related to Anne's involvement, see McManus 2002:188-201).

The same year Lady Lucy Hay proposed a *Masque of Amazons* – now lost – featuring a mainly female cast for James's court, but it was preventively censored so as not to alter the outline of new royal male-centric

festivals, for which Jonson had to become the chief dramatist in the matter of court entertainments for all the remaining years of James's reign.

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**JOSEPH HALL'S *MUNDUS ALTER ET IDEM* AND CROSS-
DRESSING IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND**

CSABA MACZELKA

University of Szeged

Abstract: This paper argues that early modern English utopias in general, and Joseph Hall's *Mundus alter et idem* (1605/1606) in particular, engage in the contemporary debate on cross-dressing. After a look at the problem of early modern cross-dressing, the paper

introduces Hall's work, together with some of the opinions about it. Out of the four books of the work, only the second part (the description of Viraginia/Shee-landt) is discussed here in detail, since it abounds in instances of cross-dressing and related phenomena (for example, sexual licence and hermaphroditism). In my reading, Hall's work readily joins the ongoing debate, but because of its masterful rhetorical strategies and its satirical perspective, the text poses a great challenge if one tries to accurately identify its position in that debate. Yet the text and some of Hall's other works testify to a serious interest in cross-dressing and other gender-related issues.

Keywords: Australia, cross-dressing, early modern, England, hermaphroditism, utopia

1. Introduction

It is quite obvious that in the early modern era, when dress code was centrally regulated by the so-called sumptuary laws prescribing the attire to be worn by people of different social ranks, both male to female and female to male cross-dressing posed a threat of some kind to established power relations. The precise extent and nature of this threat is heavily debated in critical accounts of the phenomenon, but the complexity of the issue is generally acknowledged. The secondary literature on cross-dressing is enormous. I will only refer to some of the many available critical opinions (for a recent treatment of the phenomenon, see Szönyi 2012, which lists a lot of related works in his bibliography).

The problem is all the more complicated when dealing with English Renaissance theatre, which employed exclusively male actors, a feature that Stephen Orgel sees as "anomalous" in comparison to other European countries where either women were allowed to act, or theatre in general was forbidden (Orgel 1996:1-2). With only male actors present on the stage, and boys performing the female roles, cross-dressing is universally present in the English public theatre of the time. However, the true complexity of the

problem is only revealed when cross-dressing is also directly employed in the performed play's plot, as in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*. Confusion is further exacerbated if the playwright goes yet one step further and himself refers to the strange gender configuration represented on the stage, as in the frequently quoted aside in the epilogue of the latter play, uttered by a boy actor actually performing a female cross-dresser's role:

If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not (Latham 1975:131).

With this said, it is no surprise that English Renaissance theatre is one of the predominant areas of critical discussion of the phenomenon. In the 1980s, important works by Laura Levin, Stephen Greenblatt, Jean E. Howard and others addressed the problem in the context of the stage. Another corpus particularly relevant to the issue is, quite logically, the 16th-17th century Puritan anti-theatrical polemic literature. When giving voice to their harsh critique of theatres (and, it cannot be emphasised enough, of many other "abuses" as well), William Prynne, Philip Stubbes, John Rainolds and similar authors frequently touch upon the issue of cross-dressing, as in the quotation below from Stubbes:

Our apparel was given us as a signe distinctive to discern betwixt sex and sex, & therefore one to weare the Apparel of another sex, is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the veritie of his owne kinde (Stubbes quoted in Howard 1988:422).

The third corpus pertaining to the subject is of a vastly different nature. These are actual court records of cases against cross-dressers, a body

of text which Jean Howard makes extensive use of in her seminal article published in 1988. It must be immediately noted that in the newer version of her article, Howard has added some preliminary notes, the most important probably being that “I no longer speak of a sex-gender system as a single phenomenon (Howard 1994:162, n.1.)” However, the basic structure and the conclusion are not significantly altered.

Interestingly, while in Howard’s interpretation, such cases are another proof of a “sex-gender system under pressure (Howard 1988:418),” in the historian David Cressy’s evaluation of similar material, they appear in a completely different light. Cressy revisits Howard’s claims, and based on the “remarkably mild” sentences in the legal cases examined by him, as well as on a different interpretation of cross-dressing in some contemporary plays, he arrives at the conclusion that “neither the records of ecclesiastical justice nor the London comedies reveal, in my reading, a sex-gender system in crisis (Cressy 1996:450, 464).” Howard and Cressy represent the two extremes in the evaluation of cross-dressing, and many other positions can be found between the two poles. Without going any further into the matter right now, here I would only like to highlight that analyses of Renaissance cross-dressing predominantly rely on the above-listed types of sources, namely: plays, anti-theatrical tracts, and juridical records, occasionally complemented by other types of texts (anatomical tracts, royal proclamations, homilies etc.) as well (on contemporary anatomical views, see Greenblatt (1988:esp.73-86), and also Orgel (1996:esp.18-24)). Royal proclamations and the homily *Sermon against Excess of Apparel* are studied by Garber (1992:25-28).

In what follows, I propose that another group of texts may further refine our perception of cross-dressing in particular and early 17th century sexual and gender relations in general. Let us start from an author much cited in the literature on cross-dressing: Philip Stubbes. Although he is frequently

referred to in relevant studies, one aspect of his work is habitually overlooked, and this is already represented by the commonly used reference to the work, which runs simply as *The Anatomy of Abuses*. However, the fuller version of the otherwise lengthy title is *The Anatomy of Abuses in Ailgna*. Ailgna is, of course, a rather simplistic anagram for Anglia, and the book is in fact a fictional travel book in dialogue form, as is clarified right at the beginning, when Philoponus reminisces in the following way:

I have lead the life of a poore Travayler, in a certaine famous Ilande ... presently called Ailgna, wherein I have lived these seven Winters, and more, travailing from place to place, even all the land over indifferently (Stubbes 1583:Bi^v).

Travel book in dialogue form, recounting a trip to an imagined land, Stubbes' work has easily found its way into the authoritative bibliography of utopian texts compiled by Lyman Tower Sargent (1988:3). In the present paper, I do not intend to scrutinise Stubbes' text, but following this trajectory from cross-dressing to utopias, I will turn my attention to another specimen of English utopian literature from Shakespeare's time.

2. Mundus alter et idem and The Discovery of a New World

The book entitled *Mundus alter et idem sive Terra Australis ante hac semper incognita longis itineribus peregrini Academici nuperrine illustrate* (henceforth: *Mundus*), purportedly published in Frankfort and authored by "The English Mercury," came out in late 1605 or early 1606. Although there have been debates concerning its author, it is now proved to have been written by Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1656), and also that, notwithstanding the inscription on its title page, it was printed in London (on the rather complicated publishing history of *Mundus*, see Wands 1980.)

According to its modern editor, John Millar Wands, the text was immediately connected to Thomas More's *Utopia* (the German translation even renamed it to "*Utopia Pars II*"), and its initial popularity was comparable to that of More's book (Wands 1980:1). Its English translation, a rendering by John Healey, was published in 1609, and there also appeared plagiarised editions in 1664 and 1684. Since the critical discussion on cross-dressing seems to make almost exclusive use of English sources, in the present paper I will primarily rely on Healey's translation, which is entitled *The Discovery of a New World or a Description of the South Indies. Hitherto unknown*. Where only page numbers are provided, I refer to the 1614 edition of *Discovery*.

Nonetheless, at times I will mark important differences between this and the more faithful translation by Wands, who claims that Healey's version "might perhaps be more accurately called an adaptation" (Wands 1981:lv).

Generally, *Mundus* is a fictional travel book offering an exhaustive account of the protagonist's travels to the unknown Southern land, which was a fertile source of utopian imagination for a long time. The impact of the notion of an unknown Southern land on utopian imagination is discussed in David Fauset's book (Fausett 1993).

Its descriptive parts are preceded by a highly rhetorical and rather sarcastic debate about the usefulness of travelling (*The Occasion of this Travel and the Introduction*) between three characters: the French Peter Beroaldus, the Dutch Adrian Cornelius Drogius, and the English Mercury, the narrator. The debate concludes with Mercury's decision to set sail to the Unknown Southern Land in the good ship called "The Fancie", driven by the Columbus-like hope omnipresent in utopian texts of the time: "We must hope, and wee must dare (A4^r)" (on the so-called Columbus topos, see Appelbaum (2004:24-35)). It must be also be noted here that

Fancy/Imagination is yet another frequent topos of early modern English utopias; authors often feel the need to refer to it in their prefaces, like in Francis Godwin's *Man in the Moone* (1638), or in Margaret Cavendish: *The Blazing World* (1666).

The ensuing travel account is divided into four books, each discussing a certain region of the continent, and according to the author of what is probably the most detailed monograph ever written on Hall, Richard A. McCabe, a certain group of human vices as well (McCabe 1982:100-1). The table below contains the names of these main regions in Hall's original and in Healey's translation, together with McCabe's dual division of the represented vices:

Book	Hall	Healey	Vices (McCabe)
1.	Crapulia Yvronia	Tenter-belly Drink-allia	sins of flesh
2.	Viraginia	Shee-landt	
3.	Moronia	Fooliana	sins of mind
4.	Lavernia	Thee-uingen	

The discussion of the regions strongly resembles contemporary travel books, and as a consequence, these sections are also quite similar to the second book of *Utopia*. Both textual connections are further strengthened by the beautiful maps provided with the text, which are hardly distinguishable from the famous contemporary maps by Ortelius and Mercator. Nevertheless, Hall's map of the unknown Southern Land also features a land called *Terra Sancta*. This may mark the basically moralising underlying scheme of the work, since contrary to the other depicted regions, this area seems to be uninhabited, and it bears the inscription "ignota etiam adhuc," which reinforces the moral of

the descriptive parts (the vanity of all human activities – including the search for an earthly Paradise) on the level of topography as well (McCabe 1982:97-8). The English editions I accessed through the *Early English Books Online* did not contain any maps (on the relation of the work to contemporary maps and geographical knowledge, see McCabe (1982:85-90, 98)).

However, Hall's text is much more than a simple imitation of contemporary travel books or of More's masterpiece. The complexity of *Mundus*, with its myriad of allusions to classical and contemporary authors and works, is generally acknowledged in the critical assessments of the book. One of its early admirers, Sandford M. Saylor, puts the text into the context of late Renaissance authors, and after complaining about the general neglect surrounding Hall's work, ventures so far as to claim that "judged merely as a clever piece of literary craftsmanship, the *Mundus* is superior to the *Utopia* (Saylor 1927:322-3)." He identifies important differences between *Utopia* and *Mundus*, and through specific textual analogies suggests that the impact of Erasmus', but above all, Rabelais' works is even stronger, a point reiterated six years later in Huntington Brown's book *Rabelais in English Literature* (Saylor 1927:327-32; H. Brown 1968 [1933]:103-5).

Wands also highlights important links between *Mundus* and *Utopia*, and sees in Hall's work one of the first dystopias in English literature, though he finds the connection between Hall's work and Mennipean satire more vital (Wands 1981:xxv-xli). In a similar vein, McCabe reads *Mundus* in the context of the satirical revival of the late 1590s, but at the same time emphasises the allegorical nature of the work and identifies a consistent moral agenda which is, as noted above, also reflected by the topography of the work:

[...] we may say that *Mundus* is a Menippean satire upon the vices of Europe written in the guise of an allegorical travelogue recounting a fantastic journey to the great Southern Continent (McCabe 1982:74).

Besides the above positions, *Mundus* is also read by some as a representative of the popular “Land of Cokaygne” tradition of imaginary lands with infinite abundance. In J. C. Davis’s fundamental work on English utopias of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, Hall’s text is in effect excluded from the group of “proper” utopias precisely on this basis, an opinion many would find problematic (Davis 1981:19-22). In a more recent article, Davis approaches *Mundus* from a different perspective, calling it “a satiric inversion of the claims of travel literature (Davis 2008:8)”. A similar perspective is employed in Peter Mancall’s book on the great Elizabethan travel writer, Richard Hakluyt, in which *Mundus* is seen as an “attack on the idea of travel,” implicitly positioned against the travel accounts so popular at the time, a work that “cast colonies as dystopias to be avoided at all costs (Mancall 2007:258).” David Fausett’s book is unique in that it also touches upon the question of *Mundus*’s gender reversal, and connects Hall’s work to Thomas Artus and Béroalde de Verville, who also showed interest in gender issues and hermaphroditism. According to him, Hall was one of the initiators of the “austro-hermaphrodite theme,” perfected later by Gabriel de Foigny, whose *La Terre Australe connue* (1676) is an important piece of hermaphroditic utopianism (Fausett 1993:48-51).

As this short review of critical opinions has hopefully revealed, *Mundus* is informed by multiple literary traditions (utopian writing, Menippean satire, travel writing), and this multiplicity is unified by an overarching, progressive moral agenda against vices of all sorts. Especially because of this moralising aspect, it is quite obvious that to some extent at

least, the text can be read as a commentary upon contemporary social conditions, even if the commentary is expressed in an indirect way. Thus the second book of *Mundus*, which describes the land of woman, and includes *Hermaphrodite Island*, as well as *Shrewes-burg*, a city where gender roles are completely reversed, clearly has something to contribute to the discussion quoted at the outset of my paper.

3. The description of Shee-landt/Woman-decoia

Since by definition every utopia is informed by a desire to rearrange the received social order, questions of gender inevitably arise from the very beginnings of the genre. Plato's *Republic* is renowned for its controversial views on women's role: whereas education and ruling are open to women, they are, through the abolition of private families, shared in common in Socrates' system (for a clear-cut overview of feminism in Plato's *Republic*, see E. Brown 2010). Aristophanes, and above all his *Ecclesiazusae*, had a discernible influence on Hall's work, and especially on the way he depicts the political system of the land of women. While in general the Renaissance successor of the genre, More's *Utopia*, includes a rather conventional patriarchal order, some more novel ideas are also found in it, like the examination of the man and woman by a third party before marriage, or a rather reasonable attitude to divorce. Almost invisible in utopian scholarship, one of the early English successors of More's work, *A Pleasant Dialogue between a Lady Called Listra, and a Pilgrim* (1579) is a conventional utopian dialogue between the traveller and the interrogator with the slight but important change of featuring a female interrogator (*A Pleasant Dialogue between a Lady Called Listra, and a Pilgrim. Concerning the Gouvernement and common weale of the great province of Crangalor*, London, 1579,

STC (2nd ed.) 18335.5)). The text appeared anonymously, but a certain Thomas Nicholas is sometimes suggested as its author. It seems to be completely neglected in utopian studies, although it is to my knowledge the first instance of a utopian text where one of the utopian stock characters is a woman. The text follows the usual pattern of utopias, describing the political-ecclesiastical conditions in Crangalor. Particularly because of the unique authorial/narrative configuration (the narrator is a Corinthian woman who even argues for writing in English in the preface – in a book with all probability written by an English man), a detailed analysis of this text would be highly desirable.

Gender relations are obviously in the spotlight in the first English utopia written by a woman, Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (1666), where fiction is explicitly treated as a means of gaining powers otherwise only accessible to men. As Anne M. Thell puts it, "She [M. Cavendish] attains her speaking position by locating the early modern loci of power—namely, the discourses of imperialism, science, religion, discovery, and travel—authorizing herself through them, and then harnessing them to fuel an absolute textual conquest" (Thell 2008:441).

Mundus, on the other hand, is involved in the question of gender relations in a somewhat different way, and while we are directing our attention towards the land of woman, we should keep in mind McCabe's opinion that Hall was "neither philosopher nor theologian, but an impassioned devotionalist deeply convinced of the moral efficacy of imaginative literature (McCabe 1982:2)." The part devoted to the description of the land of women begins with a rather short general description of the land, performed in the usual manner of travel books, but it also contains a rather ambivalent remark:

The soile thereof is very fruitful, but badly husbanded: It is divided into many Provinces, both large and ritch, yet all of severall conditions, habites and languages (H1¹).

The first clause obviously submits itself to utopian conventions, plenty being one of the persistent features of utopian landscapes. However, through the inventive pun on the double meaning of the word “husband,” Hall suggests that the land of women cannot be an ideal place, and the reason for this is the diversity of “conditions, habites and languages,” which in turn is caused by the lack of proper cultivation. The text implies here that a land ruled by women, or rather, unruled by men, necessarily leads to confusion, but on a less institutional level, it simply means that the “unruly” woman represents danger. Correspondingly, Howard argues that female to male cross-dressing was interpreted as a sign of unruliness, which not only represented the danger of sexual licence but was also seen as a threat against the state (Howard 1988:425). The concept of unruly women as dangerous in *Mundus* clearly initiates a remote link with cross-dressing already at this early point, and therefore it is all the more remarkable that besides conditions and language, the third area of confusion is “habites,” and also that Wands’s translation only includes “character and custom” in the same place (Wands 1981:57).

This preliminary opinion gains more relevance after a crafty rhetorical twist in the second chapter, which lends some instability to the narrator’s position. Since Mercury arrives from the land of the arch-enemies of women, *Lecheretania*, he enjoys a rather cold welcome, and only the name and the fame of his country can save him: “Well to warde I went, and but that my countries name (the true Paradise of women) pleaded for me, I had never come home alive (H2^v)”. Despite England’s favourable gender reputation (which Wands traces back to a saying popular in the 1590s), the narrator has

to accept certain laws, and thus we encounter another typically utopian textual element. Catalogue of laws are found in many early modern utopias (see for example Gabriel Plattes's *The Description of Macaria* (1641) or Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668)).

The laws are incorporated into the chapter, and open a rather wide window upon general contemporary stereotypes about women, reflecting a set of supposed female desires like the possibility of talking without interruption, being the ruler of the house, male constancy and monogamy, and respect for female privacy. From the perspective of the narrator's position, the last law is of paramount importance:

That I should continually give women the prick and praise for beauty, wit and eloquence, and defend it against all men (H3^r-H3^v).

Mercury thus subjects to a law which imposes on him certain narrative rules. Since this happens at the very beginning of a book dedicated to the description of the land of women, the rest of the book must be taken with a grain of salt, since negative judgments must by agreement be suppressed (or they must be uttered in indirect ways). The narrator himself refers to this ambiguous position, claiming that "my tongue is tied by mine oth [...] Somewhat I may say, but no harme (H3^v)," and this admonition becomes all the more important when we are moving towards chapters describing more sensitive issues.

The narrative commences in the usual utopian pathway, displaying the form of government and the system of elections. This part is again full of negative stereotypes of women, and introduces a totally confused, inconstant system, where the two most important virtues are Beauty and Eloquence. In a sense, this chapter is the illustration of the very beginning of the book,

suggesting once again that if women are their own rulers, confusion inevitably arises. This basic tenet is expressed almost word for word when this strange sort of female democracy is described in the following manner, right in the first sentence of the chapter:

Their state (for ought I could observe) is popular, each one seeking superiority, and avoiding obedience (H3^r).

Remarkably, the Latin original uses the word *democraticus* instead of popular, yet from our present perspective it is more important that the self-ruling women of Shee-landt seek the privilege of men (superiority), and consequently, lose what seems to be in Hall's opinion their own principal virtue, obedience. As we get closer and closer to the heart of Shee-landt, the picture of Hall's ideal female gradually emerges – but because of the satiric tone, the picture is in negative, and it was apparently taken in black-and-white, too.

Thus the position of the narrator has become rather problematic by the time we arrive at those parts which are directly relevant to the topic discussed here. The title of chapter six is *Of Double-Sex Isle, otherwise called Skrat or Hermaphrodite Island*, and it represents a land where everything has a “double kind,” even nature itself is full of weird dualities with fruits like *cherry-apple* and *date-almond*. But it is the inhabitants of this island who are particularly interesting for the problem of cross-dressing:

Yea in so much that the very inhabitants of the whole Iland wore all their habits as *Indices* of a coaptation of both sexes in one. Those that bare the most man about them, wore spurres, bootes and britches from the heels to the hanshes: and bodies, rebates and periwigges from the crupper to the crowne; and for those that

were the better sharers in woman kind, they weare doublets to the rumpe, and skirts to the remainder (H8^r).

Needless to say, *Indices* is the keyword in this passage, as it refers to the primary function of the sumptuary laws in effect at the time, which was to render class and wealth positions legible (Garber 1992:26). However, on the Isle of Hermaphrodites, dress code is not a marker of rank or wealth, but rather an outward sign of the dual sex of the island's inhabitants. The cross-dressing acted out here is very different from the cases discussed by Howard, Cressy and others, where cross-dressing means appearing in the opposite sex's attire. In *Mundus*, hermaphrodites wear male and female clothes simultaneously, a condition quite similar to a case noted in the mid-seventeenth century diary of the physician John Ward, which is recounted in Ruth Gilbert's monograph on early modern hermaphrodites:

An hermaphrodite at a place 4 miles of Worcester: his testicles large and his penis out of measure big yet unfit for generation as my Landlord said he did believe. I and Mr. Trap saw him. Hee goes dressed upward as a woman in a kind of wastcoat and Bodies: but Breeches on (John Ward quoted in Gilbert 2002:2).

On the Isle of Hermaphrodites, this type of "dual" cross-dressing is not so much a means of transgressing gender boundaries, but an outward sign of the double-sexed nature. In "their conceite" the inhabitants of the isle consider themselves to be in possession of "the perfection of nature," and it must be strongly emphasised that the narrator himself comments upon this duality in the following manner: "truly you may observe in them all, besides their shapes, both a mans wit, and a womans craft (H8^v)." At first glance, we seem

to encounter here an island where the hermaphrodite is “an elevated ideal, the perfect union of opposites” (Gilbert 2002:9).

Yet, despite the narrator’s apparent approval, ambiguity lingers in the concept of hermaphrodites in *Mundus*. Remnants of conventional sexual distinctions can be observed, and these govern the direction of the “dual” cross-dressing. Some “bare the most man about them,” while others are “the better sharers in woman kind,” and the kind of dress he/she/it wears is an indicator of the dominant sex in the given individual. The dominant sex is also indicated by their names: “Mary Philip, Peter-alice, Iane-andrew, and George-audry (H8^r)”. It is clear that dressing, cross-dressing, naming, and sexual identity are closely linked in the description of the hermaphrodites in *Mundus*, and there are similar instances of this association in Hall’s other books. Both in his early satirical work *Virgidemiarum* (1597-8), and in his later sermons, he engages in somewhat fervent attacks against cross-dressers, and at least in one place he refers to them as “the hermaphrodites of our times” (Wands 1981:158). The same association appears in other works written against cross-dressers, as in the famous *Hic Mulier* tract of 1620, where cross-dressing women are referred to as “new hermaphrodites” (*Hic Mulier* quoted in Howard 1988:425). Therefore, the allegedly idealised image of hermaphrodites in *Mundus* must be handled with caution. Although the narrator seems to be approving, he also refers to the hermaphrodites’ “conceite” and “deformity,” and in the typical satirical inversion of values, retells the hermaphrodites’ opinion about single-sexed persons: “what a coile they keepe about them, shewing them as prodigies & monsters, as wee doe those that are borne double-headed, or other such deformed birthes (H8^r).” All in all, the isle of hermaphrodites in *Mundus* reinforces Gilbert’s observation about the plurality and instability of the meanings associated

with the early modern concept of hermaphroditism (Gilbert 2002:ch. 1, esp. 9-10).

The last chapter of Book II is an account of the country called *Shrewes-bourg*, where gender roles are completely interchanged. Here again, dress and outward appearance is of central importance; indeed, these make Mercury initially realise that the land is out of joint:

Here was I truly guld; for espying persons in the habites of men, masse thought I, this is good, I am now gotten out of *Womendecoia*: but when all came to all, I was flat cousned with a borrowed shape: for in this countrie women weare britches, and long beards, and the men goe with their chinnes all naked, in kirtles and peticoates; spinning and carding wooll, whilest their wives discharge the main affaires of the state (I1^r).

The very first sign marking the mixed-up gender configuration is once again the garments worn, and only after this comes the transposition of functions, as if this were but a consequence of cross-dressing. Yet the interchange of functions is rather far-fetched: in fact men do everything that conventionally women were supposed to do, while women enjoy all the privileges that were inaccessible for them in the contemporary patriarchal system.

Dressing and cross-dressing play a pivotal role in the rest of the chapter as well. At one point Mercury compares the enslaved men of *Shrewes-burg* to Turkish slaves, and finds “that these distinction of habites assured mee this was a more base kinde of captivity (I2^r)” – but the section may be more straightforward in the modern translation:

It would have appeared to me that I was walking among some Turkish slaves, had not the dress that distinguishes them showed me it was an even baser kind of slavery (Wands 1981:64).

Slavery is all the more insufferable because of the humiliating attire, which is once again mentioned later, the men's clothes being the only filthy object in the otherwise neatly cleaned houses.

In the secondary literature on cross-dressing, charivaris and skimingtons are quite often mentioned, for example, Howard treats them as unofficial occasions where “unruly women were disciplined and insufficiently dominating husbands reprov’d” (Howard 1996:103). No further description of this strange collective enactment of gender tensions is needed, since we can rely on a similar episode in the chapter on Shrewes-burg – but with the role of the man and the woman exchanged:

She must first change attires with her husband, and then shave off all her haire, and so being ledde through the market place must stand for one whole daie upon the pillorie, as an object unto all the fleering scoffes of the beholders, nor shall the man escape scot-free, for being so audacious, as to take the favours offered by his wife without a modest refusal (I3^f).

Once again, the importance of dressing and cross-dressing is re-confirmed, the change of attire being the most substantial part of the punishment of the wife who lets her husband loose: she can only put her normal clothes back on after she produces a cudgel covered with the blood of the unruly man to the court. Let me add here that descriptions quite similar to this (as well as the topic of wives beating their husbands – but later duly punished) appear in an earlier text, in Thomas Lupton's *Siquila. Too good to be true...* (published in 1580 in London, STC [2nd ed.] 16951, esp. 49-50, also 60-66), which is also included in Sargent's utopian bibliography. The debt of Hall's book to

this work, and to other pieces of Tudor social criticism (like Stubbes' quoted work, or the *Pleasant Dialogue...*) deserves further examination.

Because of the total symmetry of the perspective employed (man do everything that would "naturally" pertain to women, and vice versa), Shrewes-burg reflects gender tension of a peculiar kind, one based on imagining a complete reversal of conventional gender roles. Through this, Mercury comes to realise that these roles are based on nothing but custom, in accord with Szönyi's conclusion about Renaissance cross-dressing, which, as he claims, "suggested that gender differences resulted only from social practice and cultural representation" (Szönyi 2012). *Mundus* is an apt illustration of this point, particularly in the passage below, where the narrator explicitly ponders upon this idea:

Now you would thinke it incredible if I should tell you of the neatnesse of their houses, yet the men are all their drudges to wash, wipe, scoure and sweepe all that is done: yea and dresse all the meate besides: so that I imagine that it is but mans esteeme of the undecency of such bussinesses, (not any of his unablenesse to discharge them) that makes him eschew such employments (I3^v-I4^r).

The shift of roles evidently arouses empathy in the narrator, but most of the time one feels that this empathy is reserved for the effeminated men, so cruelly humiliated by the roles imposed upon them. Here, for the first time, the narrator seems to come close to realising that male and female roles are not necessarily determined by biological sex, but are culturally and politically sanctioned. And this rather progressive stance is reinforced by other works of Hall. In one of his sermons entitled *The Women's Veil*, Hall condemns men who rule over their wives in a tyrannical fashion that reduces them to the level of slaves (Wands 1981:159).

4. Conclusion

To sum up, Joseph Hall's satirical dystopia, and especially its sections concerned with the land of women, seem to be heavily informed by contemporary gender issues, and, more specifically by the topic of cross-dressing. Whenever some sort of gender reconfiguration takes place in the text, it begins with the mixture (*Isle of Hermaphrodites*) or exchange (*Shrewes-burg*) of gender-specific attire. And the image of the cross-dressed female in *Mundus* readily conforms to many of the claims found in secondary literature. Let us here once again recall the two extremes in the evaluation of the phenomenon. Howard sees in cross-dressing a sign of a sex-gender system under heavy pressure, even if in her later article she calls attention to the non-monolithic nature of this system. Cressy, on the other hand, thinks that cross-dressing was much more marginal in its importance. Since Hall's book reiterates almost all the anxieties connected to cross-dressing (the unruly woman, the monster-woman, the effeminate man, the conventional basis of gender roles), it is beyond doubt that *Mundus* is engaged in the same discourse. However, because of the crafty rhetorical structure, the problematic position of the narrator and the satirical tone, it is not always possible to precisely identify the stance of the text.

It might also have some relevance that the anatomical aspects of sex change are left almost completely unmentioned. While in the above quoted description of a hermaphrodite by John Ward, besides the strange dual dress, private parts are also mentioned, nothing like this appears in *Mundus*. Even on the Isle of Hermaphrodites, we learn nothing specific about the anatomy of the inhabitants, except that they are "prefect both in begetting, & bringing forth" (H8^f). The biological differences seem to be less important for Hall

than the social implications of gender trouble. And this is in agreement with the supposed moralising purposes of the work, as well as with Hall's image as a typical Elizabethan figure, whose fundamental characteristic was his "learned modesty" (Wands 1981:XX). And even though it was precisely the work discussed here that Milton attacked so fervently in his *An apology against a pamphlet called A modest confutation of the animadversions upon the remonstrant against Smectymnuus* (1642), calling it the "idlest and the paltriest mime that ever mounted upon bank," and a "universal foolery," from this inquiry into the text from the aspect of cross-dressing, it has by now hopefully become clear that the text is an infinite source of information on many different contemporary social phenomena (Wolfe 1953:880-1).

In fact, cross-dressing has a fundamental place in the description of the land of women in Hall's book. *Mundus* reinforces the notion that cross-dressing was a heavily discussed phenomenon at the time, and the text readily joins this discourse. The text reveals two important aspects of contemporary cross-dressing. The first is the realisation that like dress-codes, gender roles are also customary. The other is that their interdependence is so tight that a change in one necessary causes an effect on the other. Whether these considerations refer to a general crisis in contemporary gender relations is another question. If we juxtapose the rest of the book with the chapters discussed here, we may reach the conclusion that even if there were serious problems with gender relations, there were serious problems with many other aspects of contemporary life too (at least in Hall's opinion). Thus, although here we have focused almost exclusively on gender issues, we should never forget that as Hall's book demonstrates, in contemporary culture such issues

were always inextricably intertwined with numerous other aspects and contexts as well.

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WOMEN UNDER SIEGE. THE SHAKESPEAREAN ETHICS OF VIOLENCE

DANA PERCEC and ANDREEA ȘERBAN

University of the West, Timișoara

Abstract: This paper discusses notions of physical violence, domestic violence, and sexual assault and the ways in which these were socially and legally perceived in early modern Europe. Special attention will be paid to a number of Shakespearean plays, such as *Titus Andronicus* and *Edward III*, but also to the narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece* (whose motifs were later adopted in *Cymbeline*), where the consumption of the female body as a work of art is combined with verbal and physical abuse.

Key words: consumption, rape, sexual assault, siege, violence

Introduction

The fourth act of William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* opens with the raped and mutilated Lavinia chasing Lucius' son, gesturing at the book in the boy's hand, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. She manages to turn the pages to the story of the rape of Philomela, thus informing her father and uncle about Tamora's sons' deeds. Starting from this scene, which is one of Ovid's most prominent influences on Shakespeare's plays, the paper will discuss notions of physical violence, domestic violence and sexual assault and the way in which they are socially and legally perceived in premodern and early modern Europe. Special attention will be paid to such Shakespearean plays as *Titus Andronicus* and *Edward III*, probably the best example of sexual harassment in early modern fiction, but also to the narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece* (whose motifs were later adopted in *Cymbeline*), where the consumption of the female body as a work of art is combined with verbal and physical abuse. In analysing the male-female relations in these plays, the paper makes use of a series of gender metaphors: the "not-quite-dead-body" (Aebischer 2004:6), the evacuated body (Bronfen 1992:45), the besieged body, the obscene and ob-scene body (Nead 1992:25), where the body, consumed as a work of art, is an artistic and contained one, while the aggressed body, open and leaking, is a sign of excess and an incentive to aggressive action.

The siege as a gendered notion

The potentially double role of silence is also illustrated by a play such as *Titus Andronicus*, in which Lavinia's enforced muteness is, for men, both a requirement and a disquieting condition. In *The History of Sexuality*

(1995:27), Foucault argued that silence is not just the absolute limit of discourse, but also an element that functions alongside the things said, in relation to them. We must try to determine the different ways of not saying things, which type of discourse or which form of discretion is authorised in particular situations: there is not one silence, but many. Emily Detmer-Goebel (2001:75) notices that Lavinia's silence is not only brutally oppressive (from the point of view of the rapists), but also troubling (from the point of view of the men in her own family). In this sense, both speaking and silence can be threatening. If she could speak, her testimony would endanger the criminals' freedom and life. The fact that she can't speak prevents her father from avenging his stained honour. Men depend on the young woman's ability and willingness to 'tell' about the rape. As Detmer-Goebel puts it (2001:76), "*Titus Andronicus* dramatically registers the culture's anxiety over men's increased dependence on women's voices and, in doing so, shapes and sustains early modern England's contradictory attitude toward a woman's accusation of rape".

Lavinia's body is, in John Hunt's formulation about Hamlet, "catastrophic" (1988:27). Hunt explains his choice of the epithet: "The human body in *Hamlet* forms human experience, being the medium through which men suffer and act. But the body also deforms human beings and threatens ultimately to reduce them to nothing. The nonbeing lurking at the material center of being announces itself everywhere in the play's corporeal imagery, and occupies Hamlet's mind as he tries to find his way from the regal death that initiates the action to the regal death that concludes it". Likewise, we may argue that Lavinia's mutilated body, and later her corpse, mediate her family's living experience and also deform their humanity (especially in Titus' case).

Lavinia's silence, unlike Kate's in *The Taming of the Shrew*, brings up more than just the issue of an oppressive gendered ideal of feminine decorum. Disclosing rape has a different impact from that of revealing the results of a domestic argument. Shakespeare does illustrate the fact that Lavinia's 'talking' cannot do her much good – in a way similar to Kate's problem – when he has her plead with the rapists in the 'wrong' way. She denies their masculinity by evoking images of nursing: "The milk thou suck'st from her did turn to marble;/Even at thy teat thou hadst thy tyranny." (II, 3)

The metaphorical argumentation is similar, in a way, to that of Lady Macbeth, who evokes images of sucking babes to deny her own femininity. But, in the critical situation Lavinia finds herself in, her talk is excessive because it lacks eloquence. After the mutilation, however, Lavinia does become eloquent: she persuades through the pathos of her body language, her "martyred signs" (III, 2). She becomes a discursive body – with the term used elsewhere (Percec 2006:211) to characterise Hippolyta's meaningful absence in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or the marginality of the figure of the Amazon in literature. Lavinia's verbal silence helps her more than her ability to talk. Her voice is, however, potentially powerful. The rapists cut out her tongue (and not her nose, for instance – a quite common form of mutilation in times of war) not (only) to disfigure and humiliate her, but (also) out of a desperate need to silence her. After she is silenced, the rapists, relieved, mock her disability. It is true that, even before the mutilation, Lavinia is unable to talk about the rape – in this case, a moral inability – when she entreats Tamora to kill her rather than to leave her in Demetrius's and Chiron's hands:

Tis present death I beg; and one thing more

Than womanhood denies my tongue to tell:
O, keep me from their worse than killing lust,
And tumble me into some loathsome pit,
Where never man's eye may behold my body: (II, 3)

If the rapists need Lavinia's silence, her family needs her voice. However, as Emily Detmer-Goebel (2001:81) points out, this need is eclipsed by the way Marcus and Titus repeatedly ignore Lavinia's attempts to 'tell' about the criminals. Although Marcus immediately evokes mythological images of rape when he sees Lavinia in the forest ("But sure some Tereus hath deflowered thee,/ And lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue", II, 4), this clairvoyance disappears very soon. When Lavinia points to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the library, Marcus has already forgotten his Ovidian exclamations of some time ago. He is also shocked when Lavinia finally scratches the Latin word for rape in the sand. Titus also proves to be familiar with Ovid's story only after Lavinia's scratching of words in the sand: "Lavinia, wert thou thus surprised, sweet girl?/ Ravished and wronged, as Philomela was?" (IV, 1), and not when she shows him the Latin poet's book. Because Lavinia is unable to speak or write, both Titus and Marcus give up asking her questions very soon after the mutilation. This illustrates the fact that the recognition of women as a source of knowledge is underrated in a patriarchal society. She is not unable to communicate (as we find out from her repeated attempts to 'tell'), yet it is true that her willingness to 'tell' is undermined by her shame. When Marcus first refers to the Ovidian rape scene, it would, perhaps, have been enough for Lavinia to nod. But, just as she can't name rape in front of a woman, she can't admit having been raped in front of a man ("Yet do thy cheeks look red", notices Marcus in II, 4). Blushing is not revealing to Marcus: he can't, or doesn't bother to, read

nonverbal signs on Lavinia's martyred body. The raped woman, unable to nod when asked directly, is a typical representative of a culture that prescribes silence to women in all embarrassing situations. Her cultural disability only prolongs Lavinia's torments (Scarry 1985:27).

Titus repeatedly tries to understand Lavinia (he compares her to a text or a painting several times), but it is his prejudices that prevent him from being successful. For Titus and Marcus, Lavinia cannot be a source of knowledge. And, in fact, the woman depends on the men's ability and willingness to 'read' her. Titus is too confident about his own ability to interpret what Lavinia 'tells' him to actually pay attention to her:

Hark, Marcus, what she says –
I can interpret all her martyred signs –
She says she drinks no other drink but tears,
Brewed with her sorrow, mashed upon her cheeks.
Speechless complainer, I will learn thy thought; (III, 2)

Just as Marcus promises to "speak for thee" (II, 4) and then ignores the body language crucial for a proper translation, Titus boasts about how perfect he will be in knowing the meaning of Lavinia's 'dumb action', annihilating her as a reliable source. Through the two poor interpreters, the play emphasises men's anxiety about being dependent on women's authority, on information from them. When Lavinia has finally announced the crime and the criminals, Titus and Marcus completely forget about her. Instead of trying to comfort her, they order her to kneel for the solemn moment of swearing revenge, being more preoccupied with their own honour than hers, with the consequences of their own deeds (killing the rapists) rather than the consequences of the rapists' deeds (Lavinia's suffering and shame).

By comparison, Shakespeare's comedies deal with the theme of violence in a more covert manner. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is considered – probably also because of the implications in the title – the closest to a fairy tale, to the world of magic, a play about love as imagination, about creative relationships between humans. However, this first impression may be altered on a closer reading of Duke Theseus's declaration of love: "Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword, /And won thy love doing thee injuries (I, 1). 'Winning love' is a common courtship trope, being found in texts that rehabilitate, in a way, the image of woman, so unfavourable in pre-modern Europe. It appears in the tradition of the so-called *amour courtois*, which places the woman – provided she is loved – on a higher position than the man – provided he is hopelessly in love. Love, in the minstrels' literature, installs a relationship of dependence similar to that between a lord and a vassal, between the knight and the lady. In this context only (except for the religious cult of the Virgin) does the woman become a model of all virtues and respected more than anything else. But 'sword' and 'injuries' – the instrument of violence and its visible consequences – are not part of the tradition of courtly love. Although the forest around Athens where most of the action takes place is completely imaginary, the mythological reference of the play remains valid: Theseus' taking the defeated queen of the Amazons as a prisoner and then forcing her into marriage as a cruel symbol of his victory. The 'injuries' suggest that, in this battle, it was not only the ordinary soldiers who became war casualties, and that Hippolyta surrendered only after she was herself wounded. The Duke's courtship speech is similar to what Proteus tells helpless Sylvia when he finds her alone in the woods, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: "Nay, if the gentle spirit of moving words/ Can no way change you to a milder form,/I'll woo you like a soldier, at arms'

end,/And love you 'gainst the nature of love, - force ye." (V, 4), where a rapist's intentions are hidden behind the metaphorical excuse of "wooing" but aggression is not absent at the discursive level because of the implications given by the "soldierly" type of treatment. The paradoxical connection between love and violence suggested by Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is enhanced by Helena's comparison of the ideal relationship between herself and Demetrius with that between a spaniel and an authoritarian, even cruel master: "Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me,/ Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,/ Unworthy as I am, to follow you (II, 1).

If there is uncertainty regarding the true attitude behind Hippolyta's silence or about the way in which Kate really sees her marriage at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*, when she tells the other women that "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper" and that wives should "place their hands below your husband's foot" (V, 5), there cannot be any doubt about Helena's masochistic acceptance of Demetrius' brutality and boorishness. (We see, again, correspondences here between images of violence such as that evoked by dog imagery or Kate's placing fingers under men's shoes and those explicitly depicted by Anne in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*). In *Othello*, when Desdemona suffers, with a similar masochism, her husband's fury, jealousy, and abuse, Emilia suggests an alternative attitude for women – that of secretly cheating on a husband as the only chance of asserting their rights and obtaining if not justice at least compensation in an epoch when divorce was inconceivable:

Why, we have galls; and though we have some grace,
Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know
Their wives have sense like them: they see, and smell,
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,

As husbands have. [...]
Then let them use us well: else let them know,
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so. (IV, 3)

Desdemona's misfortune is that Othello is, above all else, a soldier. Despite traditional criticism that has always presented Othello as a primarily noble character (Bradley 1970), his aggressiveness in the domestic sphere turns him into an uncouth man. From the very beginning of the play, his military career affects his love life, then his marriage. First, this happens in a positive way, as it is the Moor's very prowess on the battlefield that attracts the fair Venetian lady, accustomed to sweeter, but less spectacular talk. Then, Othello admits that his military duty makes their wedding bed one of steel when he asks her to accompany him to Cyprus. However, Desdemona proves very little affected both by this martial setting for their honeymoon and by the events that she has to face immediately after leaving her home and starting to adapt to a rougher life – the storm and the Turks that make their voyage difficult, the drunkards' roistering that wakes her on her first night in Cyprus (II, 3). Othello's problem is not that Desdemona is not 'military' enough: she understands her husband's duties and she also takes all these inconveniences much less dramatically than, perhaps, other women of her rank and breeding would have done. When the Turkish fleet is destroyed (without Othello's military intervention), the Moor is almost left out of work. Since he can no longer prove his manhood on the battlefield or, in general, in the public sphere, he grows uneasy about his private life. Iago, indeed, will characterise Othello's fits of jealousy as "unsuited such a man" (IV, 1), that is, unsoldierly. As the security of his military identity has crumbled, Othello feels desperate that his identity as a lover and husband may go in the same downward direction. The violent drives – typical, the racial clichés go, of

Muslim men – which the black general used to unleash on the battlefield will be aimed now at the person who accepted Othello's military fate with complete devotion and will destroy both the victimiser and his docile victim.

War, if not directly connected to the characters, is often a background to the comedies, suggesting, just as in the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a potentially violent or offending attitude men may develop towards women (Dash 1997). In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Bertram finds an excuse for abandoning his bride by joining in a war in Italy as a mercenary. *Much Ado about Nothing* starts with the return of the victorious army led by Don Pedro to Messina. Claudio and Benedick, the lovers in this comedy, are two of these victorious soldiers. The latter compares his friend's former enthusiasm at the sight of a war scene with his current thrill at the thought of his beloved: "I have known where he would have walked ten mile a-foot to see a good armour; and now he will lie ten nights awake carving the fashion of a new doublet" (II, 3). This is to say that a hardened soldier cannot but help having his life permanently influenced by the experience of the battlefield. The way Claudio will treat his bride has everything to do with the hardness the ideal soldier has to display in all the events of his life.

Even Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* proves to have experienced war when he compares the artillery "thunder in the skies", "loud alarms, neighing steeds, and trumpets' clang" (I, 2) to Kate's 'tongue'. The men who have been rejected by Kate are, for Petruchio, only 'boys', cowards who don't know that a woman has to be treated like a battlefield on which there can be only winners and losers after a brutal combat. Fierceness is the best quality of an efficient warrior and he should not give it up even in his private life – a piece of advice that Castiglione gives noblemen, unlike Shakespeare's Henry V who, before the siege of Harfleur, makes a distinction

between manly domestic qualities (“modesty”) and martial ones (a “tiger’s” conduct). Claudio in *Much Ado about Nothing* makes no such distinction by preserving the tiger’s cruelty when he humiliates and abandons a downhearted bride on the day of their wedding without even caring if she is still alive or has been killed by the shock. Just like Othello, Claudio starts suffering for Hero’s death only when he finds out that she had not flirted with men from the window of her room on the night before their wedding. In Hero’s silence and obedience, as in that of Bianca, Kate’s ‘good’ sister everybody wants to marry, or that of Hermione, Leontes’s virtuous and faithful wife in *Winter’s Tale*, we can immediately identify the potential victim. Faced with the ‘tiger’, these women have the spirits of a defeated army, of a fortress surrendering after a long and bloody siege. In *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron urges Tamora’s sons to rape Lavinia in a metaphorical discourse that translates this crime into a hunt, as harmless as Orsino’s romantic speech about hunting the hart in the opening scene of *Twelfth Night*. However, Aaron’s presentation of the stratagem emphasises the word *force*: “Single you thither, then, this dainty doe,/And strike her home by force, if not by words:” (II, 2). The invitation to strike the hunted animal as an instruction for rape belongs to the same imagery as wooing a woman like a soldier. Men exert power over women in actions specific to their gender: fighting and hunting. The arithmetic of this strategy is simple, the equation being summed up by Demetrius in the same scene: “She is a woman, therefore may be woo’d;/She is a woman, therefore may be won;/She is Lavinia, therefore must be loved.” (II, 1)

In a soldier’s world, love is as compulsory as fighting, the very fact that the object of desire is a woman being enough to justify the tiger’s conduct. Conquering a woman is not a metaphor; it is the physical translation

of conquering a city or an army: by attacking, injuring, besieging, and annihilating the target. The metaphor of wooing as besieging is very powerful in *Edward III*, where it takes the form of both combined, as a social and political comment. The King wants to force the Countess of Salisbury to become his mistress just as he is forcing France to accept English supremacy. The armed invasion, the numerous casualties of the Hundred Years' War, increase the violent connotations of Edward's courtship. He forces the lady to swear she will obey him before she knows what he really wants. When she realises that his claim has sexual implications, she announces she will give the King her life together with the beauty of her body, her sacrifice – an indirect threat to commit suicide which is subtle enough not to voice clearly her refusal to keep her oath. The Countess's presentation of her rejection as readiness to die for the King can be compared with the token of loyalty a soldier offers his king when he dies on the battlefield, the gesture thus containing an inherent ambiguity as to the warrior's most intimate feelings (fear, disapproval of war, doubts about the leader's true intentions, etc., best illustrated by Falstaff in *Henry IV* and by the English soldiers at Agincourt in *Henry V*).

The Countess's comment on Edward's attempted rape as an "unnatural besiege" (II, 2) reflects both her disapproval of brutality in a man's relationship with a woman and a more general discontent with martial politics and with the heavy loss of human life they have as a consequence. The relationship, invested with great symbolic power, between a lord and a vassal is massively played upon here. According to Foucault (1995), docility and discipline is different from vassalage, as the former is concerned with the operations of the body, whereas the latter has to do with ritual signs of subjection, the product of the body's operations, and is performed from a

distance. In the Countess's case, however, docility and vassalage seem to coincide, as both the King and the noble lady use a specific code and are tributary to a specific mentality, while manipulating each other in a more subtle way, supervising each other very closely.

In *The Romance of the Rose*, before the scene in which the jealous husband takes his innocent wife by the hair and drags her around the house, Jean de Meun contrasts the idyllic, simple life of the Golden Age when people lived without the tyranny of institutions (including royalty, army and marriage) with the age of "seignior", of knighthood and of battles for royal claims when "High rule sets equal love aside" for "Never can love and seignior / Travel together" (Vol. Two, C. XLVII, 8866, 8863-4). Theseus, Claudio, Bertram and Leontes are all seigniors or the King's soldiers, and their symptoms of chronic violence are immediately identifiable in Jean de Meun's descriptors. Henry V's call for equilibrium in his urging his soldiers to preserve a double nature (a "tiger's" conduct in war and "modesty" at home) remains a mere desideratum.

The erased body

Two plays that are more loosely focused on the treatment of the female body are *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. In the former, the woman's body is a vanishing body: object and improper property (Aebischer 2004), connoting instability, elusiveness, promiscuity, and ambiguity. Ophelia's deranged body and mind are presented as disruptions of the body politic. The dead female body is idealized and poetic (as shown in Gertrude's speech at Ophelia's funeral), in sheer contrast with the "regular" corpse, grotesque and decomposing (as shown in the gravediggers' scene, with Hamlet's casual disposal of Yorick's skull in the grave). Secondly, Gertrude's very presence in the play works as a sexual and political reminder ("None wed the second

but who kill'd the first" III, 2), since the possession of the queen's body equals the possession of the crown. This is why the expected identification between the Player Queen and Gertrude is so crucial to Hamlet: it works as a coercion into complicity with the male-authored, male-played action. "If she should break it now" (III, 2), Hamlet muses, but Gertrude does not break, accepting the convention but being determined to remain detached, refusing to play the guilty part by identifying with the male – Claudius and the actor. "The Lady doth protest too much, methinks" (III, 2), she says, making herself an aesthetic and distanced member of the audience of the mousetrap, like Polonius, but unlike the empathic and involved response of Hamlet and Claudius.

In *King Lear*, the female characters are rudely marginalised (so little is known of Lear's daughters and their relationship with their father that their biography leaves room for endless speculation: "in need of Valium, psychoanalysis, or both," Gay 1994:177). The daughters' bodies, just like Kent's and Gloucester's, are instrumentalised only so as to amplify Lear's suffering. Thus, the play inflicts suffering both on the guilty and on the innocent, on the people involved and on the spectators. The relationship between body and speech is more conspicuous here than elsewhere: Lear has an absolute belief in the power of words, as shown in the opening scene, when he is ready to offer his daughters fortunes according to how much they claim to love him. This, combined with Cordelia's refusal to join the game and her "nothing"ness, leads to a loss of linguistic (and literal) power. Goneril and Regan usurp Lear's throne, as they usurp his power to use speech. Cordelia's initial "nothing"ness remains constant to the very end of the play, when she offers no more than a silent, unreadable body, unresponsive in her death as she seemed to be in her life: "Lend me a looking-glass;/If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,/Why, then she lives.[...] Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a

little. Ha!/What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,/Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman. [...] Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,/Look there, look there! Dies." (V, 3). Her body is a terminus, after which no restoration of a state of language is possible: "And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,/Never, never, never, never, never!" (V, 3).

The body as work of art

The Rape of Lucrece draws on the story described in both Ovid's *Fasti* and Livy's history of Rome. In 509 BC, Sextus Tarquinius, son of Tarquin, the king of Rome, raped Lucretia (Lucrece), wife of Collatinus, one of the king's aristocratic retainers. As a result, Lucrece committed suicide. Her body was paraded in the Roman Forum by the king's nephew, inciting a full-scale revolt against the Tarquins led by Lucius Junius Brutus, the banishment of the royal family, and the founding of the Roman republic. Ovid's poem is an extensive treatment of the official Roman calendar or *Fasti*, loosely imitating Hesiod's *Works and Days*, each book of which discusses one month of the Roman calendar.. In addition to some brief astronomical notes, its more significant portions look at the Roman religious festivals, the rites performed at them, and their mythological explanations. These explanations preserve much mythological and religious lore that would otherwise have been lost. Shakespeare retains the essence of the classical story, adding that Tarquin's lust for Lucrece is the result of her own husband's praise of her. Shakespeare later used the same idea in his late romance *Cymbeline* (circa 1609-1610). In this play, Iachimo bets Posthumus (the husband) that he can make Imogen commit adultery with him. Even though he does not succeed, he is able to convince Posthumus he has done so by using information about Imogen's bedchamber and body. Iachimo hides

in a trunk which is delivered to Imogen's chamber under the pretence of safeguarding some jewels, a gift for her father King Cymbeline. The scene in which he emerges from the trunk (II, 2) mimics the scene in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Indeed, Iachimo compares himself to Tarquin in the scene: "Our Tarquin thus, / Did softly press the rushes ere he waken'd / The chastity he wounded" (II, 2, 12-14). Lucrece is described as a work of art, objectified as if she were a material possession. Tarquin's rape is described in terms of besieging, with the man conquering the maiden's physical attributes. Although Lucrece is raped, the poem offers an apology to absolve her of guilt (lines 1240-46). Like Shakespeare's other raped women, Lucrece gains symbolic value: through her suicide, her body metamorphoses into a political symbol. The woman's political body is threatened by the man's natural inclination towards physical violence: the rape is presented as mutilation of Lucrece's flesh, while Tarquin's sex is a dagger or sword piercing through Lucrece's flesh. The political metaphor continues when the incident is evoked in the descriptive language of military campaigns, drawing on the violence of attacks: Tarquin's sexual impulses are equated with the spirit of a soldier marching on his foe ("By reprobate desire so madly led / The Roman lord marcheth to Lucrece' bed", 300-301); he threatens the young woman with his sword. The poem's rhetorical nature strengthens the notion of the woman's body as a work of art. The materiality of the language disrupts a rhetorical tradition oriented towards the pure idealisation of the victim and a legal tradition, and social practice, which keeps silent about rape narratives. Lucrece's own rhetorical eloquence proves that the victim seeks out a more active, violent retribution on the rapist and on the monarchical regime that he represents (even if the active revenge must be carried out by a male agent – Brutus).

Shakespeare's late play, *Cymbeline*, transforms the seduction scene into the inventory of the woman's body and bedchamber (a décor set for passion): statues of silver Cupids (as a sexual innuendo); hangings depicting Diana bathing and Cleopatra's first encounter with Antony (Diana is a chaste presence; in accordance with Imogen's good faith; Cleopatra is the embodiment of illegal love and sexuality, while Venus, passionate, seductive, and dangerous, offers an analogy between the Queen of Egypt, greeting her imperial Roman guest, and Imogen welcoming her Roman visitor in her intimacy). According to Catherine Belsey (1999:123): "Iachimo's account of the furnishings is surprisingly specific in a play which elsewhere depends on a broad generic distinction between court and countryside, punctuated by brief excursions into an equally stereotypical Machiavellian Italy". Thus, the function of the interior decorations is to enhance the credulity of Iachimo's version and to guarantee, through their symbolism, the sexual connotation of the seducer's boastfulness. In this version, Imogen's actual betrayal is of less importance than the face the husband loses in a man-to-man confrontation (symbolic or not) – Posthumus in confrontation with a man with whom he made a bet (therefore a commitment).

Conclusions

A major aspect of such plays as those mentioned above is the theatre's potential to reflect violence. They prove that tragedy not only represents an assault on the body but is also violent in its effect on the spectator, forcing a response from viewers, as well as from characters. Major motifs, such as guilt and victimisation, are embodied by characters who are rape survivors, harassed and neglected women, wives of victimisers. These characters are physical and discursive bodies: women using language to report, accuse, and avenge, women using language to claim attention or to negotiate it, men

using language to perform actions upon more or less passive recipients, etc. Visualising bodies in pain (the mutilated body, the corpse, etc.) is an important part of the cultural history of their reception on the early modern stage.

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**SHE'S THE MAN: GENDER DYNAMICS IN WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE'S *TWELFTH NIGHT***

ECATERINA HANȚIU

University of Oradea

Abstract: More than any other Shakespearean play, *Twelfth Night* demonstrates how gender can be performed and impersonated with the use of voice, costume and mannerisms. The play explores the relationship between gender and desire, allowing us to understand the complex ways in which Shakespeare responded imaginatively to sex, gender and sexuality as determinants of human identity. The article also discusses various movie versions of the play.

Key words: Elizabethan performance, gender, identity, movie versions

William Shakespeare's comedy *Twelfth Night* (ca. 1601–2) is an improbable but entertaining fantasy that hides beneath its merry surface some of life's deepest truths. Indeed, behind all the humour displayed in this work of genius, a major truth that is both happy and sad is expressed: life is short and full of unpleasant events, so it is our duty to recognise and cherish real happiness if it comes our way.

In Shakespeare's time celebrating Christmas only began on December 25th, the twelfth night after Christmas being January 5-6, which marked the end of the festive season with the arrival of the Wise Men in Bethlehem. Even if the theme of the play has little or nothing to do with the gifts of the Magi, it is well known that the period was one of gift-giving, partying and having fun even by breaking rules and conventions. People were allowed to play whatever roles they wanted, so that sometimes masters waited on their

servants just for fun, while music, entertainment and riotous disorder were quite natural on such an occasion. The subtitle of Shakespeare's play is *What You Will*, which may be a reference to free options and choices as fit for the occasion, rather than reflecting condescension.

It is obvious that in order to enjoy the play we must accept some impossible situations and use our willpower to change Shakespeare's land of make-believe into a real world. For instance, we must pretend that successful long-term relationships and lasting happiness can occur even in cases of mistaken identity, and we must strongly believe that fraternal twins of opposite sexes, dressed identically, are indistinguishable. We must also accept Illyria, the setting of *Twelfth Night*, as a real country, although it is obvious that it is important for the play's romantic atmosphere and nothing more. Illyria may have been suggested by the Roman comedy *Menæchmi*, the plot of which involves a pair of twins who are mistaken for each other like Shakespeare's Sebastian and Viola, but the play's setting has several Elizabethan English characteristics. For instance, the cry of 16th century London boatmen is used in the play by Viola:

Then westward, ho! Grace and good disposition 'tend your ladyship! (Act 3, Scene I, 66),

while *The Elephant*, a pub not far from the Globe Theatre, is recommended by Antonio to Sebastian as the best place to lodge in Illyria:

In the south suburb, at the Elephant, Is best to lodge. (Act 3, Scene III, 67)

However, in this comedy, just as in some other Shakespearean plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, space is irrelevant. Shakespeare's

Illyria is but an illusion, just like Duke Orsino's falling in love with Olivia (which is actually falling in love with the idea of love) or Olivia's falling in love with Cesario (who is not a man, but Viola, a woman in disguise).

Viola and her twin brother, Sebastian, are separated as their ship sinks and reunited only later after having passed through various unusual situations. The play actually focuses on mistaken identity, but unlike in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, where the errors are purely fortuitous, as nature alone has conspired to ridicule human complacency, in *Twelfth Night* Viola intentionally disguises herself as a man and takes the name of Cesario. Her twin brother, Sebastian, is also mistaken for Cesario, but only at the end of the play. In both plays, the doppelgängers come out of the sea, the supreme Shakespearean symbol of mysterious uncontrollable nature, as the result of an accident, a shipwreck: it is Nature that has arranged for two people to look so alike, it is Nature again that separates them and later on reunites them. But in Viola's case, one can observe the way in which human will interferes with Nature's pranks. The theatrical device of mistaken identity that Shakespeare used so deftly in his *Comedy of Errors* takes on a more realistic shape in *Twelfth Night*: the mistakes are caused by intentional disguise. Viola's disguise as a man, besides contributing to the complexity of the plot, seems to convey additional messages as well, by suggesting that sexes are arbitrary and women are just as resourceful as men in finding a way to solve problems.

Viola arrives at the palace of Duke Orsino of Illyria disguised as Cesario and soon (s)he becomes indispensable to the Duke, who regards this charming young courtier as his confidante and messenger to the fair Olivia, the lady the Duke is fond of.

As women could not perform on the Elizabethan stage, Viola's part had to be played in those days by a young man, which made disguise much

easier. Almost every human society throughout history has made distinctions between male and female gender by the type of clothing they were expected to wear, and most societies have had a set of norms or even laws defining what type of clothing was appropriate for each gender. The Elizabethan era was a period of time dominated by class structure, with the consequence that people were not allowed to dress as they liked. They had to obey the so-called Sumptuary Laws, dictating the kind of clothing people had to wear according to rank, status or social position. For instance, the *English Sumptuary Law* of 1574 (*The Statutes of Apparel*) stated the following:

Note that also the meaning of this order is not to prohibit a servant from wearing any cognizance of his master, or henchmen, heralds, pursuivants at arms; runners as jousts, tourneys, or such martial feats, and such as wear apparel given them by the Queen, and such as shall have license from the Queen for the same. (<http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-costume.htm>)

The clause applied to actors and their costumes too. Historical realism was to come as late as the 19th century, so on the Elizabethan stage, whatever the play and whichever era the play was set in, the actors wore the costumes of their own time. Different coloured clothing, the types of materials and fabrics (velvet, silk, lace, cotton and so on) represented codes the meanings of which could be easily deciphered by the audience. For example, yellow was associated with envy, greed and treachery – this is why Olivia is so shocked to see Malvolio wearing the yellow stockings and crossed garters recommended to him by drunken Sir Toby and the clever Maria, who together engineer his downfall.

The distinction between men and women in the way of clothing helped the young male actors of the time to successfully impersonate women

on the stage. Cross-dressing, which was used as a sign of protest by a number of emancipated 19th century women, did not in this case reflect a rebellious countering of norms; on the contrary, it meant obeying the rules of performance making, especially when the play dealt with mistaken identities.

The concept of mistaken identity is doubled in this play in a more complex way and on a different level than in *The Comedy of Errors*, in which two pairs of male twins contribute to creating the imbroglio; Shakespeare sticks to just one set of twins in *Twelfth Night*, but by making Viola disguise herself as a man, he establishes a second kind of mistaking identity: the other characters in the play mistake Viola for a man, and later they mistake Sebastian for Viola/Cesario. Gender ambiguities are inherent in the play's cross-dressing. Viola's disguise places her in confusing situations: on the one hand she falls in love with Orsino and cannot reveal her true feelings, as he treats her as a man, and on the other hand beautiful Olivia falls in love with Viola/Cesario at first sight, also mistaking her for a man.

As Viola has put on a mask to create another self, she cannot give up her disguise, even though she feels sorry for deceiving Olivia while experiencing personal distress of the same kind. Viola/Cesario tries to behave like a man, and although she is described by Malvolio as "not old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy" (Act 1, Scene V, 59), (s)he knows how to obtain what (s)he wants.

Still, in comparison with other Shakespearean women in disguise, such as Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* or Rosalind in *As You Like It*, who seem to be completely comfortable in their impersonations and always in control, Viola is more vulnerable, more hesitant. Sometimes she seems very boyish, but there are times when there is some awkwardness in her trying to fill the role that she has to play, just as there are cases when Viola/Cesario

behaves like a woman. During her first encounter with Olivia she refers to her assumed identity and suggests that she is playing a role:

OLIVIA: Are you a comedian?

VIOLA/CESARIO: No, my profound heart: and yet, by the very fangs of malice, I swear, I am not that I play. (Act 1, Scene V, 60)

As Olivia has previously covered her face with a veil, Viola's female curiosity can no longer be repressed. It is both the curiosity of any woman and that of a woman in love, who needs to see the face of her rival and compare it with her own, that makes her quite abruptly ask Olivia to let her see her face. Under any other circumstances, Olivia would have regarded Viola's behaviour as suspicious, but apparently she is already too fascinated by the looks and the voice of the young messenger to hesitate, especially as she takes Cesario's request as the proof of his interest in her.

VIOLA: Good Madam, let me see your face.

OLIVIA: Have you any commission from your lord to negotiate with my face?

You are now out

of your text: but we will draw the curtain and shew you the picture. (Act 1, Scene V, 60)

Olivia has long been accustomed to the admiration of men and expects to receive compliments praising her attractive looks, yet she hears something quite unexpected from Viola/Cesario, who – like a jealous woman – doubts the natural quality of Olivia's beauty, suspecting a counterfeited beauty.

OLIVIA: Look you, sir, such a one as I was, this presents: Is't not well done?

(Unveiling)

VIOLA: Excellently done, if God did all. (Act 1, Scene V, 60)

The discourse then takes a rapid shift from female maliciousness to the seriousness of a messenger's duty, the flattery of euphemistic talk replacing the venom of envy, because Viola is honest enough to admit that she is in the presence of true, genuine beauty and Cesario has a message to deliver. Viola/Cesario recites a text that conforms to all the conventional codes of courtly manners, including admiration for the lady's beauty and praise of her virtue under the form of a complaint about her cruelty, to which the well-known Shakespearean idea of transmitting beauty to the next generations is added, just as in his so-called *procreation sonnets* (Sonnets 1 to 17):

VIOLA: 'Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white
Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on;
Lady, you are the cruel'st she alive,
If you will lead these graces to the grave,
And leave the world no copy. (Act 1, Scene V, 60)

The idea of same-sex attraction and gender blending, presented in a roundabout way that makes some of Shakespeare's sonnets cryptic, is a characteristic of this play too. Olivia feels an irresistible attraction for Viola/Cesario, in spite of the latter's numerous warnings, while Duke Orsino is continually demanding to have Cesario by his side, in spite of his declared love for Olivia. At the end of the play each of them actually gets the correct version of the same person, as the twins are described as indistinguishable:

ANTONIO: An apple, cleft in two, is no more twin

Than these two creatures. Which is Sebastian? (Act 5, Scene 1, 60)

The relationship between Sebastian and Antonio, which has often been neglected and placed in the background of Viola's relationship with Orsino, is also interesting and somewhat confusing. Antonio had saved Sebastian's life, and his deep affection is expressed in words that reveal feelings deeper than mere friendship:

ANTONIO: That most ingrateful boy, there, by your side,
From the rude sea's enrag'd and foamy mouth
Did I redeem: a wreck past hope he was;
His life I gave him, and did thereto add
My love, without retention or restraint,
All his in dedication: for his sake,
Did I expose myself, pure for his love,
Into the danger of this adverse town; [...]
And for three months before
(No interim, not a minute's vacancy),
Both day and night did we keep company. (Act 5, Scene 1, 73)

The emotional language in which he describes Sebastian, and his anger at his betrayal, have led some commentators to suggest that there is a homoerotic attachment between the two characters – at least on Antonio's side.

ANTONIO: If you will not murder me for my love, let me be your servant.
SEBASTIAN: If you will not undo what you have done – that is kill him whom you have recovered – desire it not. (Act 2, Scene I, 61)

Other commentators have criticised this attempt to impose 20th century sexual and emotional categories on the world of Renaissance drama. They argue that Antonio's impassioned expressions of friendship do not have any suspicious connotations, and that the relationship between these men is nothing but an example of the strong and celebrated tradition of close male comradeship in the English Renaissance. It is suggestive, however, that Antonio's demand *let me be your servant* sounds like the courtly love rhetoric of lover as servant which Petrarchan love poetry had popularised. (<http://jembloomfield.suite101.com/antonio-in-twelfth-night-a29871>)

Antonio is apparently taken with Sebastian as an epitome of Renaissance beauty, a handsome youth, still uncertain about his tastes, feelings and/or sexual orientation. The beauty of Olivia appears so striking to Sebastian that he consents to marry her on the spot, without thinking twice. One of Shakespeare's favourite themes, the difference between appearance and reality, finds suitable illustration in Sebastian, who is quick to judge by appearances. Compared with her brother, Viola is a determined young woman who knows what she wants – and she wants to become Orsino's wife; still, when Malvolio tries to describe the disguised Viola to Olivia, he uses words which seem to describe not only an adolescent but also an androgynous person.

Viola and Sebastian may look very much alike, but their behaviour and ways of thinking are different. Viola is a clever, resourceful and independent person who deliberately disguises herself in order to protect herself and preserve her freedom. She never abandons hope and thinks of her brother as having been saved from drowning, just like herself.

VIOLA: And what should I do in Illyria?

My brother he is in Elysium.

Perchance he's not drown'd; - What think you, sailors?

CAPTAIN: It is perchance that you yourself were saved.

VIOLA: O, my poor brother! And so, perchance may he be. (Act 1, Scene II, 57)

By contrast with his sister, Sebastian is less optimistic and has lost all hope that Viola may be alive, so he sheds bitter tears when he thinks of her.

SEBASTIAN: [...] my stars shine darkly over me; the malignancy of my fate might, perhaps, distemper yours [...] some hour before you took me from the breach of the sea, was my sister drowned. [...] she is drowned already, sir, with salt water, though I seem to drown her remembrance again with more. (Act II, Scene 1, 61)

He is also an accommodating character. This is why he needs the protection of a mature friend like Antonio and then submits to Olivia's decision that they should be married. Olivia, as suggested by Jean Howard in her *Crossdressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England*, is in a way a masculinised woman. Olivia, she writes,

is a woman of property, headstrong and initially intractable, and she lacks any discernable male relatives [...] to control her or her fortune (Howard, 1988: 432).

Seen in this light, Olivia appears to be the dominant presence in her relationship with Sebastian, just as Antonio had been in his relationship with the youth. The ambiguous words Sebastian uses when telling Olivia:

You are betrothed both to a maid and a man (Act 5, Scene 1, 74)

may also be interpreted as him acknowledging that he has had a passionate relationship with Antonio. This is the last line Sebastian speaks in the play, a cryptic statement that sounds like a warning, presaging a questionable domestic atmosphere.

Beautiful and sweet as she might seem, Olivia is very much like Viola, a woman of action, strong-willed, intelligent and capable of taking care of herself. Both Olivia and Viola fight for what they want, leaving contemplative meditation to men like Orsino and Sebastian.

Just like Sebastian, Orsino – who is older but none the wiser – readily agrees to marry Viola/Cesario, without even having seen her in her *maiden's weeds*, while the words he utters upon making such a hasty decision sound as cryptic as Sebastian's:

[...] Cesario, come:
For so you shall be, while you are a man:
But when in other habits you are seen,
Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen. (Act 5, Scene 1, 75)

Orsino's love declaration is rather bizarre or at least strangely phrased, as he continues to address Viola by her assumed male name, even after her true identity is revealed. He never calls her by her real name, continuing to recognise Cesario as a legitimate identity for his future wife. A possible continuation of the disguise in their home is alluded to, in which Viola, dressed up as a woman, would meet the expectations of Orsino's desire to have a mistress.

The complexity of the play has always been regarded as making it challenging for actors, stage and movie directors - hence the large number of performances given all over the world, as well as the numerous adaptations of

it for the stage, the silver screen, radio and television. It is interesting to observe that in all cases the stage and/or movie directors have chosen actresses to perform the double role of Viola and Sebastian, that some of the very best actors and actresses have tried to match up to the demands imposed by the mix-ups of the comedy, and that some of the most lasting achievements in this genre are still regarded as great movies today.

A short silent adaptation was released by the Vitagraph Studios as early as 1910, with Florence Turner playing the part of Viola.

The 1996 *Twelfth Night* movie directed by Trevor Nunn and adapted to be set in the 19th century employed a group of excellent actors, including Imogen Stubbs as Viola, Helena Bonham Carter as Olivia, Toby Stephens as Duke Orsino and Ben Kingsley as Feste, the Clown. The film also features Mel Smith as Sir Toby, Richard E. Grant as Sir Andrew, Imelda Staunton as Maria and Nigel Hawthorne as Malvolio.

The Shakespearean spirit is present in spite of the 19th century setting, with references to swords and other weapons being carefully preserved and strengthened by the assumed military ranks of the male characters. The movie director's vision is rather a gloomy one, as observed by Peter Holland in an article entitled "The Dark Pleasures of Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*", published in the *Shakespeare Magazine*:

The darkness of the play is palpable on screen. It is there not just in the gloomy autumnal landscape of the film's world but also in the oppressive interiors of the buildings. Viola transforms Olivia's house from a house of mourning by the simple expedient of opening the curtains to let light flood in. It is also there in the militarism of Orsino's kingdom, where soldiers chase Antonio when he is recognized, and where the shipwrecked Viola and sailors scurry for cover when a

troop of Orsino's horsemen investigate the debris of the wreck on the seashore.
(<http://www.shakespearemag.com/spring97/12night.asp>)

As a specialist in staging Shakespeare, Peter Holland (Director Designate of the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon, England) observes that Trevor Nunn's choice of the 19th century for his movie was dictated by the fact that this was the most relevant period for gender contrast in all respects: clothes, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships.

Nunn has chosen to set the film in a 19th-century Illyria (actually mostly filmed in Cornwall) because it is a world where the gender gap is strongly seen both in the extreme contrast of clothing (Nunn calls it "the dress silhouettes") and in social attitudes. It is a society where the class structures of the play's world are immediately comprehensible, where it is genuinely transgressive for Maria, Olivia's servant, to marry Sir Toby, Olivia's kinsman, and where Malvolio's final public humiliation is all the more painful for being witnessed by the servants over whom he would normally have had authority.
(<http://www.shakespearemag.com/spring97/12night.asp>)

The efforts Viola makes in order to get into not only the shape of a young man but also the world of men, which are never clearly revealed by Shakespeare, are made obvious in the movie and can be visualised in detail:

But, above all, the choice of period makes clear and powerful the journey Viola has to make. Nunn shows Viola changing her silhouette into Cesario's: cutting her hair, binding her breasts, putting on men's clothing. But she then has to negotiate the world of male activity: she must relearn how to walk or how to yawn and learn new skills like fencing or, most awkwardly for her, how to have a conversation with her master while Orsino is in the bath. The distance she travels to make that transformation is clear, and the profundity of its effects on her and

on all who come into contact with her is equally striking.
(<http://www.shakespearemag.com/spring97/12night.asp>)

Shakespeare in Love (1998), directed by John Madden and written by Marc Norman and the playwright Tom Stoppard, contains several references to *Twelfth Night*. It is a charming story which attempts to put together an imaginary account of the period in which the young Shakespeare, lacking money and suffering from writer's block, is trying to write *Romeo and Juliet*. Against this background of writing about love and desperate lovers, he meets Viola, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, a strong-willed and independent young woman, who disguises herself as a boy to become an actor in spite of all restrictions, and she becomes his true Muse. Near the end of the movie, Queen Elizabeth I (Judi Dench) asks Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes) to write a comedy for the Twelfth Night holiday, which he starts with Viola (Gwyneth Paltrow) on his mind.

One of the most interesting recent adaptations is Andy Fickman's 2006 film *She's the Man*, which modernises the story as a contemporary American teenage comedy (as *10 Things I Hate About You* did with *The Taming of the Shrew*). It is set in an American prep school named Illyria where Duke Orsino (Channing Tatum) is sharing his room on the campus with the newly arrived Sebastian Hastings (Amanda Bynes). In fact the Duke's new room-mate is Viola, Sebastian's twin sister, whose girls' soccer team has just been disbanded and who desperately wants to play in order to beat the Cornwall team and humiliate her ex-boyfriend, Justin. While Viola is playing soccer with the boys, she is also covering for Sebastian (James Kirk), who has gone to a music contest in London with his new band.

Unlike Viola, who is a fine athlete and very good at playing soccer, Sebastian is a romantic boy, fond of music and poetry. When he meets Olivia (Laura Ramsey) for the first time he is impressed not only by the passionate kiss he receives from her but also by finding out that this girl can recite his poems.

Besides using the Shakespearean device of making the fake Sebastian the Duke's friend and confidante, the movie director also included here the "courtship rehearsal" employed in *As You Like It*, when Rosalind/Ganymede pretends to counsel Orlando to cure him of being in love.

Amanda Bynes as Viola/Sebastian is simply charming, if not always convincing. In a much sunnier atmosphere than that of Trevor Nunn's movie, the American Viola binds her breasts, tries on wigs and make-up, men's T shirts, blue jeans and suits. Disguise in itself not being enough for this modern background, the young girl freely uses boyish gestures and language in order to make her *campus-Sebastian* more credible. She follows various men in the street, trying to imitate their movements and gestures, with her efforts at times resulting in ridiculous situations. Extra help is provided by adding to the cast a couple of Viola's friends who pretend to be dumped girlfriends, to increase Sebastian's credibility as a ladykiller among his dorm mates. Shifting roles in a hurry, Viola tries to run around and do both her and her brother's jobs at the Junior League carnival, performing a genuine *tour de force*, dressing and undressing, changing places, avoiding in turn her mother and Monique, Sebastian's ex-girlfriend and managing to fool both of them. In expanding the basic premise and adding comedic elements, the movie director used both Mack Sennett chase elements and the *snowball effect*, common clichés in cartoons and modern theatrics.

The American Viola is a real tomboy, although she is supposed to be and behave like a Southern belle. Her behaviour at the course for débutantes is outrageous, shocking and even disgusting (on purpose) at times. She hates the artificial pretended delicate feminine gestures taught there and protests by entering the room at a totally ungraceful pace and by eating in a distasteful manner. The course is a fiasco, culminating in Viola, Olivia and Monique fighting in the restroom in a most unladylike way.

Sebastian/Viola succeeds in playing soccer with the boys, her team is victorious, and the game ends with the Duke quoting the words of Malvolio in Shakespeare's play:

Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them. (Act 2, Scene V, 65)

The final part of the movie takes everybody to the débutante ball where Olivia comes in accompanied by the real Sebastian and Viola – finally agreeing to wear a dress – has the Duke as her formal date.

Although inspired by Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, *She's the Man* is a much lighter version of the story, in which it is entertainment and not serious considerations about life and its problems that comes first. Some of the important characters in Shakespeare's play (Sir Toby, Andrew Aguecheek, Maria, Feste etc) are merely shadowy presences in the movie, acting as necessary but not indispensable class or dorm mates, while Malvolio simply becomes Malcolm, Feste's pet: a hairy tarantula. Much of Shakespeare's philosophical thought and wit is in this way lost, the intention of the producer being directed towards providing amusing situations and images instead of entertaining but at the same time deep dialogues.

Nevertheless, the main message of this Shakespearean romantic comedy is still there: love comes in various shapes, love means trouble and pain – or, as the Duke puts it in the movie: when you're in love *you have issues*, but love can also be the most beautiful thing in the world. Moreover, unless we experience a certain situation, we do not know what it is like; unless we walk in somebody else's shoes we don't know what he/she really feels. Shakespeare's comic, romantic tale of loss and love, disguise and gender continues to teach wise life lessons, no matter what shape it comes or will come in.

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Movies

Twelfth Night (1996) *Director*: Trevor Nunn *Writers*: William Shakespeare (play), Trevor Nunn (screenplay). *Stars*: Helena Bonham Carter, Richard E. Grant, Imogen Stubbs, Steven Mackintosh.

Shakespeare in Love (1998) *Director:* John Madden *Writers:* Marc Norman, Tom Stoppard. *Stars:* Gwyneth Paltrow, Joseph Fiennes, Colin Firth, Geoffrey Rush, Judi Dench.

She's the Man (2006) *Director:* Andy Fickman, *Writers:* Ewan Leslie (story and screenplay), Karen McCullah Lutz (screenplay), Kirsten Smith (screenplay). *Stars:* Amanda Bynes, Laura Ramsey, Channing Tatum, James Kirk

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IN RENAISSANCE WESTERN
EUROPE**
EROS VIA THANATOS

ELISABETA ZELINKA

University of the West, Timișoara

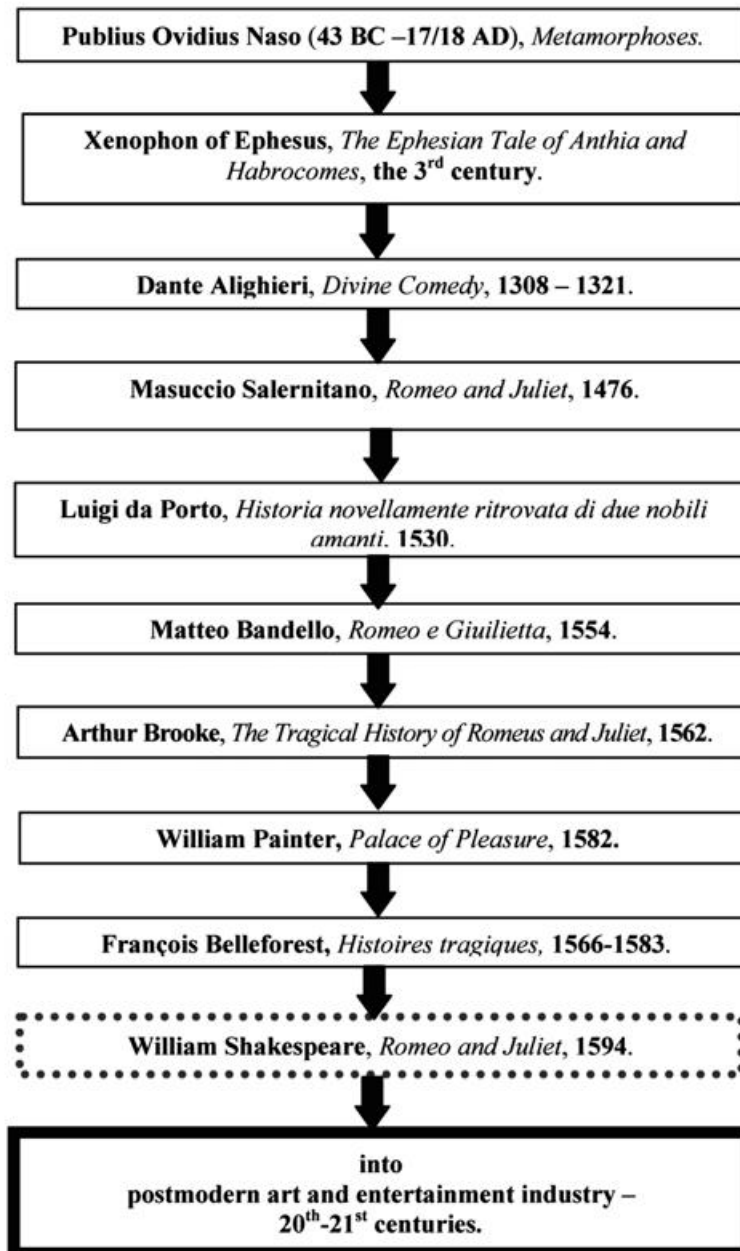
Abstract: The present article offers a postmodern (re)interpretation of the 16th century Renaissance set of social etiquettes versus the average citizen's *Weltanschauung* triggered by his most natural drives and impulses. The epicentral focus of our investigation is the social network(s) built by the different, sometimes oppositional ethical, theological and epistemological codes. What types of motivation triggered certain members of different social layers to observe or to break these codes? Was there any differentiation between clergymen and (fe)male aristocracy? Most importantly, why was the epistemological positionality of men different from that of (educated) women?

Keywords: collective consciousness, the French Revolution, “the politics of location”, proto-liberation, *Weltanschauung*

Introduction: Elizabethan phallocratic realities

William Shakespeare presents the ravishing love story unfolding between the scions of two rival families in Verona: the Montagues and the Capulets. The Bard probably had little idea that the *Romeo and Juliet motif* would live as long as 21st century cinema and drama, and appear over the signature of world-famous directors and actors: *West Side Story*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Shakespeare in Love*. This love-related motif can be considered to be

more deeply engraved in the collective conscience of the postmodern audience (whether as readers or viewers) than any other.



The evolution of Romeo and Juliet

The mission of Shakespearean / Renaissance drama

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that the postmodern reader probably wonders about the following: why precisely *Romeo and Juliet*, what does this play have to do with the 16th century *Weltanschauung*, how can it reflect England, its society with its ideas and concepts, when all characters are Italian? After all, not even the setting is in England!

Although two thirds of Shakespeare's plays are set outside the borders of England and two thirds of all his characters are of other nationalities than English (Egyptians, Romans, Spaniards, Italians or Africans), they all symbolize Renaissance England and the 16th - 17th century Shakespearean society. Whether the characters are Roman statesmen or Venetian generals, they are all allegories of the all-round Renaissance persons living in Shakespeare's Elizabethan England (Goethe 1813, available at: <http://pages.unibas.ch/shine/shakespundkeinende.html>).

It is a fact that one of Shakespeare's favourite locations was indeed Italy and the Italian cities with their fairytale-like Italian sceneries: Mantua, Rome, Venice or in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, Verona.

Secondly, Shakespeare offers his readers a quite special imagology as far as Italy is concerned: all that is evil is placed in Italy. This image of Italy is usually a negative one, depicting father-murderers in Rome (*Julius Caesar*), mean, cruel merchants in Venice (*The Merchant of Venice*) or a vendetta-ruled society which smothers the innocent love of two young people (*Romeo and Juliet*).

Therefore, in the present tragedy Verona represents the typical Italian city-state, the most modern type of commercial society available to Shakespeare's historical imagination. Verona is the modern, commercialized,

bourgeois society, nevertheless it is driven by a series of deep-rooted social contradictions. Consequently, the epicentral topic of this tragedy might be *eros* via *thanatos*, or love through death, as only *thanatos* has the power to terminate the two dynasties' feuds and to reunite the victimized lovers.

Nevertheless, the play fulfils its social-moralizing mission: according to M. C. Bradbrook (1971:76) Shakespearean drama, like any Renaissance drama, generally had two paramount functions: firstly, to mirror contemporary reality, that is Elizabethan England with all its faults and shortcomings and secondly, to castigate the negative aspects. *Romeo and Juliet* fulfils its double mission, as an Elizabethan tragedy: The two feuding families indeed come to peace at the end of the play and acknowledge their children as being "Poor sacrifices of our enmity" (V.3.). The horrible acts are revealed and either the villains are punished or they repent.

Eros, *thanatos* and hate – the distinctive elements of this triptych co-exist in a perfect symbiosis. At the same time they prove a most useful resource for analysing the 16th century psycho-social realities of England, alongside the socio-political position of the woman during the Elizabethan Renaissance.

Ladies in Renaissance Western Europe

Women in Renaissance times had a rather pitiful status; to quote Simone de Beauvoir's (1993:xx-xxiii) famous phrase: they indeed were "the second sex". Women were considered weak, inferior to men, both psychologically and biologically. The husband was associated with power, ownership, violence and authority over his wife. Man was superior, thus he became the master of the woman (King 2000:251), while women had

absolutely no rights but to get married and give birth to as many children as their health allowed them, hopefully boys and not girls.

In the same line of thought, one should mention Toril Moi, whose theory on women's condition over the past centuries aligns itself with those of the French-Bulgarian linguist and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. Kristeva considers the feminine condition not in terms of essences (as Hélène Cixous does in her *Sorties*, 1989), but in terms of positionality. Moi and Kristeva (1989:111-112) agree in adopting a positional perspective: 'feminine' is the marginal, "that which is marginalized, by the patriarchal symbolic order". Therefore the 'feminine' "seems to be marginalized (repressed, silenced) by the ruling" (1989:111-112) patriarchal heteronormative canon. Moreover, 'feminine' is all that is pushed to the borderline between man (the norm) and irrational chaos. Thus 'feminine' becomes the symbol of the marginal, of that mysterious principle which is suspended between the masculine norm and unknown chaos.

Does that not automatically position and define the inferior, marginalized and oppressed feminine in opposition to the superior, central and oppressing masculine? The present standpoint of the borderline / of marginality is also shared by bell hooks, but hooks' theory functions as a sequel to Kristeva's and Moi's argumentation. hooks (2004:153-156) calls her theory "the politics of location" and she sees the margin not as a to-be-pitied locus of redemption and repression for women, but as a topos of finding their peace, their peace of mind and of power to gather strength.

Precisely as hooks (2004:153-156) theorises, not all women of the past wasted all their time on self-pity. It indeed was a Sisyphean task for a young woman to rebel against the absolutism of the Renaissance father figure; nevertheless we witness exceptional cases, such as Juliet and the Nurse. Juliet faces a tough decision: she either accepts her fate imposed by

her father (a barren, loveless marriage to Paris) or she uses her marginalized, secondary positionality (that of being a woman) as a topos of finding her peace of mind and her power to act and, if necessary, to react.

Therefore Juliet may be considered as an allegory of the Renaissance proto-rebellious woman, the antiphallocratic, self-empowered young woman. She fights the central phallocratic norms with all her might and dignity. Women often became subjects of physical and verbal violence, or mere sexual objects, consequently they could be sexually assaulted anytime and anywhere. Women's position during the Renaissance will also be discussed with reference to Juliet's relationship to her father, the absolute phallocratic figure, the *pater familias*.

Antipatriarchal women in the Renaissance - proto-liberation?

Concerning the concept of love, love is approached from numerous standpoints. Let us consider Romeo for example, in whose case the idea of love mirrors a clear maturation or evolution. At first, Romeo is in love with a young lady of aristocratic origin, this being the very first stage of the evolution of his *eros*. In order to suggest that Romeo's first love is shallow and immature, Rosaline is hardly mentioned (and then only in passing) in the opening of the tragedy. In deep contradiction to Juliet, Rosaline only exists *in absentia*, in Romeo's hot-blooded consciousness. Most importantly, she never enters the stage, unlike Juliet, his true love, who masters the entire play.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the tragedy, Romeo is unaware of his immature passion for Rosaline. He has not yet passed the maturing trail of falling in love and experiencing true, ardent love (for Juliet). Therefore, Romeo suffers for Rosaline, he is tormented by this feeling, he is shattered,

and he feels he cannot live any longer, so powerful is this feeling within his heart. This love towards Rosaline is so boisterous and so burning that it means pain, not happiness.

Romeo is more in love with the idea of love, with the exaltation of this feeling, than with Rosaline *per se*. That is why, when he sees Juliet at the ball, where, ironically enough, he only goes to have a chance to meet Rosaline, he immediately forgets her and falls forever in love with Juliet. This will become the true, genuine love of his life, which will lead to his death. Thus his bondage within *eros* and *thanatos*.

While in love with Rosaline, Romeo considers this feeling something ephemeral, “a smoke made with the fume of sights”, “A madness most discreet” (I.1.). Romeo is so intoxicated by this first, boyish love of his life that he even starts to behave like a melancholic lunatic (melancholy associated with love was a fashionable pose in that period). Benvolio, his friend, even asks him: “Why, Romeo; art thou mad?” (I.2.), while Romeo responds: “Not mad, but bound more than a madman is” (I.2.).

Nevertheless as soon as Juliet appears on the stage, the burning flame for Rosaline is immediately forgotten. Romeo himself acknowledges that he has never experienced true love until that precise moment: “Did my heart love till now? For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night” (I.5.).

Almost the same kind of evolution is to be seen in Juliet’s case. She is a tender, fourteen-year-old girl, with a sensitive and noble heart, but totally inexperienced as far as love and marriage are concerned. Juliet sees them as being an honour: “an honour that I dream not of” (I.3.), something in which her power of decision is of no importance, as her father is supposed to arrange her marriage with her suitor, Paris.

At the ball, when Juliet meets Romeo, she instantly falls in love with him. This moment proves decisive for her destiny and becomes a test of

maturity and of decision-making empowerment. Like Romeo, she too will have to complete a trajectory of maturation, a path of self-empowerment to confront her indomitable *pater familias*, her mother and her entire social circle, as well as the socio-religious disapprobation of the phallographic society in which she lives.

It is Juliet's love for Romeo that gives her courage and triggers her maturation process: although barely fourteen, she fully understands the meaning of true love, which may also demand self-sacrifice. That is why she makes the greatest possible sacrifice: suicide out of love for Romeo. Marriage is no longer merely an honour she never dreamt of; it becomes the strongest possible bond and proof of the love she cherishes for Romeo. If this proof is impossible to have, she rejects loveless life altogether. For the empowered Juliet, it becomes a matter of 'all or nothing'.

Juliet's process of (somewhat forced) maturation is even more evident if we consider the avalanche of dramatic turns she experiences during the short, four-day plot: Juliet is abruptly hurled into painful adulthood, she has to shoulder the responsibilities of life, love, passion and death, she is courted by a potential husband (Count Paris), falls in love with another (Romeo), secretly marries Romeo, experiences the death of her cousin Tybalt, has one brief passionate night with her new husband, then Romeo is forced to leave the city, she is threatened by her father and nearly disowned, spends almost two days intoxicated to near-death by the potion, is widowed and ultimately commits suicide alongside the body of her dead husband. Tragically, all these painful experiences prove futile, as both Juliet and Romeo have to die: Fate works against them.

Fate is cruel to the two lovers, their love is free of pain only for a few moments, in its primary phase at the ball, while Romeo is still masked and before they learn each other's names. As long as they are unaware of the

other's identity, as long as the power of their masks hides their feuding lineages, they are free of any constraint forced upon them by their vendetta-blinded families: "Is she a Capulet? / O dear account! My life is my foe's debt" (I.5.), Romeo exclaims in despair when he learns that his love is in fact a Capulet.

Other such characters in world literature who first have to complete certain steps of maturation *before* they prove ripe enough to love and to cherish their love are: Natasha Rostova in her love for Pierre in Lev Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869), Clarissa Dalloway in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Mrs. Dalloway, Louis and Richard in Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* (1998) and Mr. Rochester in his affection for Jane in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847).

Epicentral phallocracy

In Lord Capulet the Elizabethan drama unmasks a prominent and intricate character: Juliet's father, Capulet. He is the typical mighty father-figure of the Renaissance epoch, representing the clear product of the patriarchal world in which everything is governed only by men: *he and only he* may arrange Juliet's marriage to Paris, *he* organises the ball where the two are intended to meet and *he* roars at his daughter for not accepting this self-mutilating marriage. Juliet, the real subject of the entire arrangement, has absolutely no right to voice her opinion: she must merely witness *other* men directing (mutilating) her life and her destiny. Lord Capulet is the epitome of the Renaissance Man, the indomitable, omnipotent father figure and husband figure, who cannot and will not tolerate disobedience.

Capulet has no idea about what true love means. He shares the typical Renaissance outlook on marriage: a woman's social duty and right, the only

one besides giving birth to children and a means of transferring wealth from one family to the other (King 2000:248). In Capulet's discussion with Paris about his marriage to Juliet, the bride "is defined as an object of male choice and negotiation" (Ryan 1995:79), while Capulet proves that he knows nothing about his daughter's psychological and emotional potential:

My child is yet a stranger in the world / She hath not seen the change of
fourteen years: / Let two more summers wither in their pride / Ere we
may think her ripe to be a bride (I.2.).

There is a generation gap between father and daughter as far as love and marriage are concerned, because Juliet is in fact very "ripe": that same night she meets Romeo, falls in love with him and marries him.

Key characters: the Nurse, anti-patriarchal and subversive

The Nurse is not a leading character in the present tragedy, yet she plays an indispensable key role in the build-up of the dramatic climax. In Shakespeare's plays, it is often the minor characters who carry just as important messages as the leading characters: a similar example of a supporting character would be the archetypal Fool.

The Nurse is the messenger, she facilitates the dangerous and clandestine wedding, yet later when Romeo is banished (from Verona to Mantua) and the Nurse's love and understanding for Juliet are really tested, it becomes clear that Juliet has grown into a womanly maturity far beyond the Nurse's comprehension. All she can suggest is deceit, of the most callous kind, springing from brutish opportunism and immorality. What she actually suggests is nothing less than bigamy: since marriage means nothing to the Nurse but sexual pleasure and Romeo is banned from Verona, Juliet should

see no “use” of him. That is why she advises Juliet to quickly forget Romeo and seek pleasure with another man, with Paris: “Your first (husband) is dead – or’t were as good he were / As living here and you no use of him” (III.5.).

From a postmodern standpoint, the sexual liberty the Nurse here stands for may be interpreted as women’s most dangerous (sexual) rebellion site against Renaissance phallocracy. The Nurse, simple but kind as she is, may be considered a proto-liberated woman, an embryo form of the truly liberated women of the late 19th and 20th centuries. Nevertheless, although she is placed in the 16th century, it is beyond doubt that she is a woman who dares speak up against abusive male authority. We can detect another such ‘liberated’ woman in the Shakespearean canon: Emilia, Desdemona’s lady-in-waiting in *Othello*.

In IV.3. Emilia bursts out against men, accusing them of arrogance, violence and unfaithfulness to their wives. This can of course be pardoned, as they are men, but the same sins will not be forgiven to women. She dares state that women are physically and psychologically equal to their husbands and that men force women to “*fall*”, that is to cheat on them, by being aggressive and abusive:

But I do think it is their husbands’ faults / if wives do fall [...] let them
use us well: else let them know, / The ills we do, their ills instruct us so
(*Othello*, IV.3).

Friar Lawrence: the anti-patriarchal clergyman

Friar Lawrence’s position is an extremely special one not only in British literature, but in the entire Western canon. Together with Prince Escalus, he stands in the nexus of this vendetta-governed society, representing faith, justice, order and above all, peace and reconciliation. Nevertheless they

prove unable to heal the breach between the two feuding dynasties and thus to overcome the tragic predicament of their offspring.

Except for Romeo and Juliet, Father Lawrence is the *only* character to understand the depth of true, lasting love. This is the reason why he even scolds Romeo for his flame-like love for Rosaline: “Is Rosaline that thou didst love so dear, / So soon forsaken? Young men’s love then lies / Not truly in their hearts but in their eyes” (II.2.).

Paradoxically, the Franciscan brother is the *single character* in the play who comprehends love and marriage as a means of reconciliation between the two rival families: “For this alliance may so happy prove / To turn your households’ rancour to pure love” (II.3.). He proves the wisest of all the characters, wiser than Lord Capulet or Lord Montague themselves. This is even more noteworthy in Friar Lawrence’s case, as he is a member of the clergy, who has little or no tangentiality to erotic love and to eroticism. His educational formation could just as well have made him a thoroughly conservative Catholic priest who would definitely reject a secret marriage ceremony.

Nevertheless, as a Christian who preaches in the name of unconditional love and forgiveness through love, he proves wiser by far than his patriarchal milieu that brutally imposes all of its demands upon the younger generation. He takes enormous risks when he secretly marries the young couple, and what is more, he demonstrates outstanding wisdom in every piece of advice he offers them.

Fate and Time - a demonic pair of Shakespearean characters

An omnipresent and omnipotent character in *Romeo and Juliet* is Fate. Nowhere else was Shakespeare so deep a fatalist as in this particular

play: the prevailing idea in this drama is that the human being is merely a pawn, a toy in the hands of inexorable Fate, completely exposed to Fate's whimsical moods and mercy.

Moreover, Fate is not conveyed as a positive character but clearly as a negative one: it is a destructive force incessantly working against man and man can do nothing but helplessly witness himself being devoured. The same *Weltanschauung* is present in *King Lear*, *Hamlet* and especially in *Macbeth*, where Fate is directly represented by the three witches who shape human destinies.

Further masterpieces of world culture where Fate devours the human being are Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, Lev Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, Hermann Hesse's *Siddharta* and *Das Glasperlenspiel (The Glass Bead Game)*, Greek tragedies such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the orchestral work *Romeo and Juliet* composed by Tchaikovsky, and Verdi's opera *La Forza del Destino (The Force of Destiny)* (Zelinka 2010:157).

Fate seems to be incessantly working against the human being. Everything happens a *little bit too early or too late*: in the tomb scene, Romeo thinks Juliet is dead and immediately poisons himself, just a *few seconds before* Juliet awakes and discloses the truth; Friar Lawrence arrives a *few seconds too late* to stop Romeo from slaying himself and thus prevent the tragedy. Finally, when Friar John goes to Mantua (where Romeo is banished) to bring him the good news that Juliet is not in fact dead, only asleep, he is not allowed to enter the city - the guards *happen to believe* he might come from an area affected by the plague. Each of the dramatic disruptions in the play occurs because the course of actions was either

delayed or advanced by a few seconds, enough though to trigger the catastrophes.

Fate and Time seem to have joined forces in order to destroy the characters and to bring the play to a tragic end:

Shakespeare's great tragic protagonists are indeed '*fools of Time*' (*Sonnet 124*), but in the sense that they are hoodwinked by history. They are overpowered by the prevailing tides of their moment [...] figures born before their time, citizens of an anticipated age whose values their suffering discloses (Ryan 1995:75).

Their love is too emancipated for the prison-like society they live in, they share too democratic views concerning their rights as scions of two powerful, rival families, and thus their Fate will crush them: "*Romeo and Juliet* lays siege to the legitimacy of a world which deprives men and women of boundless love" (Ryan 1995:86). They can do nothing against these superior powers devouring them, as everything is steered by ruthless Fate.

As Father Lawrence so nicely puts it: "A greater power than we can contradict / Hath thwarted our interests" (V.3.). Juliet, Romeo and Friar Lawrence are indeed complex Renaissance characters, yet they are born ahead of their time, in a milieu that is still governed by certain medieval *Weltanschauungs*.

Conclusion

These three characters nevertheless fulfil a paramount role, precisely through their Thanatotic *dénouement*: they carry the true message of the high Renaissance, of the Enlightenment and of Romanticism, brought to political

fruition by the French Revolution: freedom of spirit, mind and body, that is, “*Liberté, égalité, fraternité!*”.

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**PRE- RAPHAELITES PAINTING SHAKESPEARE'S
WOMEN**

LAVINIA HULEA

University of Petroșani

Abstract: Iconic signs such as paintings, engravings or book illustrations come into existence as a result of visual attempts at redefining the literary text to which they refer. Although they belong to a different medium, they are always conditioned and influenced by the original literary work. English painting displays a series of famous images which explicitly have their roots in literary texts. While the works of Shakespeare, Keats and Tennyson seem to determine a special connection with painting, Shakespeare's plays are the source of one of the most inspiring subjects of the Pre-Raphaelite painters: women.

Key words: literary text, Pre-Raphaelites, Shakespeare, visual image, women

Literary texts and iconic signs such as paintings, engravings and book illustrations resemble each other in that they both display appearance as reality and have as a common source the concept of beauty. While sharing aesthetic values, literature and visual arts apply them to their medium differently.

A literary text usually borrows for a visual image, more specifically for a painting, a certain theme or moment that is going to represent the ground for a transposition resulting in a so-called "literary art". The communication that occurs between such a transposition and its viewer expands along the particular language of visual creation and also invites the viewer to read the literary counterpart. A connection to the original is accordingly established, implying a decoding of both painting and text that may result in a complete and rejoicing appreciation of the visual art work.

The reverse of *ekphrasis*, the visual "reading" of a literary text, makes the painter a mediator between the verbal and the visual code. A visual image comes into existence in response to a verbal stimulus; it is, to a wider or narrower extent, dictated by the original, although the transposition into another medium may be freely executed.

Painters have to face and settle the rather important issue of what to transfer from the chosen text to the image they are going to forge. They may sometimes purposely leave aside certain aspects of the literary text or raise questions without providing answers; they may, as well, make use of details that are not included in the verbal code they are transposing or even refer to moments which are only implied by the text.

During the nineteenth century the relationship between literature and art was quite close, determining certain critics to state that a dramatist is the person responsible for making good pictures; painters were quite often regarded as artists who possessed the skills required in order to render the “dramatic potential of a poet’s imagined picture”, as Martin Meisel (1983:69) remarks.

Other critics viewed the complementary character of literary works and paintings as residing in their capacity of interpreting and explaining each other. It was widely admitted that analyses of literary masterpieces had to consider artists’ interpretations of them as well.

A wide range of paintings with their roots in literature and widely known owing to exhibitions, illustrations and engravings is to be found in the 19th century British art. The literary works of Keats, Tennyson, Milton, and Shakespeare seem to possess a special connection with visual art.

According to Richard Altick (1985:255), “pictures from Shakespeare accounted for about one fifth - some 2,300 - of the total number of literary paintings recorded between 1760 and 1900”; the figure takes into account only the paintings of British artists, whose exquisite art works are preserved by museums world-wide.

The Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood resorted to poetry from their beginnings and Shakespeare’s plays were the source of one of the most inspiring subjects of the Pre-Raphaelite painters: women. They expressed

their belief that women are capable of healing and guiding men and strove to raise women to a high social condition. The result was the painting of a particular typology of women displaying several characteristics that include beautiful faces, large eyes, long necks, and long hair.

Despite such prominence given to a woman's face, the Pre-Raphaelites seem to have attributed to the women they painted various roles which do not appear to heighten the characters but rather cause them to be lacking in nuances and dynamics. The roles include virgins, 'femmes fatales', prostitutes, old maids and victims and may be connected to the Victorian environment and system of values and the fact that the authors of such role-building were men. Accordingly, while on the one hand they idealised women, trying to invest them with the higher state they deserved, on the other, the static poses of these women were the expression of the social milieu of the century which displayed a passive woman as the domestic axis of a household. Women could thus subsequently be perceived as merely decorating a man's life and home.

Certain feminine characters of Shakespeare's plays sharing common traits such as youth, beauty, and artlessness particularly attracted the Pre-Raphaelite painters. These were Ophelia, Juliet, and Miranda, who seemed to match the pattern of the painters' ideas about romantic love. Besides living ultimate love experiences and being the recipients of older men's will and determination, they may be perceived as symbols of female fragility and missed opportunities. And, during a period when the institution of marriage was shifting from a foundation based upon social category and wealth towards a union that tended to require sexual and romantic feelings, Shakespearean models allowed the Pre-Raphaelites to engage in constructing their feminine ideal.

Although relying upon common interest and romantic participation, the union between a man and a woman was seen, during the Victorian period, as immanently threatened by death. That “pairing of love and death with youth and beauty springs from the choice of Shakespearean heroines and the elegiac quality of many contemporary paintings”, as Michael Benton and Sally Butcher (1998:53-66) consider.

The Pre-Raphaelites attempted to paint evocative and complete visual images that were connected with the literary texts but that also represented an imaginative broadening of those texts and even “reinventions” of the images which the text indirectly contains.

Pre-Raphaelites’ transpositions of literary subjects seem to open a whole problematic field that involves at least two issues: the one regards the manner in which a literary text is transposed by different painters, while the other has in view the group of paintings an artist creates through handling the same literary text.

Such serial paintings are related both to their literary sources and to each other, the artists creating a visual art which does not confine itself to a single painting. As far as the means by which they deepen complexity and significance are concerned, one may notice that despite manipulating time owing to their different ways of expanding the original text, they preserve the connections with their source. An all-inclusive significance of both serial paintings and literary text may spring out, requiring the viewer’s participation in unveiling it through engaging with both the visual art works and their verbal conditioning.

Usually, the paintings of such series are not painted one after another during a short period of time and accordingly they not only display interconnections but also become related to other paintings belonging to different artists transposing the same literary source. The associated text

seems to be heightened by serial paintings that are sometimes considered to create visual narratives that explore the realm of the links between literature and visual art.

Various members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood – Sir John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti - as well as their followers who displayed the characteristics of aesthetic Pre-Raphaelitism such as John W. Waterhouse - painted images of Shakespeare's Ophelia which showed their perception both of love and of feminine victimisation. And indeed, Ophelia, the victim driven mad by a triple mischance - the rejection her lover had shown her, the absence of her brother and the death of her father – became an iconic sign of the typology of women they created.

Millais carried out thorough documentation when constructing his *Ophelia*, spending almost four months in order to depict the background on the banks of the River Hogsmill in Surrey. Furthermore he brought the painting to London and inserted the portrait of Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, embodying Shakespeare's heroine, into the canvas.

Elizabeth Siddal was a model, poet and artist herself; even her early death matched the Shakespearean character she depicted. From this starting point Millais is considered to have recreated Ophelia in terms of the Pre-Raphaelites' muse.

The episode displayed cannot be seen onstage as it only exists in the lines that describe Ophelia's death:

There is a willow grows aslant a brook
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
Of crow – flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds

Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death. (*Hamlet*, act 4, scene 7, lines 167 – 184)



Ophelia by Millais

The painting develops according to an impressive visual register, exhibiting a detailed depiction of nature, of the flora of the riverbank, and of the river. A willow grows “aslant” the stream, its branches mingle with a nettle, and a robin is seen on another branch. The flowers shown floating on the river, the dog roses on the bank, the flower by Ophelia’s cheek, a pink rose by the hem of her dress, loosestrife in the painting’s upper right corner, violets around Ophelia’s neck might possess certain meanings connected with chastity and death. Millais also paints flowers that Shakespeare did not

mention in the script which may show his interest in the “language of flowers”, according to which each flower carries a symbolic meaning: the red poppy, the forget-me-nots linked with sleep and death.

Certain critics consider that the painting is an image of “woman-as-flower”, implying a fragile and passive feminine character that represents a nodal and perennial iconic image of Pre-Raphaelite painting.

Millais’ *Ophelia* shows the young woman drowning, with her palms upturned as if she is embracing death. The range of colours displayed by nature, the flowers on the heroine’s dress, the emptiness of her facial traits and her unaware eyes translate the overwhelming presence of a natural element that is going to absorb the human element.

It is considered that the painting’s impressive impact is rooted in its main contrasting registers: on the one hand, the flowers conveying the sense of nature as a living presence, and, on the other, the young woman who is drowning and who resembles, due to her open arms and upwards gaze, traditional portrayals of saints or martyrs.

Although Millais’ *Ophelia* is said to have more particularly expressed the artist’s vision of “Victorian womanhood” instead of accurately transposing Shakespeare’s character, it is an outstanding nineteenth-century work of “literary painting”. While the play shows a lunatic woman evolving towards her death through a succession of events composing a dynamic framing, Millais’ minute natural details, his heroine’s exterior “cleanliness” and inner serenity are the evidence of a motionless, almost static scene.

In contrast with Millais’ portrayal of a woman perceived as possessing the capacity of a “complete surrender”, the paintings of victimised women by Dante Gabriel Rossetti seem to involve the painter’s chivalric spirit when confronted with a woman’s degradation. During the late years of his life he painted several portraits of Ophelia which shift from “pity for the

victim towards Hamlet's despair under the crushing femme fatale", as David Sonstroem (1970:42) has noticed. His first version of "*Hamlet and Ophelia*" was painted between 1854 and 1858 while the second one was accomplished in 1866, and despite the ten-year gap between the two paintings they both depict Hamlet as a tortured human being and Ophelia as an innocent woman rejecting him. There is yet another painting dealing with the already-mentioned character: *The First Madness of Ophelia* shows a mad, pitiable, yet frightening woman, and Rossetti might have been thinking of the later part of Shakespeare's scene where Ophelia first shows her madness, when she recites the names of the plants.



Ophelia and Hamlet by Rossetti
(1854 – 1858)



Ophelia and Hamlet by Rossetti
(1866)



The First Madness of Ophelia by Rossetti
(1864)

Although John W. Waterhouse did not belong to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, but to aesthetic Pre-Raphaelitism, he too painted three versions of *Ophelia* showing her in different stages before her death: the first portrait, dating from 1889, displays a woman with gazing eyes whose hair is loose and whose dress bears the mark of negligence, lying in a field. The character seems to be integrated within the surrounding natural landscape, with flowers in her hands and hair, and the distant expression of her gaze makes her thoughts impenetrable. The background, containing a stream in the distance, does not reveal the heroine's identity if the viewer is not familiar with the subject.



Ophelia by Waterhouse (1889)

The second version of *Ophelia*, painted in 1894, shows her sitting on a log, before a lily pond, much closer to the water than in the first version, during the last moments that precede her death. Her lap and hair are adorned with flowers as in the first painting of the series; the dress she wears now is a sophisticated one, contrasting with the landscape. And again, as her eyes stare into the water, she displays the same distant look that has already appeared in the first painting.



Ophelia by Waterhouse (1894)



Ophelia by Waterhouse (1910)

In 1910 Waterhouse painted his third version of *Ophelia* which is perceived as representing the climax of his serial paintings of her. While still

maintaining the flower adornment and her hair “pattern”, the woman now stands in the foreground and occupies the pictorial space. Unlike her previous appearances, the heroine is not a girl anymore but a mature Ophelia who is determined to drown herself as she gazes at the viewer.

Waterhouse’s serial paintings are considered to represent “progressive moments” of Ophelia’s path towards death from the young woman lying in a field to the subject coming closer to the water and, finally, to the mature woman who puts an end to the circle of her destiny.

The Pre-Raphaelites - belonging to the Brotherhood or part of aesthetic Pre-Raphaelitism – painting Shakespeare’s women faced and settled an issue of extreme importance that occurs when transposing literary texts into paintings: they either abandoned certain aspects of the literary text or made use of details that were not included in the verbal code they were transposing or even referred to moments which were only implied by the text.

The particular typology of women they painted, conditioned and influenced by the original literary works, yet imaginatively broadening them or reinventing indirectly contained text images, developed into famous images of the Pre-Raphaelite ideal woman. During a period when the institution of marriage was tending to require sexual and romantic feelings, Shakespeare’s heroines allowed the Pre-Raphaelites to engage in constructing new feminine characters, with Ophelia – a victim driven mad by a triple mischance – becoming an iconic sign of the typology they created.

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FASHIONING THE QUEEN - ELIZABETH I AS PATRON OF TRANSLATIONS

OANA-ALIS ZAHARIA

“Dimitrie Cantemir” University, Bucharest

Abstract: The present paper aims to explore the role of Queen Elizabeth I as literary patron and dedicatee of translations by focusing on the dedication that precedes Geoffrey Fenton’s rendering of Francesco Guicciardini’s *Storia d’Italia*. Fenton’s extensive dedication to the Queen is extremely revealing of the manner in which the system of patronage was understood in Elizabethan England. Moreover, it facilitates our understanding of the translator’s role and position at the Elizabethan court, of the political and cultural implications of choosing the Queen as the patron of a translation.

Keywords: literary patronage, translation, Queen Elizabeth I

Introduction

Regarded as a powerful storehouse of fundamental information on matters of state, war, politics and foreign affairs, Francesco Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia* was extremely popular with the sixteenth century European audience. There is ample evidence of the book's circulation and popularity in the Italian, French, Dutch, Spanish and English intellectual circles of the time (Burke 2007:132). While Renaissance Englishmen such as William Cecil, Philip Marnix and the Scottish King James VI and I owned the 1566 Latin translation of Guicciardini's *Storia*, English translations of both Machiavelli and Guicciardini could be found in the libraries of Sir Edward Coke and William Byrd (131). In 1579, the year of Geoffrey Fenton's English translation of the book, Gabriel Harvey famously stated in his correspondence with Edmund Spenser that Cambridge scholars were thoroughly acquainted with the works of such important European writers as Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Phillip de Commines, Baldassare Castiglione and Stefano Guazzo (Harvey 1884:79-80).

The present paper aims to explore the role of Queen Elizabeth I as literary patron and dedicatee of translations by focusing on the dedication that precedes Geoffrey Fenton's translation of Francesco Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*. Fenton's extensive dedication to the Queen helps us gain insight into the Elizabethan understanding of the system of patronage, of the relationship between patron and translator/writer and the role and status of the translator. It brings to light the relation of interdependence that existed between patron and translator: on the one hand, the noble or royal patron offered the translator financial support or royal favour, acknowledged the name of the translator and certified that the translation had merit and was worth reading; on the other hand, the translator had the power to fashion in his dedication the figure of the patron, thus reflecting the circulation of power from subject to

ruler and vice versa. Thus, Fenton glorifies Elizabeth as the ideal ruler, successively associating her image and rule with the imperial image of the Roman emperor Augustus, with the humanist model of the ideal prince and with the qualities embodied by Lorenzo de Medici – Guicciardini’s favourite ruler. The dedication anticipates Fenton’s rewriting and domesticating of Guicciardini’s text for political and ideological reasons.

The first English translation of Guicciardini’s “History of Italy”

Francesco Guicciardini’s life and reputation were relatively familiar to the Elizabethan audience when Geoffrey Fenton published his translation of *Storia d’Italia* in 1579, a rendering based on the 1568 French translation of Jérôme Chomedey. In his dedication to the Queen, Fenton states that he refrained from commenting on Guicciardini’s “life and learning” since this matter had been “testified with sufficient credit and reputation in the high negotiations and employments which he managed long time under great Princes, Popes, and common weales” (Fenton 1579: Aiiij). What Fenton chooses to emphasise is Guicciardini’s integrity, his objectivity as a historian, his ability to recount past events without allowing any “humaine affection” (Aiiij) to make him distort the truth of the story. Moreover, Fenton astutely points out the historian’s perspicacity in setting down the causes of the events he is telling, one of the modern features of Guicciardini’s historical writing.

However, Fenton’s admiration for Guicciardini’s work did not prevent him from manipulating the original in order to make it ideologically acceptable to the Elizabethan audience of his time. While the French translation keeps extremely close to the source text, rendering most of it word

for word, Fenton frequently departs from the text in order to insert his own moral and value judgements.

Given the fact that Guicciardini's *History* described the direct role of England in the international context of the Italian wars, including numerous references to English kings and detailed accounts of the wars and historical events in which they were involved, his book must have presented special interest to Elizabethan Englishmen. Guicciardini focused on the period 1490-1534 which followed the Tudors' rise to royal power in England. The book covers a large part of the reign of Henry VII and most of the reign of Henry VIII and his involvement in the wars sweeping Europe in the sixteenth century.

Fenton, a convinced Protestant and resolute supporter of the Queen, makes his translation conform to the Tudor myth and the propaganda accompanying it during the reigns of both Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. The fact that Guicciardini gave a detailed account in his *History* of the Tudors' accession to the throne of England, thus emphasising the legitimacy of Henry VIII's rule and implicitly of Elizabeth's reign, made it an ideal text to be appropriated and domesticated by the Elizabethan translator.

The purpose of the translation

By listing in the first lines of his dedication the reasons that disposed him to offer his translation to the Queen, Fenton implicitly supplies us with the motives that lay behind his decision to choose for translation Guicciardini's *History*, allowing us to gain insight into what the Elizabethans found of interest in the Italian culture of the time:

It is not without reason nor contrarie to example, that I presume to offer vp to the peculiar and graue viewv of your Maiestie, these *my compositions* and labors: for

that the generall argument being historicall, a doctrine vwherein your Maiestie farre above all other Princes hath a most singular insight and iudgement, and the particular partes conteining discourse of state and gouernment, in vvhich God hath expressed in the person of your Maiestie a most rare and diuine example to all other Kings of the earth for matter of pollicie and sound administration.” (Fenton Aiiij)

The reasons that prompted him to translate and to dedicate the translation to the Queen are, therefore, explicitly mentioned: the historical content of the book and the discourse of state and government. They are, of course, embedded in the fulsome flattery of the Queen, who is presented not only as an exceptionally knowledgeable and keen observer of the “doctrine” of history, “far above other Princes”, but as a “most rare and divine” (Fenton Aiiij) example to be followed in matters of policy and administration by all the other kings of Christendom.

Therefore, Fenton does not present his translation to the Queen for her to use it as a source of inspiration, in the manner of the *speculum principis* advice-books. As she manifests such an “inspired science and spirit to judge of Monuments and events of times” and since she has proven to be such an extremely astute and perceptive ruler as to manage to preserve the “felicitee” of her government and reign during “so perillous and conspiring” times, she is asked to judge and assess the work as a sensible and sharp-sighted connoisseur (Fenton Aiiij).

The patron as mediator: ‘To The Queenes Most Excellent Maiestie’

The patronage of writers and translators became entirely a secular matter after the dissolution of the monasteries during the reign of Henry VIII,

the monarchs and the aristocracy being constantly encouraged to perceive learning as one of the functions of power and authority (Parry 2002:117). In offering his translation to the Queen, Fenton follows the examples of other notable writers whose works had been treasured and prized by the great princes of all ages; just as the root of a tree that is nourished by the earth but needs the light of the sun in order to “bring forth the blossoms”, likewise the wisdom and knowledge that God offered to man needs to be revealed to the whole world by true monarchs who, by means of their authority, have the power to enlighten the common people.

In an aristocratic age, associating the name of a noble and, even more, the powerful figure of the Queen with the publishing of a translation, brought credit to the name of the translator and gave assurance that the contents of the book had merit and did not contain any subversive political or religious matter. Taken under the authority and countenance of the prince, original works and translations could be “with reputation and credite *insinuated* into many peoples, nations, and regiments” (Fenton Aijj). Being an extremely cultivated and learned patron, so familiar with “the doctrine of histories and information of times” (Fenton Aijj), Elizabeth expresses in the form of her government what is only theoretically stated in books and works of authority, “all that which learning and bookes can set downe by rule and precept” (Fenton Aijj). She is “the Lampe”, “the terrestrial Sun” that, by the will of God, has to enlighten not only her own people but also “all the Regions and Climats of the whole common weale of Christendome” (Fenton Aijj). Therefore, she plays a mediating role which parallels, even transcends, those of the translator and his translation, taking over the part played by divine providence in many religious texts.

As Graham Parry remarks, a common feature of most Renaissance texts – religious, historical, philosophical - is the frequently expressed belief

that the patron “will be a preservative against ‘malicious tongues’, ‘backbiting’, ‘detraction’, ‘serpents’ and the like” (Parry 2002:118). These anxieties, often conveyed in powerful language, may indicate that publication exposed the author or the translator to rather robust criticism in the social circles of the sixteenth century:

There seems to have been widespread resentment against writers, arising from any number of sources – envy, factionalism, small-mindedness, anti-intellectualism, cultural hostility – so that a decision to publish was, in effect, to put one’s head above the parapet and be a target for all manner of abuse. (Parry 2002:117-118)

Fenton’s dedication expresses precisely the fears common to so many of his contemporaries. Thus, in the end he reverently asks Elizabeth to let the translation pass under her name and authority and to defend it in case there might appear any malevolent persons who would interpret it unfavourably:

Humbly beseeching your right excellent Maiestie, that where the worke is now to appeare in the open view of the world, and stande before the uncertaine iudgements of so many sundry and straunge humors of men, you will vouchsafe to let it passe vnder the happie name of your Maiestie, and vnder your gracious authoritie to giue it defence and fauor agaynst the emulation of such as eyther through malice or ignorance may rise up to interprete me and my labours sinisterly. (Fenton Aiiij)

While these exceedingly flattering and effusive dedications were at one level a pledge of loyalty and allegiance, they could also represent the translator’s or author’s attempt to obtain some reward in the form of office or career advancement. If Elizabeth did not directly participate in the system of patronage in strictly financial terms, this did not mean that she could not

favour certain courtiers and bestow sought-after positions (Bates 2002:372). Patronage came in all shapes and sizes, from permanent positions to more sporadic offerings or gifts, reflecting the circulation of power from subject to ruler and the other way round which entailed that the Queen, depended in the epoch of “self-fashioning”, on courtly poets and image-makers to produce her royal image just as they depended on her royal favour to secure certain position-related ends (372).

Although circulation of power could not be guaranteed to be entirely reciprocal, as in the case for instance of John Lyly who in spite of his most flattering descriptions of Elizabeth and her court in his dramas did not succeed in obtaining the prestigious post of Master of the Revels for which he struggled all his life (Bates 2002:359), Geoffrey Fenton was one of the lucky ones since in 1580 he obtained the post of secretary to the new deputy of Ireland, Lord Grey of Wilton, and thus began his long career in administration.

Fashioning the queen: from Emperor Augustus to Lorenzo

Magnifico

All through the Epistle, Fenton extols Elizabeth’s government as a moderate and well-tempered one, peace being preserved in her realms only by her divine virtues and qualities. Clearly supporting the principle of divine right, Fenton emphasises time and again Elizabeth’s providential appointment, her being Queen by the will of God and her setting as a “divine example” of sound policy, government and administration to all the other kings in Europe. She is described as the perfect embodiment of all the leading Christian virtues and classical qualities that the humanists required as

indispensable for the ideal ruler: justice, clemency, constancy, equity, wisdom and virtue:

All Kings, and Kingdomes, and nations rounde about you, rise vp to reuerence in your fourme of gouerning, that propertie of vvisdome and vertue, vvhich it seemes God hath restrayned to your Maiestie onely, vvithout participation to any of them: And in that regarde they holde you that sacred and fixed Starre, vvwhose light God will not haue put out, *though* the deuises of men on all sides are busie to dravv clovvdcs and darke vayles to obscure it. (Fenton Aiiij)

Constant reference is made to the plots and hostile environment that surrounded Elizabeth and to her power to suppress and surpass them. It is well known that Queen Elizabeth acceded to the most insecure throne in Europe; at the beginning it was claimed by Philip of Spain in right of his widow, Mary Tudor. Eleven years later, she had to face the revolt of the Catholic northern earls and in 1570, Pope Pius V formally issued a Bull deposing her, releasing her subjects from their allegiance and advocating her assassination. Elizabeth's cousin, the Catholic Mary of Scotland, with powerful connections in France, had a good claim to the English throne (particularly since the rumour that Elizabeth was not only illegitimate, but in any case no daughter of Henry VIII, had been fostered by the papacy); Mary of Scotland had been a virtual prisoner in England since 1568, and was such a constant focus of plots against Elizabeth that she had to be executed in 1587.

These must be "the devises of men on all sides" that try to obscure her "sacred and fixed Star" (Fenton Aiiij) with dark veils and clouds that Fenton refers to; but it was all to no avail since God, the almighty authority, would not allow her light to be put out.

Further on, drawing probably both on Virgil's *Aeneid* and on Seneca's *De Clementia*, Fenton likens Elizabeth's reign to that of the first Roman emperor, Augustus, thus supporting Elizabeth's imperial ambitions: "I may with good comelinesse resemble the gracious reigne of your *Maiestie* touching these regions of Christendome, to the happy time and dayes of *Caesar Augustus Emprour of Rome*" (Fenton Aiiiij).

The *Aeneid* had been recently translated and published in English (in 1573) by Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne. The standard textbook interpretation of the *Aeneid* maintained that it represented a celebration of the renewed power of Rome under the rule of Augustus Caesar. The *Aeneid* served thus to give legitimacy to the reign of Octavian, the first emperor, who was *princeps* and Pater Patriae of Rome. In giving authority to Octavian, the *Aeneid* also legitimated the existence of the empire itself. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil reminded the Roman people of their superiority among other races and peoples, which was often gained by the sword. As a greater people, Romans had the right to impose their laws and rules on other nations, though it was a value to be merciful to the conquered unless necessity required a harsher rule of law. Virgil glorified their Empire and their right to rule over the rest of the world.

Comparing the "the happy time and days" (Fenton Aiiij) of Elizabeth's rule to those of Augustus, Fenton implicitly supports the idea of Elizabeth's imperial power and divine superiority.

Furthermore, by emphasising the importance of the ruler's clemency and constancy in the maintenance of peace and the prosperity of the state, Fenton also echoes Seneca's instructions to the prince in *De Clementia* (56 C.E.). Seneca's works and ideas had been disseminated in Renaissance England especially by Erasmus whose own book of advice, *The Education of*

a Christian Prince, was heavily informed by Seneca's discourse on the differences between a tyrant and a good king. Seneca's description of Augustus is ambivalent. Stressing that a policy of clemency must characterise a reign from its very beginning, Seneca duly criticises Augustus for having learnt this lesson rather late in his political life. The young Augustus 'was hot-headed, he burned with anger'; in his old age, 'he may have shown moderation and mercy. Of course he did – after staining the sea at Actium with Roman blood.'" (Seneca 1995:142)

Nevertheless, later, when exemplifying the idea that clemency is a gentle remedy for the disease of injustice, Seneca mentions Augustus' treatment of the treacherous Cinna. Therefore, although Seneca first accuses Augustus of having begun a policy of clemency too late in his political life, in this story he offers his behaviour as an example of the kind of attitude the good prince should adopt (147).

Fenton's description of Augustus draws heavily on Seneca, although he chooses to emphasise mainly the positive side of the rule of Augustus who:

after a long and generall combustion and harrying of the vvhole vvorlde with blood and vvarres, did so reforme and reduce the Regions confining his Empire, that vwith the Scepter and seate of peace he much more preuayled then euer he could haue done vwith the svword. By his clemencie he brought to submission his neighbours that stoode out agaynst him, and by his constancie helde them assured being once reconciled. (Fenton Aiiij-Aiiij)

In his view, the only difference between Elizabeth's rule and that of Augustus is that of time and place. She is herself a "soueraigne *Empresse ouer seuerall nations and languages*" and like Augustus, who due to his wisdom and justice had absolute power in matters "touching quarrels and

controuersies of state”, she has been given by God “the ballance of power and iustice, to peaze and counterpeaze at your will the actions and counsels of all the Christian kingdomes of your time.”(Fenton Aiiij)

The importance of the balance of power is central to Guicciardini’s analysis of international relations among the Italian states, a balance that was preserved until 1492 due to Lorenzo de Medici’s diplomatic policy.

In drawing his portrait of Elizabeth, Fenton associates her not only with the humanist model of the ideal prince and with the imperial image of Augustus but also with the qualities that Guicciardini praises in Lorenzo de Medici, the ruler whom he celebrates for succeeding in preserving peace among the Italian states during the 1480s.

In the first pages of his book, Guicciardini repeatedly emphasises that this period of tranquillity was mainly established and conserved due to Lorenzo’s industry and virtue. Fenton amplifies the historian’s description of Lorenzo choosing to translate the Italian “*cittadino tanto eminente sopra ‘l grando privato*”, as “*a Citisen of Florence, in whom was expressed such an excellencie of spirite and authoritie aboue the other Citisens of that regiment*” (Guicciardini 1579:2). His “excellencie of spirite” reminds us, of course, of Elizabeth’s “inspired science and spirit to iudge”, while his “authoritie” and position “above the other Citisens” evoke her “authoritie awefull” above all her neighbours and borderers as well as her singularity and superiority among the other princes and kings of Europe (Fenton Aiiij).

Realizing that the Florentine republic would be in danger if any of the major Italian states increased its power, Lorenzo strove to ensure that the affairs of Italy were kept in balance and that the existing distribution of power was maintained:

He knewe well that it would be a thing preiudiciall to the common weale of Florence, and no lesse hurtfull to him selfe, if any of the great Potentates of that nation stretched out further their power, and therefore he employed all his deuises, meanes, and directions that the thinges of Italy should be so **evenly ballanced**, that they shoulde not waigh more on the one side then of the other: A thing which he could not make to succede, without the preseruatiō of peace, and a perpetuall care, diligence and watching ouer all accidents yea euen to the least, basest, and most inferior. (Guicciardini 1579:2)

Similarly, Queen Elizabeth is praised for her wisdom and moderation, for her equity and fulfilment “of all the laws and offices of a deuote Neutralitie” (Fenton Aij).

Elizabeth’s qualities and virtues also stand out in opposition to the vices and failings of the rulers and popes that populate Guicciardini’s book. Throughout the *History*, Guicciardini vilifies the ambition and cupidity of princes and popes as the most destructive sin of all, as the cause of all troubles and corruption. The examples are multiple and scattered through almost all his historical accounts.

Fenton does not keep his “fashioning” of the image of the Queen within the bounds of his dedication, but extends it to the text of the original, which he frequently alters for ideological reasons. Thus, upon reaching the part recounting the circumstances of Queen Elizabeth’s birth, Fenton slightly modifies the text so as to make it conform to the Tudor version of the story: Anne Boleyn is turned from the King’s “*innamorata*” [mistress] (Guicciardini 1561, Libro 2, capitolo 7),” into the highly honourable Lady Anne Boleyn, who got pregnant not before her marriage to the King, as Guicciardini states, but after it had been officially pronounced.

Conclusion

The difficulty of pinning down a single, coherent and authoritative theory of translation due to the lack of any theoretical translation treatises in the Tudor era has been noticed by the various translation scholars who have tried to give an account of the principles governing translation in the period.

The largest part of the information we have about Tudor thinking on translation comes from the prefaces, dedications and introductions to particular translations which sometimes contained statements related to the role of translation.

Geoffrey Fenton's dedication to Queen Elizabeth is a gold mine of information, offering us access not only to the Elizabethan understanding of translation but also to the Elizabethans' view of the system of literary patronage. His dedication brings to the fore the political and cultural implications of choosing the Queen as patron of a translation and subtly highlights the relationship of interdependence that existed between patron and translator/writer. Fenton's dedication as well as the text of his translation are indicative of the translator's less-obvious albeit significant power to fashion and construct the image of the Queen herself.

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THE RENAISSANCE MIDWIFE

REGHINA DASCĂL

University of the West Timișoara

Abstract: The paper deals with the delineation of the subversiveness-ridden career of the midwife in history and with the specific circumstances under which this privileged hypostasis of womanhood undergoes major changes during the 17th century. The main focus of the presentation is the female engagement with the public space during the Renaissance and the major impact of the emergent male empirical science - the scientific paradigm of New Science - upon it. *The Magnetic Lady* by Ben Jonson, an unduly neglected play, will provide a meaningful cultural illustration of this shift.

Keywords: female lore, midwife, misogyny, Renaissance, subversiveness

Introduction

The Renaissance in reviving the cultural models of classical antiquity constituted a backlash against the Women's Renaissance of the 12th century. As Joan Kelly remarks, the Renaissance was a revival of the concepts and practices of classical Athens, where the domestic imprisonment of citizen wives was the norm (1984:21-22). In the High Middle Ages a refreshed onslaught on women's agency and former sites of power had already started. The classical *topos* of woman as gossip, as prattler, as chatterer gained new currency, with the Old Testament, classical antiquity and early patristic texts being appealed to as founts of truth. Thomas Aquinas, Alvaro Pelayo and the authors of *Malleus Maleficarum* are unanimous in denouncing this new scourge and calling for its suppression (Dalarun 1992:40). Aquinas sternly reminded women that they were allowed to speak only in private (in public, only prophecy was permissible, since it was the expression of a charismatic gift), reviving the Roman satirist Juvenal's urge that she 'who plays the

critic', who 'lectures' and 'declaims' and who tries to 'seem too learn'd' is the most 'intolerable yet' (Juvenal 1906:125). Although they were the vehicle for new and progressive ideas, the Renaissance writings on education, domestic life and society map out an inferior domestic realm as opposed to a superior public realm and place severe restrictions on women's attempts to gain even a modest degree of autonomy.

Midwifery amply illustrates this shift in the social status of women. The beginnings of this hypostasis of womanhood are lost in time. The Bible contains many verses about midwifery. For example, the Egyptian midwives defied the Pharaoh's mandate to kill the Hebrews' newborn sons. Exodus 1:15-22 reads "if the midwife sees a boy on the delivery stool, he should be killed; if it is a girl, she may live." Later, in Genesis 35, Rachel recalls Joseph's birth with the midwife's help: "When she was in labour, the midwife told Rachel not to be afraid, she is having another son." Early Chinese and Hindu writings also mentioned midwives.

In all Nativity scenes there are always some women – and only women – present at the birth. In early English, the term "midwife" meant "with woman," referring to someone who supports rather than intervenes in the birth experience. In some countries, such as France, the word 'midwife' is translated as "wise woman," or *sage femme*.

Their presence was so natural that in the *Book of James* - an apocryphal gospel (St James's proto-evangelium), in chapters 19-20 a little fable was interlarded which does not appear in the canonical gospels and which was later circulated both in mediaeval theatre and the Dominican Jacob of Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*. Salome the midwife insisted on personally testing the virginity of Mary. When she continued to deny

evidence her arm became paralyzed being withered by fire. Only after repenting did her arm return to normal (Warner 1983:28).

The paradox of midwifery as intellectual metaphor

Since ancient times, analogies between mental creation and bodily fecundity have become commonplaces, although such rhetorical appropriations do not entail the exaltation of femaleness and are a clear sign of male authors trying to harness their anxieties about a secret female knowledge. For Philip Sidney his hectoring muse is a midwife and Ben Jonson – frequently delineated as the most aggressively masculine of Renaissance writers, depicts creation as a maternal function (Harvey 1992:76-115). Socrates in *Theaetetus* informs his interlocutor that his mother was a midwife and in pondering the nature of knowledge he explains to the young Theaetetus that he modelled his own career on his mother's profession, yet he underlines that in his case the midwifery will be applied to men, not women and he will rather tend to their soul in labour than to their bodies (Eisaman Maus 1995:186).

Intriguingly, male writers imagined their poetic and intellectual endeavour in terms of a sex to whom those endeavours were denied and subsequently they displayed a kind of rhetorical appreciation of women's bodies.

Equally baffling is the frequent reference to the womb, an organ which was supposed to chill and dampen the feminine intellect (the womb being cold and moist and migratory and subsequently accounting for the much dreaded change of moods in women who were often likened to the serpent that seeks to warm itself by entering a sleeping person's mouth). Aristotle was responsible for launching the doctrine of the excessive humidity of the female body and later misogynists built on this tradition underscoring

the female association with Satan, cold as well. In the *Dialogue of Placides and Timeo* claimed to have been inspired by Ovid and written towards the close of the 13th century, the Hermaphrodite is portrayed as a mythical embodiment of the thirst for sexual knowledge: he plucks out his beard, dons women's clothing, lives among women in various parts of the world. He thus earns their confidence and is given a rare access to women's mysteries. When he grows old he reverts to his masculine gender and reveals what he has learned. He has a competitor though as an initiator into the mysteries of womanhood - the Salerno midwife Trotula.

The clerical author of the tale is emulating both Hermaphrodite and Trotula in claiming to possess the secret knowledge about sexuality (Thomasset 1992:62-65). Trotula of Salerno (also known as Trotula of Ruggerio) was an eleventh-century Italian doctor (b. unknown; d. 1097) who is frequently regarded as the world's first gynecologist. Her achievements are so much more to be appreciated in a medical field dominated by men, thus setting an example for contemporary women to follow, not to mention the educational opportunities that she herself provided, at the same time advancing progressive ideas about women's health care. Trotula served as physician and professor at the Medical School in Salerno, Italy, the first medical school in the world. It was the only school in Europe to instruct and employ both men and women, her sons and husband being also employed there. Trotula gave her undivided attention to women's diseases and overall health and was an unmatched diagnostician in the field. She was much ahead of her time when she advocated for the use of anesthetics during labour, opposing the biblical belief of the intense suffering during childbirth as punishment for Eve's sin. Trotula's work was so influential that it set the course for the practice of women's medicine for centuries. *Trotula Major on*

Gynecology, also known as *Passionibus Mulierum Curandorum* (*The Diseases of Women*), was a sixty-three chapter book first published in Latin in the 12th century that remained for centuries a medical reference and even today it is regarded as the definitive sourcebook for pre-modern medical practices.

It is certainly not by chance that during the Renaissance, some scholars began to express doubt that Trotula was a woman, and others believed she was an entirely fictional character. It was supposed that a male physician Trottus had written the complex material in *Trotula Major*, and that Trotula was a midwife. Though scholars today believe she did, in fact, exist, there is continued research into whether Trotula's writings are solely hers or compiled from many authors.

Midwifery and female power in the Renaissance

Pregnancy, birth and all associated knowledge and practices were largely a purely female domain in the Middle Ages. Women possessed their own store of contraceptive lore, of abortifacients, the ability to practice magic (their herbalist lore) and a corresponding autonomy in sexual matters, exerting quite a lot of influence and wielding significant forms of power in their communities. They had more liberty than other women, they moved freely from their community to other provinces; they had spatial and social mobility that was often dreaded as too much power, particularly as they were called upon to act as important witnesses for rape, infanticide and bastardy. The church would license midwives because they had to perform baptism. City councils often called upon midwives to give opinions in legal cases of infanticide and abortion, to examine women charged with fornication or female prisoners who claimed to be pregnant in the hope of delaying their

corporal punishment or execution; they served as medical assistants during epidemics and participated in the welfare system handing out food and clothes to needy women.

Generally the midwife was the senior woman in the community, commonly a married woman or widow who had herself given birth. With the gradual development of towns and cities came the specialisation of occupations, including midwifery, and with this the professional midwife emerged starting with the 14th century (Wiesner 1998:222-223). In her *Complete Practice of Midwifery* (1737) the West Country midwife Sarah Stone stresses how essential were her three years spent as 'deputy' to her mother to the practice of her art.

On the other hand, already in the 13th century midwifery is dealt a heavy blow by being associated with witchcraft, exactly because of the growing influence and spreading of women's control over the medical field, what with their intimate traditional knowledge of the healing effects of plants and concoctions. According to early-modern writers like Jean Bodin, Cardano, and Della Porta, the fat of newborns was a vital ingredient in magical flying potions. Witches were also said to make candles from an infant's umbilical cord. Other byproducts of labour were also reported to have great mystical properties. The placenta was considered by some to be an aphrodisiac and, if eaten, could be used to treat infertility, a practice that the church condemned. These and other concerns regarding what the midwife-cum-witch might do with human flesh and body fluids motivated regulations in Germany (e.g. Wurzburg in 1555) that clearly specified how the midwife was to dispose of all biological bi-products during the delivery. Similarly, in France frequent laws were passed that stipulated that only women of good Catholic faith could help a birthing mother (Tucker 2003:67).

Inquisition was founded in the early 13th century as a result of Waldensian and Catharist heretical scares and Pope Innocent VIII announced the dangers that witches posed to Christianity in a papal bull *Summa desiderantes* of 1484 (Karant-Nunn 1998:193). Subsequently, he asked two Dominican friars Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger to draw up a method of proceeding with such women and thus appeared the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*, reprinted 14 times between 1486-1520, followed by a hiatus and then 16 more editions between 1576 and 1669 when witch persecution was at its most intense. Whilst the earliest trials, going back to the thirteenth century, were the work of church institutions, particularly the Catholic Inquisition, the large majority of later trials saw very little formal church involvement. Within Calvinist congregations midwives could no longer administer emergency baptism and in Lutheran communities, pastors, possibly with the help of their wives, carried out a much closer oversight of midwives and their use of baptism.

Various hypotheses have been offered to explain the situation, but without doubt, the need by the male medical profession to rid the world of midwives and female folk healers cannot be overlooked (Ehrenreich and English 1973).

Midwifery and new scientific paradigms

As the sixteenth century progressed, so the new Renaissance spirit of enquiry was applied by leading surgeons to the anatomy of childbirth. Eminent among these pioneers was Ambroise Paré (1510-1590), surgeon to four French kings, notable for his use of podalic version. The fame of men like Paré, now spread through the printed word, in the vernacular rather than the traditional Latin, was to encourage male attendance in childbirth, first in

‘extraordinary’ cases and later in routine ones. Thus originated new designations (‘Man-midwife’ in English, *accoucheur* in French), to indicate men (usually surgeons) who added midwifery to their practice. This development gradually spread throughout Europe, being further boosted from the 1720s by the new availability of the midwifery forceps whose use, like other instruments, belonged officially to the surgeon. Meanwhile Church licensing, which had given the ‘sworn’ midwife her official standing, was gradually discontinued, while the higher status of leading men-midwives lifted that of all the rest, however rash and inexperienced some of them might have been.

The contrast between the erudite world of medicine against its popular feminine rival is illustrated in Christine de Pizan’s *Epitre d’Othea*, in which both Aesculapius and the sorceress Circe appear: he a great man of science and the father of surgery (a 15th century doctor holding a patient’s urine sample in a traditional examination) and Circe cursed enchantress, an old woman in rags threading toads ingredients of her magic potions onto a long stick to place them into two containers - official vs. empirical medicine (Frugoni 1992:386).

Although the midwife had been central to the thesis of a serial decline in the position of women over the period since women had to progressively cede ground to the male midwife (Hufton 1997:183-184) it is a mistake to portray the midwife as a passive victim of such forceful historical and cultural developments. The use of a male midwife grew among those who could afford it in the second half of the 18th century but the huge majority of women continued to be delivered by other women. Quaker women were much sought after and their skill as midwives became legendary (184). Undermining the misogynist myth of the incompetent midwife, historians like Hilary Marland or Helen King demonstrated that midwives were well

educated, respected members of their communities but also able to handle very serious complications at delivery. Louise Bouregois (midwife to Marie de Medici, Henry IV's wife, and author of *Various Observations on Sterility* penned in 1609) and Jane Sharp were such prototypes of very competent midwives. The latter's *Midwives Book* (the first female-authored text of female midwifery published in England), appeared in 1671 and it clearly addressed an all-female audience, being written for her 'sisters, the midwives of England' (Sanders 2002:78). A Dutch woman, Catharina Schrader, left a remarkable set of memoirs recording her experience over more than 50 years of practising midwifery. She was the widow of a surgeon and she was very critical of the murderous procedures of male surgeons; she worked tirelessly at unsocial hours, performing in her career more than 4000 deliveries. Her *Memoirs of the Women* is dedicated to the women who gave birth, to whom she delivered either safely or not safely. She was still delivering even in her 84th year of age, though not as frequently:

In my thirty-eight years living in Hallum in Friesland I saw my good, learned and highly esteemed, and by God and the people loved husband, go to his God to the great sadness of me and the inhabitants, leaving six small children in my thirty-eight years of age. But then it pleased God to choose me for this important work: by force almost through good doctors and the townspeople because I was at first struggling against this, because it was such a weighty affair. Also I thought that it was for me and my friends below my dignity; but finally I had myself won over. This was also the Lord's wish. [...] I sat and thought over what miracles The Lord had performed through my hands to unfortunate, distressed women in childbirth. So I decided to take up the pen in order to refresh once more my memory, to glorify and make great God Almighty for his great miracles bestowed on me. Not me, but You oh Lord be the honour, the glory till eternity. And also in order to

alert my descendants so that they can still become educated. And I have pulled together the rare occurrences from my notes (quoted in Hufton 1997:185).

The intense development of print during the Renaissance did certainly bolster the male vilification of the female midwife. *Les Caquets de l'Accouchee* of the early 16th century is a good case in point. The literary collection of tales, social observations and witticisms which allegedly sustained a high-born mother in her birthing room (Hufton 1997:188) was the creation of male imagination, the femaleness of this space jealously prized away from the male gaze is displayed however through the presence of the voyeuristic male narrator. Women exerted a lot of influence through official or unofficial networks such as the neighbourhood, the village, the well, the washing place, the shops, the stalls, the street exchanging information, passing on their experience (Warner 1994:33-34). The visual further intensified the effects of the printed texts: scenes of inebriation, licentious excess that followed the birth with the baby neglected and falling into the fire. (Donna C. Stanton (1993:248) remarks in this context on Bakhtin's gender-blindness in his *Rabelais and his World* when he emphasizes the grotesque and low cultural gathering of women round the childbed – lots of food, drinking and talking contrasting all these aspects with the post-Renaissance world of private bourgeois manners).

A satirical broadsheet of 1603 entitled *Tittle-Tattle or the Several Branches of Gossiping* comes to reinforce such misogynistic representations: “At Child-bed when the Gossips meet,/ Fine Stories we are told:/ And if they get a Cup too much,/ Their Tongues they cannot hold./ Like wrangling Queens they fight./Then Gossips all a Warning take/Pray cease your Tongue to rattle: Go knit, and Sew, and Brew, and Bake,/And leave off tittle-tattle” (Richard West, a poet of the early 17th century). We can plainly see

illustrated here the stereotypical role of women as gossips and scandalmongers, chattering in their marketplace, water conduit, bakehouse and alehouse: “thou that at Conduits, and such other places,/The ale-house, bake-house, or the washing block/Meet daily, talking with your brazen faces,/Of peoples matters which concerne you not.”

Women’s talk was always presented as sexual and scatological by male authors who attempted to re-subordinate the female claiming undivided control over the child-bed to male interpretation and circulation. The disparagement of women’s talk as chatter and mere gossip, a century-old stereotype further belittles the semi-professional female midwife (note the verb ‘cluck’ or ‘cackle’). The several ‘branches of gossiping’ allowed the misogynist author to circumscribe all forms of the much dreaded female autonomy and women’s attempts to control their own narrative to their vitriolic critique; the gossip was perceived to be a leading element in women’s folly and in the sex’s propensity to foment riot (etymologically the semantic evolution of gossip is revealing: ‘god-sib’ meaning baptismal sponsor initially, became almost exclusively female as early as the 14th century, being applied to female friends invited by women to the christening of their child and at the end of the 16th century the word acquired the meaning of ‘midwife’).

It was by such unsophisticated handling of satire that the new scientific paradigm of the New Science was used to denigrate women and disparage their role in public life or in their exertion of the role of health carers, practitioners of medicine. If women spoke the language of tradition, of myths and popular fables, men used the new discourse of experimentalism, of empiricism and inquisitiveness. The penetration of the female space of the birthing room was thus both physical and discursive (Sanders 2002:76) and the *Tittle Tattle* print represents a visual enactment of the marginalization of

the female practice in medicine, the erosion of their prestige and social respectability: the birthing scene is consigned to the corner of the frame and the presumed privacy of the scene is in fact the object of the misogynist male gaze.

Giving birth and laying-in created a socially sanctioned space of female autonomy becoming in time a rare manifestation of its kind and it also created a site of female togetherness, exchanges and solidarity that was tightly guarded against masculine intrusion - hanging heavy curtains over windows and doors and blocking keyholes - this space exacted from the patriarchal household by women to have and rule over. The anxieties and resentment experienced by males led to the eventual reconquest of it by male doctors and by the discourse of the New Science (Sanders 2002:77). The professionalisation of medicine and medical discourse excluded women and, moreover, the masculinised medium of print disseminated the increasingly technological and mechanical approach to science so that the end of the 17th century sees the space of the birthing room colonized by male experts. The masculine scientism of the age, making decisive inroads into traditional knowledge inaugurates a technological regime, a new brave world of science, hailing induction and experiment “for I admit nothing but on the faith of eyes”, or at least of careful and severe examination against the myth-making power of old science. It ushers in a new position of power, that of harnessing the elements, nature and the whole universe, its over-arching goal being that of restoring man to the pre-lapsarian position (Fudge 2002:94).

When in 1616 women midwives petitioned James I to allow them to form a society, the Chamberlen brothers (Peter the Elder and the Younger, sons of William Chamberlen, a Huguenot) supported them (Peter the Elder is assumed to have invented the forceps and the brothers went to great lengths to keep the secret. When they arrived at the home of a woman in labour, two

people had to carry a massive box with gilded carvings into the house. The pregnant patient was blindfolded so as not to reveal the secret, all the others had to leave the room. Then the operator went to work. The people outside heard screams, bells, and other strange noises until the cry of the baby indicated another successful delivery). In 1634 they sought to gain control of the midwives' profession for themselves, a project which failed and consequently led to a lot of resentment and that is why the forceps remained a family secret.

And yet, not all male writings on midwifery were hostile to women. Nicolas Culpeper defended traditional practice in *A Directory for Midwives*. He even suggests the limits to the male understanding of the female body (Sanders 2002:80), a discourse that attempts to counter the technical discourse of the male midwife hinging on the detailed anatomizing of the interior body and the practice of dissection.

Ben Jonson's *Magnetic Lady*

The literary representations of these important developments in the scientific and social order of the age can be exemplified in *The Magnetic Lady* by Ben Jonson(1632).

The play was written in 1614 and its space is domestic and thus connoted as female. Central to this female-controlled space is the midwife's conspiracy to hide a birth and protect the identity of the mother in order to secure a considerable family legacy. Lady Lodestone, aristocratic estate owner, has a niece called Placentia, who on her marriage is due to inherit her late parents' fortune so that her aunt tries hard to find a suitable match for her. In the meantime her greedy uncle Sir Moth Interest has the money in his care. Placentia is attended by her nurse Keep, her mother's resident advisor

Polish and the latter's daughter Pleasance. Plot thickens, Placentia falls ill so that Dr Rut and the Parson Palate are called upon and they are quick to offer suggestions about the illness despite their obsession with wind and green sickness (hysterical illness befalling virgins who were not married off quickly). Polish is placed at the forefront of the attempts to cover up pregnancy as she has a vested interest in swapping her own daughter for Lodestone's niece in an attempt to prise away some of the family fortune.

What is interesting to follow in the text is Jonson's clear preference resonating with that expressed by Culpeper for women to control the birthing room.

Names are self-referential in the play and it would take at least another article to account for such references. Suffice it to mention that magnetism was often employed in the medical discourse of the time. Jane Sharp in the wake of Culperer described the reproductive act in the following terms: "The womb is that field of nature into which the seed of man and woman is cast, and it hath an attractive faculty to draw in a *magnetic* quality, as the *lodestone* draweth iron, or fire the light of the candle mand to their seed runs the woman's blood also" (quoted in Sanders 2002:85-86; emphasis mine). Placentia's name is self-referential also, her surname Steele connotative of the remedies for 'false swelling' or 'green sickness', yet she is false Steele because she is actually Polish's daughter. Equally, Dame Polish's name is indicative of her status and of her 'education': "her shee-Parasite, Her talking, soothing, sometime governing Gossip. And did bequeath her, to my care, and hand, To polish, and bring up. I moulded her. And fashion'd her, and form'd her" (Act 1, sc. 3 and 4)

On the one hand, Gossip Polish and Mother Chair ('char' and 'birthing stool') seem to be portrayed in such a way as to merely illustrate the

stereotypical masculine definitions of midwives as witches and bawds: “Out though Catife witch/bawd. Beggar, gypsy: Anything indeed /But honest women”. They are reprehensible characters, who slander each other and are quick to blame each other for the imminent collapse of their carefully rehearsed plot: “What will you doe? Tell truth, And shame the She-man-Divell in puff ‘d sleeves; Run any hazzard, by revealing all unto my Lady: how you chang’d the cradles, And chang’d the children in ‘hem. Calling your Daughter Pleasance, there Placentia, And my true Mistress by the name of Pleasance” (Act 4, sc.4).

Yet, on the other hand, Jonson despite his underlining their subversiveness never suggests any supernatural or occult power on their behalf and eventually allows female cunning and even solidarity to prevail: “Polish: Good gentle Keepe, I pray thee Mistress Nurse, Pardon my passion, I was misadvis’d. Be thou yet better, by this grave sage woman, Who is the Mother of Matrons, and great persons, And knowes the world. Come, come, be friends: and keepe these women-matters, secrets to our selves, in our owne verge” (Act 4, sc.7)

Conclusion

Jonson is neither proto-feminist nor misogynist in his play *The Magnetic Lady* but concerned with the reconfigurations of his own community, cultural and theatrical, and not least medical. Nevertheless he does not enthuse too much about the innovations of the New Science; on the contrary, he seems to be permanently questioning the tenets of New Science. Dr Rut, is depicted throughout the play in a most grotesque manner by Jonson who mordantly rants against his pretence at science while courting alchemy and astrology and being heavily steeped in superstition. His portrayal recalls Chaucer’s physician (1.II): “And in his life a profest

Voluptuary; The slave of money, a Buffon in manners; Obscene in language; licentious in discourse, which he vents for wit ; Is sawcy in his Logicks, and disputing. Moreover, the female characters are often made to deliver the truth about him, as does Polish: “You are a foule mouth’d, purging, absurd Doctor ; I tell you true, and I did long to tell it you. You ha’ spread a scandall i’ my Ladies house here. On her sweet Neice, you never can take off With all your purges, or your plaister of Oathes; (Act 5, sc 5). There are other ample opportunities for ridiculing the demoniacal possession in the case of Needle or the pretended power of exorcism in the case of the doctor (Act 5, sc 5 and 7). As we have already mentioned above Jonson thinks highly of midwives and their prerogatives in the birthing room, allowing female solidarity to prevail in the end.

Almost 400 years later, feminist artist Judy Chicago was to pay tribute to Trotula and her legacy to professional women of all times. In her emblematic *The Dinner Party* Trotula’s place setting combines references to her role as a doctor with childbirth and caretaking. The Tree of Life image in the runner gracing her place among the 39 famous women seated round the dinner table highlights Trotula’s profession as a gynecologist. The Tree of Life imagery – a complex symbol of life, rejuvenation and regeneration occupies a choice place in the symbolic heritage, beginning in ancient times and continuing into Christianity. In creating the runner, Chicago chose to use the *trapunto* technique that can be dated back to 11th century Sicily. The white fabric of the runner is reminiscent of swaddling clothes, and the piece itself is a quilt, creating a visual association with a baby blanket. Trotula’s plate features a birthing image, as well as serpentine imagery that resembles both the *caduceus*, and Aesculapius’ rod – an important symbol for medicine and doctors. These serpentine forms also refer us, as Judy Chicago explains,

to the Aztec fertility goddess who served as the patron of midwives. Chicago chose the snake motif "because of its historical association with feminine wisdom and powers of healing" (Chicago, *A Symbol of Our Heritage*, 74).

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Gender, Culture, Society

REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMININITY IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY CONDUCT MANUALS FOR GENTLEMEN

STEFANIA BISCETTI

University of L'Aquila

Abstract: This paper investigates conceptual representations of women in 17th century conduct manuals for gentlemen published in England before and after the Civil War. The aim is to see whether the socio-cultural transformations produced by the Revolution are reflected in the metaphorical expressions referring to the female sex in a highly conservative textual genre

Keywords: conduct literature, femininity, gender roles, metaphor analysis

Introduction

This paper defines gender as a category of cognitive investigation. By “gender” historians and sociologists understand the “socially constructed meaning of sexual difference” (Crawford 1996:2), i.e. the social and cultural creation of ideas about the appropriate roles of men and women, their desirable qualities and power relations (Scott 1986; Eales 1998; Foyster 1999; Connell 1987, 2002).

Given the important role played by conduct literature in the construction of gender roles (Fletcher 1995), we are going to investigate the metaphorical coding of ideas of femininity (i.e. the cognitive representations of female gender) in 17th century English conduct manuals addressed to men and their possible diachronic variation. The basic tenet here is that since metaphors reveal and construct human experience (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2005; Charteris-Black 2004), they are likely to reflect the profound transformations in culture and society such as those triggered in England by the Civil Wars (1641-1659).

Seventeenth century England: an overview

The beginning of the 17th century is marked by political and religious tensions, culminating in the Civil Wars under Charles I (1625-1649). In this phase of English history religion and politics were so intertwined that the Bible was regarded not only as a moral and religious authority, but also “as a social and political blueprint” (Eales 1998:5). Justice and common law, for example, were meant to reflect God’s will in terms of the wife’s subordination to the husband.

The patriarchal system – with its assumptions about female insufficiency and inferiority – had scriptural justification in the story of Eve’s creation – secondary and derived in nature. The separation of the spheres (whereby man was fit for the public and woman for the private) was another by-product of the alleged inferiority of women, and had both a biblical and a physiological (i.e. Galenic) explanation in women’s physical, emotional and mental weakness. Thus, in the dichotomy mind/body advocated by 17th century rationalist philosophers, reason was associated with maleness, and the body with the feminine (cf. Gouge’s (1634:273) statement: “Though the man be as the head, yet is the woman as the heart”).

The Civil War marked a turning-point in English history placed “between medieval and modern ways of thinking” (Hill 1969:198). The execution of Charles I in 1649 not only shook the foundations of the English political system, it also brought into question the patriarchal system.

Philosophical rationalism resulted in a critical approach to the Bible, no longer seen as an irrefutable authority on all subjects. One of the most remarkable phenomena of those years was the greater freedom enjoyed by women in public, political and religious activities. Radical women were allowed “to participate in church government, sometimes even to preach.” (Hill 1975:310) They published (mostly on religious themes; see Crawford (1996: 93)), petitioned the Government on social and economic issues and participated in religious life as never before. With their conquest of the public sphere, women activists gained intellectual self-confidence, challenged the boundaries between male and female domains, and forced a revision of the gender codes. It must be said, however, that the questioning of many traditional ideas did not significantly alter old assumptions about the two sexes (Crawford 1996:9). Legal evidence of the endurance of a double sexual standard, for example, was an act passed in 1650 which defined adultery as a crime that could only be committed by women (Foyster 1999:78).

Although the transformations produced by the Revolution were in theory reversed with the return of Charles II, “1660 did not - could not - restore 1640” (Hill 1990:21). Tolerance (to be intended more as permissiveness rather than as religious toleration) became a feature of the Restoration period. This could be seen, for example, in the reopening of public theatres and in the regular appearance of women on the stage, as well as in the concern for bad form rather than sin characterizing Restoration comedy.

As for the upsetting of gender relations and the questioning of traditional hierarchy during the Revolution, using evidence from conduct literature, Fissell (1995:442) claims that while pre-war writers were more concerned with male chastity and female submission within marriage, post-war authors emphasize the dangers of female unruly sexual behaviour, no longer aggressive but potentially disruptive of social order. Restricting women's access to the public sphere was men's response to the female sexual threat. Shoemaker (1998:33) makes the point that this increased separation of the spheres is reflected in conduct literature by a shift in focus from women's vices and weaknesses (especially lust) to their natural inclination to virtue.

Evidence of continuity (rather than crisis) in gender relations has instead been found in that the view of woman as emotional, fragile and easily led astray not only remained unaltered after 1660, but "was confirmed by the experiences of the revolutionary years" (Crawford 1996:185). Foyster's (1999:210) conclusion about the endurance of patriarchal ideology throughout the seventeenth century goes in the same direction.

Keeping in mind the fact that changes in the political, economic and social macrostructure are slow to penetrate the language and thought of a community and to emerge as metaphors in discourse, the above claims about continuity and change in the ways of representing women will be put to the test of metaphor analysis.

Sources

The sources considered here belong to the Puritan tradition of conduct literature chiefly concerned with the education of young gentlemen and focused on moral issues such as honour and virtue. Pre-war material consists of *Heropaideia, or The Institution of a Young Noble Man* (1607) by James

Cleland, *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622) by Henry Peacham, and *The English Gentleman* (1630) by Richard Brathwaite. Post-war material includes *The Gentleman's Calling* (1660) by Richard Allestree, *The Gentleman's Companion* (1672) by William Ramesey, and *Advice to a Young Lord* (1691) by Thomas Fairfax. Although “a condensation with slight revisions” (Sloane 1940:417-418) of Archibald Campbell's *Instructions to a Son* (1661), Fairfax's manual can be credited a late 16th century exemplar of conduct literature, if borrowing from an older work is taken to imply that certain ideas were still topical thirty years later.

Feminine metaphors, extracted manually, form a corpus of 39 tokens, of which 7 from pre-war sources and 32 from post-war sources.

Metaphors in pre-war sources

Female metaphors only amount to 7 types and tokens, distributed unevenly among the three manuals: 2 in Cleland (WOMAN IS A MAGNET (1), WOMAN IS AN ENSNARER/HUNTER (2)) and 5 in Brathwaite (WOMAN IS A VIPER & A WARRIOR (3), WOMAN IS A PRIZE (4), WOMAN IS A COMMODITY (5), WOMAN IS A BEAST (6), BEAUTY IS AN ENSLAVER (i.e. A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IS AN ENSLAVER) (7)).

1)... I wish you alwaies [...] that you bee ever upon your garde, chieflie amongst those who are faire, of a comlie, gracious, and alluring behaviour. (Cleland p. 245)

2)Abstaine frō the company of these impudent *Laïs*, who with their painted faces, smooth tongues, & glancing eyes study to entrap young Gentlemen in their snares; (Cleland p. 245 a)

- 3) my exhortation is to *Youth*, [...] that you shake off these vipers [i.e. women with an harlot's behaviour] at the first assault, and prevent the occasion when it first offers it selfe. (Brathwaite, p. 24)
- 4) But you will object; to vanquish where there is no assault made, is a weak conquest; (Brathwaite p. 33)
- 5) as I would not have you to entertaine so maine a businesse [i.e. choosing a wife] without mature advice, so I would not have you wholly rely upon a friends counsell; as you are to have the greatest Ore in the Boat, so to make your selfe your owne carver: for he that is enforced to his Choice, makes a dangerous bargaine. (Brathwaite p. 262)
- 6) *Idleness* maketh of *men, women, of women, beasts, of beasts, monsters.* (Brathwaite pp. 32; 124)
- 7) To court Beautie is an enterprize of danger: for some I have knowne, who upon their accesse to Beautie, have beene free-men, who upon their returne, became slaves. (Brathwaite p. 33)

Albeit scarce in number, they give us a clear idea of how woman is seen in relation to man. Woman is here represented as powerful (i.e. as dangerous for their power of attraction (1) and control (7), as aggressive (3) and deceiving (2)) and powerless (i.e. as the object of male conquest (4), as man's property (5) and as an inferior being (6)), with a negative connotation in both cases. The picture of the early seventeenth century English woman emerging from these metaphors is that of a creature engaged in seduction and sexual conquest. Unlike male power, female powerfulness is negatively valued because of its association with sexuality and vice/sin. The powerful woman is the lustful, tempting virago ((2), (3)), who threatens a man's honour and freedom with speech, lascivious behaviour and beauty, her most powerful weapon of conquest (7). Uncontrolled lust was commonly

considered a sign of women's weakness of mind and will, and of their being closer than man to nature and brute beasts (6). (see Thomas 1983:41)

These data seem to confirm the emphasis of pre-war conduct literature on female aggressive sexual behaviour (Fissell 1995:442) and on women's lust (Shoemaker 1998:33). There is instead no reference to women's subjection within marriage (Fissell 1995:442), while reference to women's emotional unsteadiness and frailty (Crawford 1996:185) can only be gathered from their voracious sexuality, which they are unable to control. Here woman is not only subordinate and inferior to man in the divine hierarchy (i.e. outside marriage) (6); she is utterly reified as a man's possession (5).

Metaphors in post-war sources

The post-war manuals I analysed contain 32 female metaphors distributed as follows: 2 in Allestree (WOMAN IS A WARRIOR (8), WOMEN ARE GAME/PREYS (9)):

8) Sometimes [...] Lust attacks him [i.e. man] with the piercing darts, the killing glances of a prostitute Beauty. (p. 71)

9) So if they hear but of a beautiful Woman, what contrivancies, what designs do they lay, first to see, and then to corrupt her; make it a business to themselves, [...], to spring such game? (p. 109)

18 in Ramesey (WOMAN IS A FORTRESS (10), WOMAN IS A MASTERPIECE (11), WOMAN IS MAN'S GLORY (11), WOMAN IS A SUBJECT (12) and (13), WOMAN IS A PLAGUE (14), WOMAN IS A CABINET (15), WOMAN IS AN OBJECT (16), WOMAN IS AN INFERIOR BEING (17), WOMAN IS A CONTROLLER (18), WOMAN IS A BRIGHT_ENTITY (19), WOMAN IS AN ENSNARER (19),

WOMAN IS AN EXCREMENT (22); BEAUTY IS A TENDER FLOWER, A TEMPTATION, A SNARE and A FOLLY (20), BEAUTY IS A FLASH and A VENICE GLASS (21)):

10) [...] 'tis great folly in *Parents* [...] if they have not [...] as much care in the Education of their Daughters, as Sons; especially in this Age, wherein they need to be furnisht with abundance of Virtue, to withstand the continuous assaults Men make on their Chastity. (p. 13)

11) [...] and then lastly, [God] ends with the Creation of the *Woman, as the Masterpiece of Nature*, and glory of the Man. (pp. 10-11)

12) [...] *were not we taught by an infallible Spirit, that the Man is the Head of the Woman; and that he was not made for her, but she for him, and he for God; and therefore is she to be in subjection to the Man.* (p. 11)

13) But when thy choice is made, thou must treat her [the wife] with all Love and Civility (yet so as that thy Love do not enervate thy Rule over her, nor that lessen thy Love) (p. 94)

14) To have a Scold, a Fool, a Whore, a Fury, is the worst of Plagues, and an Hell upon Earth. (p. 91)

15) [...] if a Man have a Cabinet that every mans Key will open as well as his own, why should he think to keep it private? (p. 96)

16).. many narrow-witted People [...] may [...] conclude the use of Women sinful, because some have been clapt by them. (pp. 125-126)

17) Nay, 'tis [i.e. anger] a kind of baseness, and pusillanimity, and so, beneath a *Gentleman*. For wee see such as are weak, sickly, Aged, or else Children, Fools, and Women most addicted to it. (p. 186)

18) A Batchelor lives free, [...] He has [...] none to please, nor none to displease, and controul him; (p. 199)

19) Let not the Splendour of her Beauty [...] or Gold dazzle the eyes of thy understanding, and obfuscate thy judgment as to precipitate thee into such a Pitfall. (pp. 92-93)

20) [...] the Splendour of her Beauty (which is so tender a Flower, that the blast of any Sickness shrivels to nothing, A Temptation, if not, oft-times, a snare to thy self, and others; the greatest folly imaginable) (pp. 92-93)

21) Every day detracts form her Person. Beauty is but a mere flash, a *Venice* Glass, quickly broken by any Disease. (p. 197)

22) After she has been Married a while, has had two or three Children, she will be so altered, her nearest Relations will hardly know her. But, at best, bethink thy self, 'tis but Earth thou lovest. A mere excrement (as some will) that vexeth thee. (pp. 197-198)

12 in Fairfax (WOMAN IS A DANGER (23) and (24), WOMAN IS AN EMPRESS (25), WOMAN IS A MAGNET (26), WOMAN IS A HELPER (27) and (33); BEAUTY AND WEALTH ARE BRIGHT ENTITIES (28), BEAUTY IS A DECEIT (28), BEAUTY IS WITCHERY (29), BEAUTY IS A CONQUEROR (30), BEAUTY IS CLAY (31), BEAUTY IS A WEAK AND GAY ARMY (32)):

23) The Converse of ill Women is altogether to be shunned, lest you be fascinated by their Beauty and Subtleties, to the ruine of your Welfare hereafter, as well as your Estate here. (p. 102)

24) Several Men esteem it no little Felicity to enjoy the Company of fine Women, but they consider not to what Dangers they oblige themselves, ... (p.102)

25)... for nothing is so chargeable [with the ruin of a man's fortunes] as an imperious Beauty. (p. 103)

26) [...] keep your mind fast shut against their [i.e. women's] Charms and Allurements. (p. 103)

27) 'Tis one of the chiefest ends of the Almighty's Creation of Women that they might be an help meet (that is necessary) for Men; (p. 43)

28) [...] Wealth and Beauty; the latter of which especially I would not have you over-blinded with, 'tis one of the greatest deceits Nature is guilty of; (p. 47)

- 29) [beauty is a deceit] in the fascination and witchery it darts through the Eyes into the Minds of Men; (p. 47)
- 30) you cannot but pay homage to it [i.e. female beauty], but let that Tribute redeem you from a Total Conquest. (pp. 47-48)
- 31) Remember therefore that it [female beauty] is but Clay more refined, and set off with a better varnish, and being all on the out-side, lies more open and obnoxious to weather, and consuming time, and very often to present misfortunes; (p. 48)
- 32) [...] the other [outer beauty] [...] is but a weak and gay Army, ready to be vanquish'd at the first Onset, and Encounter. (pp. 48-49)
- 33) [...] God did oftentimes reward the good works, the Honesty and piety of a Man, with the tender of a good and discreet Wife; (p. 45)

As before, type frequency almost equals token frequency. The greater number and variety of types (here female metaphors are almost four times as much as in pre-war manuals), however, suggest that woman has gained relevance in post-war sources, and that post-war authors are more concerned than before with defining manhood in relation to women both within and outside marriage. As a matter of fact, unlike before reference is here made to woman's subjection ((12), (13), (27), (33)), unruly sexual behaviour ((14), (15)) and power ((14), (18)) in marriage.

As in pre-war manuals, woman is represented as powerful (e.g., as sexually aggressive (8), controlling (18), dangerous (24), overbearing (25), attracting (26)) and powerless (e.g., as the target of male conquest (9), as a sexual object (16), as emotionally weak (17) and instrumental to man (11), (27) and (33)), with a constant negative evaluation. Three metaphors standing out for their positive connotation are instead WOMAN IS A FORTRESS (10), WOMAN IS A MASTERPIECE (11) and the semi-positive (because of woman's instrumental role) WOMAN IS MAN'S GLORY (11), all from Ramesey.

These metaphors reflect the author's positive attitude to women, considered "no less Rational, Intellectual, and Docible, than Men" (p.9) and "for the most part, more pitiful, more pious, faithful, merciful, chaste, beautiful, than Men" (p. 10).

Yet, in spite of such emphasis on women's equality or superiority to men in virtues, women are seen as emotionally fragile (i.e. as naturally inclined to passions) (17) and lustful (34), just as in Allestree (8) and Fairfax (35), where no word is spent in praise of the female sex:

34) [...] thou wilt not be so fond if you observest her faults. Especially those of the Mind; her Pride, Envy, Incontinency, Weakness, Lightness, Self-wit, Jealousie, Insatiable Lust, &c. (Ramesey, p. 198)

35) A Great Philosopher tells us, A Man ought to approach his Wife in fear, lest too wantonly provoking her desires, the pleasure thereof make her exceed the bounds of reason. (Fairfax, p. 55)

Allestree's metaphorization of lust (8) as "the killing glances of a prostitute Beauty" establishes a complex association between sexual aggressiveness, immorality and female beauty which also appears in Fairfax (23), although simplified (i.e. without the aggressive component). In Fairfax the power and dangers of female beauty are so prominent ((23)-(26); (28)-(30)) and set on a par with those of lust, that beauty actually becomes a cognitive-semantic substitute for lust. In arousing male lust, female beauty makes men irrational (in Fairfax) ((19), (28)), and women victims of their own power of attraction (in Allestree) (9).

Not all metaphors equate female beauty with power, though. In (20), (21), (31) and (32) beauty is the emblem of frailty (glass and clay), perishableness (flower) and weakness (weak army). Strength belongs to

inward beauty (i.e. virtues), which solely should guide a man in choosing a wife.

The two opposite but equally negative conceptualizations of beauty as power and fragility still reflect early 17th century attitudes towards the flesh, either demonized or mortified as the negative pole of the pair body-mind. The subordination of the body (identified with the feminine) to the mind (associated to the masculine) is visible in (12), (13) and (27), where woman is subject to man both within marriage ((13) and (27)) and outside it (12).

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to uncover possible variation in men's perspective on women reflecting the profound social and political changes produced during the revolutionary years through the analysis of feminine metaphors present in 17th century courtesy books for gentlemen published in England before and after the Civil War. A corpus of 39 feminine metaphors extracted manually from three pre-war and three post-war male conduct books was used as testing ground for a number of claims on the representation of women in 17th century conduct literature for women. Given the nature of the sources used, our findings were expected to diverge substantially from those of previous studies based on the prescriptive discourse on female conduct, where woman is especially represented as an ideal model of behaviour according to a male perspective. Instead of representing how women should be, our data represent in fact how women are perceived or are to be seen by men obsessed as they were with reputation and self-control. The results of our analysis can be summarized as follows:

In pre-war sources woman is mainly seen as sexually aggressive and lustful, hence as a dangerous threat to male honour, understood as virtue, esteem and self-mastery (Biscetti, in preparation; Fletcher 1995:126).

In post-war data sexual aggressiveness is only marginally present (with only one occurrence out of 32 metaphors), whereas female lust remains a female prerogative and a correlate of beauty. In fact, in post-war sources female beauty is utterly identified with lust and becomes a semantic-cognitive substitute for it (i.e. beauty implies lust). Instead of emphasizing “the dangers of female unruly sexual behaviour” (Fissell 1995:442), our post-war authors emphasize the dangers of female beauty for men’s welfare in marriage, as beauty can obfuscate a man’s judgement and make him blind to her vices. The fact that beauty is here a threat to a man’s happiness rather than to his virtue (as in pre-war sources) is a clear sign of the secularization of the times.

As to women’s subjection to men within marriage, contrary to Fissell’s (1995: 442) finding, no reference has been found to this in pre-war data.

In spite of a sense of female superiority emerging from a few metaphors in post-war data, the negative view of women as powerful and dangerous is too persistent and statistically relevant for those positively connoted metaphors to be taken as evidence of a shift in focus from women’s vices to virtues observed by Shoemaker (1998:33) in conduct manuals for women. The picture we get from our data seems closer to Foyster’s (1999:210) claim about the endurance of patriarchal ideology throughout the century and to Crawford’s (1996:9) view that old assumptions about the female sex remained more or less unaltered after the Revolution.

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**THE MODERN WOMAN AND WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION
IN 19TH CENTURY ENGLISH AND
ROMANIAN COMEDIES**

IOANA-FLORINA MITEA

Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest

Abstract: The construction of feminine characters in nineteenth century English and Romanian comedies reflects the changes that the two societies were experiencing, especially the fact that women were no longer confined to domestic life. The plays feature women assimilating the latest fashions and lifestyles, their aspirations to change their status and their steps towards emancipation.

Keywords: feminine characters, nineteenth century English comedies, nineteenth century Romanian comedies, women's emancipation

Introduction

Romanian drama in the nineteenth century before the début of Ion Luca Caragiale is largely comprised of comedies, many of which were adapted or translated vaudevilles (light and agreeable plays of French origin, easy to understand for the audience) and made suitable for the stage by Romanian playwrights, who replaced the conventional characters with ones taken directly from their society. Their contemporary setting and critical spirit are characteristic of these plays: they tend to reveal some negative aspects of life and argue for the correction of manners by means of satire. As Mihai Vasiliu (1995:63-64) states, the first examples of original drama are found in the form of satirical comedy. The authors exposed, with a corrective intention and use of comical means, the mores of society: the parvenus, the marriages of convenience, the deliberate imitation of the customs and usages of the Western world, the Romanian language spoken with a foreign accent and many mistakes, captured in very simple structures and with theatrical resources that were still modest by comparison with the requirements of dramatic dialogue.

The English drama before Thomas Robertson, widely regarded as the first modern English playwright and as having introduced a new era in

English drama, “the return of respectability” (Rowell 1978:75), drew the portrait of fashionable society, with the satirical intention of pointing out its flaws. The gambling scene, the fops and the social vices are portrayed, but the typical duel between the sexes of the Restoration, which usually ended with seduction, is omitted and replaced with material typically found in sentimental drama: a happy ending, sometimes with a marriage. Some of the characters are drawn from the comedy of humours and other elements, such as an unexpected inheritance in melodramas (Bailey 1966:28). Some of the situations and characters of the English comedies are drawn from the French vaudevilles, encouraged especially by the taste of the theatre audience: there was a huge demand for plays, to fill the bills, and these plays did not need to reach literary excellence but only to bring profit to theatres (Booth 1975:201-202) and please the working class and lower middle class audience. Likewise, the Romanian playwrights and managers took into account the level of the audience and their own financial difficulties, using “familiar forms, approved by the public (comedy, vaudeville, melodrama), an accessible stage language, a repertoire in agreement with the taste of those who paid for the tickets and yet skillfully adapted to the educational purpose of the stage” (Cornea 1980:262).

Concerning models, Mircea Angheliescu (1996:91-93) argues that Charles Drouhet’s previous comparative research on the French models of Alecsandri’s comedy created the impression that they were directly indebted to French sources that they imitate, localize or translate and have no “originality”. But the French comedy of the third decade of the nineteenth century was only one facet of the European drama of that time. Almost all the processes of Alecsandri’s comedies are found in the European comic drama of the first half of the century (not only in the French drama that Alecsandri had known when he was young, but also in German and English drama),

common to many cultural areas, in which it is still impossible to discern what is “original” and what is “borrowed”. From these European models, Alecsandri kept the general frame, the overall plot line and the characters with their traits, marital status and social position, while transposing the play in all its constitutive aspects to the Moldavian reality of the mid-nineteenth century (Anghelescu 1996:110).

Regarding originality, Michael R. Booth (2004:1989) states that the genres of English drama were mixed together and combined with stage adaptations of French and German plays. One can say that there is almost no such thing in this veritable maelstrom of dramatic writing as purity of form and singleness of genre. Definition is an acute problem in this period of theatre history, given the fact that tragic and pathetic parts, comic characters combined with serious ones and a constantly changing dramatic tone can be found in the same play. Similarly, Anghelescu notes the many factors that influenced Romanian theatre in the nineteenth century. Noting “the common air that characterises the whole production of the comic first half of the nineteenth-century”, Anghelescu shows that the frequent movement of theatre troupes across national borders made comedies move quickly from one end of the continent to the other, and the continuous need to refresh the repertoire led the most prolific authors to use, with the greatest freedom, ideas, plots, types, lines and gags from plays they had read or watched (1996: 92-93; 11).

The most easily visible feminine characters in these Romanian plays are ridiculous coquettes, who imitate Western fashion and strive to upgrade their social status through education or marriage (theirs or their children’s). The playwrights try to show and question the mores of the time. The feminine characters in these Romanian comedies are the first to adopt Western forms of civilization, are ambitious, eager to lead a modern life, emancipated and open to progress. Typically, the dull, narrow-minded and conservative

husband, the traditional and retrograde element, has a conflict with his wife: he does not want her to go beyond his comfort zone. Nineteenth-century women have more time and are more concerned to take on new fashions, foreign words and expressions, the new ideas and habits and some of the female characters that imitate foreign models succeed in bringing about real change and progress. They manage to get away from the domestic sphere that was reserved for them and express their wish for emancipation through reading, learning foreign languages (especially French), travelling, patronage and attending salons. Cocola Măndica (*O soare la mahala/ A Soirée in the Neighbourhood* by Costache Caragiali, 1845) frequently criticises her husband, who has not adapted to the latest changes in language, dress and habits. Just like Alecsandri's character Chirița later on, she cannot understand why her husband does not like tea parties and is furious because he embarrasses her. Boyar Anastase says that he is protecting the family's "moral honesty" by banishing from his house the new fashionable habits, admired and imitated by his wife, of those who are ruining the language and traditions. Caliope Busuioc (*Muza de la Burdujăni/ The Muse of Burdujăni* by Costache Negruzzi, 1851, an adaptation of Théodore Leclercq's *La Sapho de Quimpercorentin*) is a parvenue, not on the social scale, but in the realm of literature, although she is snobbish and whimsical and ready to fall for Baron Flaimuc, Signor Turlupini, or Kir Lacherdopulos. She is also a "Frenchified lady" like the characters of Costache Faccà's *Comodia vremii* (*The Comedy of Today*, 1833), and her speech bears the mark of the kind of melodramatic and romantic literature which was later to be parodied by Caragiale. But of the utmost importance is her quest for an acknowledgment of her intellectual status as a way of becoming a part of high society. She is a poet and speaks good Italian and Greek, and is able to face the character

Teodorini's challenges when he ridicules her wish to get married. Caliope also imposes the Western fashions of educated people on Trohin: she is critical of Trohin's old clothes, which are no longer fashionable and give him a frightful appearance. Gahița Rosmarinovici (*Iorgu de la Sadagura/ Iorgu of Sadagura* by Vasile Alecsandri, 1844) sighs when she thinks about the benefits of civilization as seen in Chernivtsi. She is surprised that Damian does not know what the word "invitation" means, calls him an "arriéré" and states that it is pointless to talk to him about the elegance and delicacy of the French language. Gahița admires the elegant atmosphere of the salons abroad and the young unmarried men there. She wants to be in the midst of a society "full of grace". Iorgu and Gahița leave together for Iași and Iorgu is glad that he found someone who "unveiled their mind like a cauliflower in the warmth of civilization" and who travelled a lot.

Such examples can also be found in British comedies: Lady Duberly (*The Heir at Law* by George Colman, 1800) becomes rich by inheriting, with her husband, old Lord Duberly's fortune and wants her family to acquire noble manners overnight. She tries unsuccessfully to civilize her husband with some help from a teacher. She cannot stand the fact that Lord Duberly does not know the difference between drinking tea from a cup or from a saucer, which is very important in high society, and regrets that the old Lord did not leave her husband some manners together with the money. Mrs. Templeton (*Education* by Thomas Morton, 1813) has an "active taste for expense, with a decided averseness from all household duties, produced by the indolent and deceptive spirit of procrastination". She accuses her husband of treason against the monarchy of fashion that she is a loyal subject of. Her husband must become a modern man and take advantage of the rapid advances made daily in feelings, spirit and refinement. Lady Wellgrove (*The*

Faro Table by John Tobin, 1816) is always bossing Sapling around (he had been sent to the city by his father, in the hope that he would marry Lady Wellgrove, just like Alecsandri's character Pestiț in the comedy *Farmazonul din Hârlău/ The Freemason from Hârlău*, 1841), and avoids him because he is uncouth, despite the fact that she took him to the opera and to the theatre. Sapling realizes that she won't marry him and asks her to allow him not to behave in a polite and distinguished manner any longer and to write to his father in a sophisticated and polite way explaining her refusal to marry him. Lady Charlotte (*The Round of Wrong* by William Bayle Bernard, 1846) is a fashionable woman who has style and is rich (Ducks thinks that she "washes in Ody Cologne water"). Her ideal life consists of a walk before dinner and a good book afterwards. Ducks hopes that he can persuade her to take him to London to see all the places where young people of fashion go and to refine his speech and manners. Even in the later comedies, such as *Caste* (1876) by Thomas Robertson, there are many feminine characters who want to rise above their station. Polly accuses her fiancé, Sam, of being uneducated and therefore inferior to the upper classes of society. Just like the characters of Caragiali and Alecsandri, Polly would like Sam to call her "my lady" and treat her accordingly, but Sam does not allow her to wear makeup and cares only about what the neighbours will say about the people who visit Polly and her sister, ballerinas of the Theatre Royal).

The Romanian feminine character who concentrates the types previously discussed is Alecsandri's Chirița. Chirița is not interesting today as a satirical portrait, but rather as a cultural model (Ghițulescu 2008:54). She is ridiculous, vulgar and ignorant, but has the qualities needed to rise above her status. Although she is not able to find husbands for her daughters in Iași, Guliță does not learn any French (although she claims to be speaking

the language, making her famous “free translations”), is an *isprăvniceasă* only for a short period of time, sees herself mocked on the stage of the theatre in Iași, brings Western fashion and manners to her house, takes a ride in a hot air balloon and visits Vienna and Paris. Chirița is caught between two different worlds: the traditional one (the countryside) and the modern one (the capital, Iași). The trip to Iași (*Chirița în Iași/ Chirița in Iași*, 1850) is an adventure of knowledge, but Chirița is forced to return to the countryside, where she “belongs”, and is advised by Bârzoi not to try to “exceed her station in life”, although she wants to rise “as a lark” (and manages to do this in *Chirița în balon/ Chirița in the Hot Air Balloon*, 1874: “I’ll go up to the moon and stars”). Although criticised by the playwright in the second play of the series, *Chirița în provincie/ Chirița in the Countryside* (1852), for her lack of sophistication and for her upstartism, Chirița embraces Western civilisation by importing to the countryside the habits of Iași: she criticises and changes her husband’s and her servants’ clothes, will not cook traditional dishes, buys furniture, clothes, lamps, rides a horse and smokes, etc. She’s happy that both her daughters are married and that her husband has become an *ispravnic* (local representative of the ruler) and has even more plans, including travelling and finding a wife for her son Guliță. She travels to Vienna and Paris (*Cucoana Chirița în voiaj/ Chirița Takes a Journey*, 1863). In Paris, she takes Guliță to school to study politics, doesn’t visit any galleries, museums, monuments or go to the theatre, but has dresses made by “Madame Desal and Madame Fovel”, goes to balls, to the Mabilles, and even dances the cancan. In the last play of the series, Chirița rises into the sky in a hot air balloon, together with Moghior, despite her husband’s protests. When the balloon reaches the ground, Chirița is wearing only her corset, and her arms and shoulders are bare. It was the first time in Romanian drama that a

female character had appeared on stage in such a revealing dress (though under the pretext that she had thrown her outer garments out of the gondola one by one in order to save her life). The nineteenth century English comedies feature feminine characters who, like Chirița (or Mândica in Costache Caragiali's *Doi coțcari sau Păziți-vă de răi ca de foc/ Two Rogues*, 1849, one of Chirița's predecessors, who, rushing to marry off her daughter Evghenița, finds herself about to be fooled by two charlatans, Burdicescu and Nicholae), have the ambition of seeing their children married to people of higher social status. Lucretia MacTab (*The Poor Gentleman* by George Colman, 1802), an old-fashioned lady who looks like a frog, is angry with Emily, her niece, for not having taken her advice and married Sir Charles while they lived in London. She takes Emily out for a walk and arranges a secret meeting with Sir Charles. Lady Clanarlington (*Moonshine* by Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley, 1843) takes her daughters, Juliana and Maria, to Rome, planning to find them husbands at the balls, parties and picnics held there. They are accompanied by Geraldine, Lady Clanarlington's niece, a young woman with modern ideas, who is more successful than Juliana and Maria (the play *Chirița in the Countryside* features a similar character, Luluța). At the banquets and parties, Lady Clanarlington invites all the unmarried young men (she has a notebook with information about all the idle men of London and she introduces her daughters to them according to their incomes and fortunes). Kate (*Old Soldiers* by Henry James Byron, 1873) is taken by her father, Captain McTravish, to the Continent, to find her a husband, as if she were a commodity for sale. The father hopes to marry her to Mr. Lockhart or Mr. Leveret. Similarly, the widowed Mrs Moss takes her daughter, Mary, on a surprise visit to Mr Leveret's house, with the same intention. Captain McTravish thinks that women should not be let out of the

house (the Turkish system is the best) and that women who express their opinions won't find husbands. Mrs. Colonel McCann (*Up at the Hills* by Tom Taylor, 1861) wants to marry off her nieces, Katie and Margaret, two simple and innocent girls, at Calcutta, and takes them to parties and introduces them to the rich and idle men there. They find suitable husbands, without much assistance from their aunt. Jane (*A Woman Never Vext* by James Robinson Planché, 1824) is a young girl who has reached the age of marriage. Her father, Brown, wants her to be married at all costs and introduces her to his friends, Sir Godfrey Speedwell and Master Lambskin. Some of the characters in the British comedies show similarities to Chirița's attitude towards her son Guliță (she smothers him and wants to "civilize" him): Mrs. Templeton (*The Beulah Spa* by Charles Dance, 1833), a widow, critical of the schools of that time, spoils her two teenaged sons, Magnus and Hector. Her attitude leads to the fact that they show immature behaviour and do not know how to behave in society. Moreover, they are both in love with the maid. Mrs. Swipes (*Exchange no Robbery* by Theodore Edward Hook, 1820) offers to help her husband to turn his son, Sam, into a fashionable young man: everyone must think that he is Sir Christopher's son, left in their care. Lady Duberly (*The Heir at Law* by George Colman, 1800) wants her son Dick to learn how to dance and speak some French, assuming that trendy young men have their heads overburdened by knowledge, but she does not agree to him marrying Cecily, a poor girl.

From the viewpoint of gender studies, the most interesting feminine characters are the ones that express independent tendencies, modern and feminist ideas, questioning the traditional roles of men and women (the ideas promoted by men, the dominant group in the society of that time). In the Romanian comedies, the only feminine characters who have modern ideas

without being portrayed as ridiculous are created by Alecsandri. The Princess (*Concina/ The Game of Cards*, 1864-1865) confesses that when she was young she was forced by her parents to marry Prince Michael, a sick and unlikeable old man (children were victims of parental despotism, as the parents did not want their children, but themselves, to be happy). Another Princess (*Boieri și ciocoi/ Boyars and Parvenus*, 1874) appreciates the atmosphere at the ball given for Iorgu Hârzobeanu's daughter, Elena, where she admires the elegant atmosphere, the dress and the improving of manners, which she and her younger friends helped achieve. Sânziana (*Sânziana și Pepelea / Sanziana and Pepelea*, 1880) is emancipated and has feminist ideals ("today we are free and independent", "it is only fair that we should choose our husbands ourselves"). Aglăița (*Farmazonul din Hârlău*) states that she will not change for a man. She will not marry the man her family wants if she hates him. Aglăița believes that all this is the painter Leonil's fault, because he waited for too long and did not ask her father for her hand in marriage. By contrast, other characters' feminist ideas and attitudes are hidden behind the more visible aspects of ridiculous coquetry. Gahița Rosmarinovici (*Iorgu de la Sadagura*) admires foreign young men and their politeness, especially their eloquence, the salons abroad and the elegant atmosphere there, the well-educated and distinguished women who do not ruin their hands cooking and washing. Marița (*Un poet romantic/ A Romantic Poet* by Matei Millo, 1835), Stan's wife, does not want to be like a man, even though she has feminist ideas and, when young, used to rule over her husband. She thinks that women's desire to replace men happens because of a mistake made by men: they forget their role and allow women to act like them. Costache Caragiali's Tincuța (*Doi coțcari*) defines women: "the ladies are made to be led, otherwise one would see them writing the laws of the

world”. Zoița (*Însurățeii/ The Newlyweds* by Matei Millo, 1846) deploras women’s fate when Stan, believing that women are given as a sacrifice to men, “as written in the Bible”, reminds her of women’s obligation to obey them (Stan takes her to a village and pretends to be a simple peasant, not a nobleman). Zoița goes to Spătăreasa and asks her to help her obtain a divorce, arguing that she is the one who deserves obedience from her husband and not vice versa. A similar feminine character is Juliana (*The Honey Moon* by John Tobin, 1805), a witty young noblewoman with beautiful manners but with a sharp tongue. Her husband, the Duke, hopes that she will soften after marriage, because he does not want to be the slave of a woman. To teach her a lesson about pride, he takes her to a shack and tells her that he is a peasant, not a duke, but does not use violence towards her. Stan does not use violence either, although he is advised to do so by Ichim. Like Millo’s Zoița (both reminiscent of Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*), Juliana thinks that men were born to serve women. Volante, her sister, is confident that Juliana’s husband will be like a puppet in her hands. Just like Alecsandri’s Aglăița, Emily (*The Three and the Deuce* by Prince Hoare, 1806) admits that she will not give up her freedom for a man whom she does not love. She gets to choose which one of the triplets, friends of her father, she will marry. She prefers Petrinax because he is just as serious and moderate as she is. The English comedies have even more independent feminine characters. Fanny Smith (*Partners for Life* by Henry James Byron, 1871), Tom’s wife, is rich, but sells everything so that her husband can succeed by himself in his career as a solicitor. Madeleine (*St Mary’s Eve* by William Bayle Bernard, 1838) takes advantage of the fact that her future husband has a high position in society and hides her brother in the bedroom. The latter is a Jacobin being chased by the authorities and her attitude stirs varied reactions in the

community. Sophia (*The Blind Bargain* by Frederick Reynolds, 1805), deceived by Jack, a fugitive and homeless character, forgives him and swears she will work and will try to be independent. Rose (*The Vindictive Man* by Thomas Holcroft, 1806), beautiful, innocent and nice, does not want to receive the money she has inherited from her aunt, Leonora, the lover of a very rich man, because she doesn't think that this would be fair and without honour she cannot live a peaceful life. Rose states that she is healthy and strong and can work for herself and her father. Rose wishes her aunt had died a poor and honest woman, and that she had left behind, instead of wealth, a virtuous name. Rosine (*Education* by Thomas Morton, 1813), a schoolmistress, stands against an education system that has as its goal obtaining the applause of society and teaching the art of obtaining a husband instead of domestic happiness. Miss Grannett (*Cyril's Success* by Henry James Byron, 1868) is Kate's former schoolmistress, a "horrible creature who knows all sorts of things about chronology and Women's Rights", who left her husband when they encountered their first marital problems (like Millo's Zoița). Although not convinced that the women should obey men, Miss Grannett agrees to help Kate be reconciled with her husband, the playwright Cyril Cuthbert. Georgina (*Money* by Edward Bulwer Lytton, 1840) has not received much education from her father, who expects her to grab a rich husband (Evelyn). Inheriting a fairly large amount from her uncle, Mordaunt, Georgina secretly meets Frederick, the man that she likes more, in spite of her father, who is afraid that this may jeopardise her future marriage. Young and beautiful Melissa (*The Bride of Ludgate* by Douglas William Jerrold, 1829) manages to avoid marrying Shekel, a much older man, but is forced to marry Charles: if she refuses, she is threatened with seeing

Mapleton, the man that she truly loves, dead. She does not give in: “I’d rather mourn a dead man than despise a living one”.

Conclusion

The construction of these Romanian feminine characters reflects the status of women in the nineteenth century, a period of progress and modernisation for the society of the Romanian Principalities. Influenced by Western civilization, women’s interest progressed from the private and domestic field to social life. In the nineteenth century, the Romanian comedies adopted various European models, largely due to the fact that the playwrights were writing for the stage and also because these were the first productions of drama in the national language. In both Romanian and English comedies, it is difficult to draw a firm line between the playwrights’ satirising of feminine characters and their reflection of and admiration for women’s progress. Beyond mere affectation, mocked by dramatists, the feminine characters of the plays show modernising trends. The playwrights oscillate between trying to present and discuss the mores of the time and delivering the first feminine characters who express the first emancipating and feminist ideas.

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DIFFERENT HORRORS, SAME HELL: THE GENDERED NATURE OF HOLOCAUST SUFFERING

ROXANA GHIȚĂ

University of the West Timișoara

Abstract: While most Holocaust memoirs and stories considered canonical present mostly the male viewpoint on loss and traumatic experiences, a shade is cast over women's representations of the horrors of the Shoah. Although the suffering and horror experienced by both men and women cannot be quantified, women were subject to different traumatic experiences, as they were objects of hatred not only for belonging to an "impure race", but also for being mothers and "sexual beings."

Key words: gender differences, gender stereotypes, Holocaust, trauma, memoirs, photography.

1. Introduction

In Holocaust studies, gender distinctions have largely been ignored, either because women have been perceived as marginal to the Holocaust, or because these distinctions have been seen as possible distractions from the central feature of the history of the Holocaust itself. The “canonical” corpus of Holocaust literature presents mostly the male viewpoint, and thus men’s traumatic experiences and memories have become the “norm” for describing loss and suffering.

Holocaust scholars disagree over whether women and men should be considered two distinct entities in the study of the Nazi genocide. Writers such as Ruth Bondy and Lawrence Lager, for example, challenge the idea that women should be studied separately in historical and social analyses of mass extermination. Even though she is the author of an entire volume offering insight into women’s experience at Theresienstadt, Bondy’s introductory remark (1998:310) very clearly states her position regarding a gender-based approach to Holocaust studies:

Zyklon B [lethal gas] did not differentiate between men and women; the same death swept them all away. Because the same fate awaited all Jews, I approached the writing of this chapter with grave reservations: why should I focus on women? Any division of the Holocaust and its sufferers according to gender seemed offensive to me. This issue of gender seems to belong to another generation, another era.

Lawrence Langer (1998:362) also challenged the moral legitimacy of what he considered to represent the privileging of one group over another in Holocaust studies:

The pain of loss and the relief of survival remain entwined in the memory of those lucky enough to have outlived the atrocities. All efforts to find a rule of hierarchy

in that darkness, whether based on gender or will, spirit or hope, reflect only our own need to plant a life sustaining seed in the barren soil that conceals the remnants of two-thirds of European Jewry. The sooner we abandon this design, the quicker we will learn to face such chaos with unshielded eyes.

In contrast to these points of view, scholars such as Carol Rittner, Dalia Ofer, Leonore Weitzman and Joan Ringelheim share the firm conviction that the study of women during the Holocaust is not only justifiable but necessary in order to redress the absence of women's lives and experiences in the documentation of Holocaust history and the preservation of Holocaust memory. After a long period of research in the field of Holocaust studies, Rittner and Roth (1993:XI) reached the conclusion that

Relatively little attention has been paid to women's experiences before, during or after the Holocaust. Much of the best witness literature by women, the autobiographical accounts of those who survived the Holocaust is out of print or not easily accessible. Much of the most widely read scholarship – historical, sociopolitical, philosophical and religious – treats the Holocaust as if sexual and gender differences did not make a difference [...] Thus the particularities of women's experiences and reflections have been submerged and ignored.

Joan Ringelheim (1998:350) asserts, on the one hand, the fact that the pain and the suffering experienced by both men and women during the Holocaust cannot be quantified and compared, but on the other hand she argues for the inclusion of women-centred perspectives that focus on “gender-specific” traumas such as the fact that

Jewish women carried the burden of sexual victimization, pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, killing of newborn babies in the camps to save mothers, care of

children, and many decisions about separation from children. For Jewish women the Holocaust produced a set of experiences, responses, and memories that do not always parallel those of Jewish men.

2.1. Sources of gender differences during the Holocaust

In their article “Women and the Holocaust” (1998), Dalia Ofer and Leonore Weitzman identify four sources of gender differences during the Holocaust which legitimate the need for a gender-based approach to Holocaust studies:

•Pre-war roles and responsibilities of men and women:

Jewish men and women lived in a cultural and social environment that endowed them with “different spheres of knowledge, expertise, social networks and opportunities with which they faced the Nazi onslaught” (Ofer and Weitzman 1998).

•Anticipatory reactions:

Jews assumed that Nazis would not hurt their women and children, and only men were in any real danger. Therefore, Jewish women were those who devised strategies to help their men hide or migrate. They used to go to the police, the SS and the municipality to protest arbitrary actions against their families and to try to gain the release of their male relatives who had been detained. In the early days of the German invasion of Poland, Jewish women urged their men to escape to Russia, and, as a result, at a certain moment during the war they formed the majority of the Jewish population of both Warsaw and Lodz.

•German policy and treatment of men and women:

In the early years of the war Nazis issued different regulations for men and for women which provided specific constraints, on the one hand, and opportunities, on the other. One Nazi concentration camp, Ravensbrück, was

created especially for women and children. 132,000 women were imprisoned there, from more than 20 countries, and about 92,000 died of starvation or illness, or were executed (<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia>). Women were prone to be subjected to acts of sexual harassment, rape or sexual slavery, despite the fact that Germans were prohibited from having any sexual relations with Jews because of *Rassenschande* (racial shame, behaviour beneath the dignity of one's race). Atrocious medical experiments were conducted on women's reproductive organs and on different ways of sterilising them. Moreover, there were particularly cruel experiments in which the doctors taped the breasts of breast-feeding mothers so that they would not be able to feed their newborn babies and then measured the endurance of the mothers and the babies. The mothers, in an agony of suffering, were forced to participate until their babies were starved to death.

In Theresienstadt, an order for compulsory abortion was issued in July 1943. After that date, any woman who gave birth to a child was sent, together with her baby and her husband, on the next "transport to the East" (to the Auschwitz death camp). This *lager* was, as Ruth Klüger (2001:70) names it, "the stable that supplied the slaughterhouse". In Auschwitz, any woman who was visibly pregnant, or who was holding a child, was sent to the gas chambers. If a woman was in the first months of pregnancy, it was possible for her not to be detected, and to be selected for slave labour.

Both men and women experienced all kinds of humiliation, especially as on arrival in the concentration camps their hair was shaved and their bodies exposed in front of strangers. However, women experienced this as sexual humiliation to a greater extent than men, as they were being gazed upon by Nazi soldiers. Furthermore, because of starvation and its effect on menstruation, women lived under the constant terror that they might never be able to conceive children again.

Forced prostitution was also a common phenomenon in the camps, as women were used not only as rewards for elite male prisoners, but also as a “safeguard” against homosexuality among German soldiers. They were also used in experiments conducted on gay male prisoners who were forced to have sexual relations with women.

•Responses of Jewish men and women to Nazi persecution

The victims of the Holocaust answered Nazi persecution by “drawing on gender-specific skills and resources”. What seems to be specific to women during their camp imprisonment was the formation of camp-sister relationships, the *Lagerschwestern*. These close family-like ties that women formed were meant for mutual help and strength in a sea of terror. Apparently, no parallel term describing male friendship as “brotherly” exists for men during that period.

Moreover, throughout the Holocaust, women had to face a terrible decision that men did not, namely the mothers of young children had the choice of presenting themselves to be selected as workers, and abandoning their children, or staying with them and being sent together to the gas chambers. Only two of about six hundred mothers of young children presented themselves for the selection, as all the others decided to stay with their children until the end (<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia>). One such traumatic moment is illustrated in William Styron’s novel *Sophie’s Choice*, featuring a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps who was forced to choose between the lives of her two children when they were caught by the Nazis.

In order to preserve their faith, spiritual life and humanity, first and foremost, some women were able to continue observing their Jewish traditions. Thus they improvised prayers, lighted “candles” on the eve of holidays, fasted on Yom Kippur and abstained from eating bread at Passover,

despite their permanent hunger. Furthermore, women sang, told stories and even gave theatrical performances in order to overcome the brutal realities of ghetto and camp life.

2.2 Gender, trauma and narrativisation in Ruth Klüger's *Still*

Alive

The importance of gender as an essential constituent of Jewish people's narrativisation of Holocaust is highly visible in survivors' memoirs. On the one hand, when we look at men's and women's accounts alongside each other, common elements that bridge the accounts may be noticed. Both men and women were, as Anna Reading (2002:74) states, "part of the same shattered and shattering gendered genocidal jigsaw". But on the other hand, these complex renderings of surviving the Holocaust are also articulated according to a gender-marked perspective, as the atrocities that men and women were subjected to were different to a certain extent, and they negotiated them and their personal survival differently.

Although the corpus of Holocaust literature by women is diverse and varied, several themes predominate. Some of these recurrent themes are gender specific, while others characterise Holocaust writing in general. Among the most striking images that occur in both men's and women's memoirs are the cattle freight cars, the hunger and the thirst, the *Muselmänner*, the name that Primo Levi gave to the walking dead in the camps, to men who wouldn't live long because they had reached the limits of pain and suffering, as well as the gradual dehumanisation of the prisoners that all the camp practices managed to bring about.

Ruth Klüger's volume of memoirs, *Still Alive*, features both these general topics and gender specific ones. As a child, Ruth saw her family's

happy life in Vienna undermined and destroyed. She remembers the constant humiliation and terror she felt as a child:

‘Oh, you are from Vienna’. Americans like to say. ‘How lucky you are. What a charming city’. That’s what they said even in the late forties, as if they had promptly forgotten what the war was about, and I’d reply incredulously, ‘But I am Jewish’. They act as if that had nothing to do with the objective charm of waltzes and empresses with long hair and Mozart operas. And nowadays they think of *The Sound of Music* and of Schwarzenegger. But with the yellow Jewish star on one’s coat, one didn’t go on excursions or into museums. Even before we were required to wear it, half the city was forbidden, *verboten*, taboo, or out of reach for Jews. The signs telling Jews and dogs to stay outside were ubiquitous (2001:25).

When she was eleven, Ruth was deported with her mother to Theresienstadt, the first in a series of concentration camps which would become the setting for her shattered childhood. She vividly recollects the devastating hunger and thirst that she suffered from in the camps, not only because of their dreadful effects upon the body, but also because of the rapid deterioration of mental condition that these two triggered:

Those were my first weeks of protracted hunger [...] Hunger gnaws and weakens you. It takes up mental space which could otherwise be used for thinking. What can you do with your food ration to stretch it? (2001:75).

Hunger was less of a problem than thirst. [...] you only have to consider how long it takes for a person to die of hunger and how quickly he dies of thirst. You can live for weeks, even months, without food, but you die of thirst within a days. Accordingly, thirst is more nagging, harder to put up with, than hunger. [...] ‘What did you children do in Auschwitz?’ someone asked me recently. ‘Did you play games?’ Games indeed! No, we had roll call instead. In Auschwitz I stood in

rows of five and was thirsty and afraid of dying. That's it, that's all, that's the sum of it (2001:100).

In her attempt to analyse with a critical eye and with a certain detachment, as far as possible, as her trauma still breathes through every line of her volume of memoirs, Ruth Klüger acknowledges the predominance of male perspectives in the narration of Holocaust horrors, and once again, the minimalised role and importance of women's distinct voices in rendering traumatic experiences which eventually led to the trivialisation, to a certain extent, of their stories:

Occasionally, I tell a few stories of my own, if someone asks. But that rarely happens. Wars, and hence the memories of wars, are owned by the male of the species. [...] Besides, women have no past, or aren't supposed to have one. A man can have an interesting past, a woman only an indecent one (2001:18).

Ruth Klüger also devotes several pages to a topic that we have already mentioned, a topic which is recurrent throughout women's writings on the Holocaust, namely the emergence of camp-sister bonds between women, the *Lagerschwestern*. It was the feeling of belonging to a community, disregarding the atrocious circumstances in which these communities were formed, and the friendships flourishing in the midst of hell that prevented them from complete dehumanisation. Furthermore, the acts of heroism carried out by these women seem almost surreal given the circumstances, and the author narrates an episode which made a lasting impact on her:

I was saved by a young woman who was in as helpless a situation as the rest of us, and who nonetheless wanted nothing other than to help me. The more I think about the following scene, the more astonished I am about its essence, about someone making a free decision to save another person, in a place which promoted the instinct of self-preservation to the point of crime and beyond (2001:107).

Still Alive also contains harsh criticism of the legacy of the Holocaust of the museum culture which has grown up around the camps. Ruth Klüger deeply resents all easy comparisons and analogies, all naive and sentimental symbolisms associated with the Holocaust, as well as the fact that for some people, one of the greatest collective traumas of the twentieth century represents nothing but a manipulating tool which desecrates the memory of the victims:

The camps are part of a worldwide museum culture of the Shoah, nowhere more evident than in Germany, where every sensitive citizen, not to mention every politician who wants to display his ethical credentials, feels the need to take pictures at these shrines or, even better, have his picture taken (Kluger, 2001:63).

2.3. Rendering Gender in Photography

Photography is another essential artistic device which has shaped the representation of female gender in depictions of Nazi atrocities. As Barbie Zelizer (2001:251) has pointed out, there are four basic portrayals of women associated with the Holocaust:

- women portrayed as victims
- women portrayed as survivors
- women portrayed as perpetrators
- women portrayed as witnesses to what was transpiring in the

camps

There are certain patterns and stereotypes that Holocaust-related photography has engendered in the case of women. For instance, female survivors are portrayed both individually and in group shots. Their faces usually show distress and agony, they have hollow cheekbones and vacant eyes. Female perpetrators, on the other hand, are always depicted as angry, harsh, often with maniacal eyes. In their case, there is an emphasis on the collective rather than on the individual. Female perpetrators seem to be the antithesis to all that has ever been expected and desired from women.

There were two main tendencies in documenting the Holocaust through photography:

gender was either *wholly absent* or *wholly present*. In the first case, women were depicted as genderless, namely their gender was neutralised, rendered invisible. In numerous instances, there was little or no visual marker of gender itself, as the piles of human bodies that appear in many photographs are indistinguishable. This suggests the universality of the Holocaust and of death, but it fails to particularise the different kinds of atrocities that different kinds of people had to bear. In the latter case, women were depicted as over-gendered, as the photos, mostly taken after the prisoners' liberation from the death camps and meant to show Nazi barbarism, emphasised women's vulnerability, their fragile bodies and vacant eyes. These over-gendered depictions ultimately upheld and reinforced stereotypes of women as domesticated beings, extremely fragile and vulnerable.

More or less the same effect is triggered by Holocaust museums and exhibits, as some researchers have pointed out that these displays fetishise the memory of the dead. Among the most recurrent and meaningful questions that are being asked are related to the extent to which these representations merely reinforce gender stereotypes, rather than accurately documenting the

realities of women's lives in concentration camps. The accounts and the historical evidence that are privileged are those involving suffering and helplessness, while the memory of women's resistance in the face of Nazi terror is almost erased. However, as the history of the Holocaust shows and as was mentioned at the beginning of the present study, women assumed multiple roles, including overt or covert resistance, as well as taking extreme risks. Although such memories are not completely ignored, they are far less prevalent than those recollecting helplessness and submission.

3. Conclusions

To conclude, as Barbie Zelizer has pointed out,

the documentation of women's experience in the camps was thereby shaped to fit dominant cultural assumptions about women in culture and society. Perhaps because women were presumed to be more vulnerable than men, the brutality both against women and by women was seen as doubly atrocious, challenging gender-based expectations of women and broader expectations of humanity (2001:255).

While there were obviously common experiences among Holocaust victims that crossed gender boundaries, and the exploration of their representations would enable us to understand with more depth "the communal wound" (Reading, 2002:75-76) of the Holocaust, it is equally important to thoroughly research and analyse gender distinctions in the experiencing and inflicting of pain and trauma. The study of women during the Holocaust is essential not only in order to redress the absence of their lives and experiences in the documentation of Holocaust history, but also for the preservation of Holocaust memory. The predominance of one perspective upon these traumatic events leads to stereotypical representations, which only

reinforce traditional gender roles, to misconceptions, numbness towards and eventually oblivion of everything that the Holocaust represents.

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LILIES ON THE LAND – THE FORGOTTEN WOMEN’S LAND ARMY OF WORLD WAR II – A DOCUMENTARY PLAY

HILDEGARD KLEIN

University of Malaga

Abstract: This paper centres on a play directed by Sonia Ritter and produced by the Lions part that portrays an extraordinary event in Britain's recent history – the Women's Land Army of World War II. It is based on real evidence given in hundreds of letters and interviews with former Land Girls. The anecdotes of their shared experience and strenuous work are presented by a female quartet - Margie, Peggy, Poppy and Vera – in a sparkling, captivating and emotional way.

Key words: agricultural labour, historical testimony, Lions part, Women's Land Army, World War II.

We are land girls, we are land girls,
And we're proud to do our bit,
Working, hoeing, reaping, sowing,
Just to keep the nation fit. [...]

To the tune of "Oh, My Darling Clementine"

(Lilies on the Land 2010:25)

Introduction

1) The creation and development of documentary theatre

Lilies on the Land can be classified as documentary theatre or theatre of testimony because it is based upon real historical events, that is, real happenings. According to Mason, "[d]ocumentary Drama presents and re-enacts records from history. Unlike traditional drama, it is not founded on a freely imagined plot" (1977:263). Documentary drama can be traced back to Erwin Piscator's production of *In Spite of Everything (Trotz Alledem)* in 1925, in which "he depicted Germany's history from Berlin's situation at the

outbreak of World War I to the assassination of Karl Liebknecht in 1919” (Mason 1977:263). Mason also explains that “Piscator insisted throughout on the factual authenticity of his material, claiming that “the whole performance was one huge montage of authentic speeches, articles, newspaper clippings, slogans, leaflets, photographs and films of the War and the Revolution” (263). Note Piscator’s emphasis on the importance of dramatising real happenings, real historical events which he points out as being the essence of the documentary method, that is, to construct a theatre of involvement through documents. Bertolt Brecht, in turn, is another key figure in the history of drama who influenced the new wave of documentary drama, but he differed from Piscator “in wanting above all to maintain an aesthetic distance between the stage and the audience” to provoke the spectator’s rational reflection, rather than draw him into emotional involvement (Mason 1977:267). It is relevant here to refer to Joan Littlewood’s famous, time-breaking documentary play *Oh What a Lovely War*, produced in 1963. The play was staged as a multi-media event, with the introduction of non-naturalistic theatrical devices, such as news panels, slide screens, pierrot shows and music-hall entertainment to draw attention to the absurdities and atrocities of war (here the First World War). The play seeks to satirise patriotism and heroism, and thus follows Brecht’s theory of both alienating and engaging the audience in establishing a rational analysis of the action. Brecht’s theory of stressing aesthetic distance was followed by a number of documentary dramatists such as Rolf Hochhuth, Peter Weiss and Heinar Kipphardt. Favorini (1995:139-45) in Filewod (2009:60) points out that Weiss, “whose 1968 essay, ‘Fourteen Propositions for a Documentary Theatre’, articulated the principles of arguments, montage and critical examination he attempted to achieve with his ‘oratorio’ documentary of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, *The Investigation*” (1964-5). The play “includes

harrowing testimonies from witnesses of the concentration camps” and was “poignantly restaged [...] at the Young Vic in 2007, in a new eighty-minute version by the philosopher Jean Baudrillard that created a chilly, contemporary resonance” (Lane 2010:59). Considered a key figure as the creator of the “Theatre of Facts”, Weiss lectured on the subject of documentary theatre at the Berliner Ensemble in 1968. “For Weiss, documentary theatre is a utile form that marshals a ‘critique of concealment’, ‘distortion’, ‘lies’ and the ‘artificial fog’ generated by media and government” (Megson 2009:198). In fact, “Weiss’s 1971 definition of documentary theatre is pertinent today because he affirmed the dialectical relationship between raw material and the theatrical apparatus” (Bruzzi 2006:6 in Reinelt 2009:9), that is to say, the document produces the raw material that is used in theatre performance. “This link sets up a realist epistemology where knowledge is available through sense perception and cognition linked to objects/documents” (Reinelt 2009:9). In this connection, Carol Martin has pointed to an important feature of documentary theatre: to reproduce “what really happened”. She writes: “While documentary theatre remains in the realm of handcraft – people assemble to create it, meet to write it, gather to see it – it is a form of theatre in which technology is a primary factor in the transmission of knowledge” (2006:9). In the absence of “real people” on stage, their stories are re-enacted and represented through various means, including stage acting, film clips, photographs, and other “documents” that attest to the veracity of both the story and the people being represented. Martin stresses: “Technology is often the initial generating component of the tripartite structure of contemporary documentary theatre: technology, text, and body” (2006:9). In fact, in the last twenty years, documentary theatre and even more so “verbatim” or tribunal theatre has enjoyed great popularity in its tackling of socio-political realities in the mode

of “infotainment”. (The term “verbatim theatre” was coined in 1987 by Derek Paget in a paper for the *New Theatre Quarterly* (Lane 2010:59). These plays claim that “what you will hear spoken are the authentic and unaltered words of various real-life agents” (Reinelt 2009:13), and their only sources are official transcripts of judicial proceedings and/or interviews. The case for documentary theatre arose from the “failure of new British writers to engage with the political” and “[t]he failures of the media to faithfully report events without manipulating evidence” (Lane 2010:61). Documentary theatre, thus, stresses its moral and ethical claims to truth (Martin 2006:14). “Governments spin the facts in order to tell stories”, whereas “[t]heatre spins them right back to tell different stories” and to avoid social reality being “constructed” (2006:14). In an age of globalisation, poststructuralism and postmodernity, theatre practitioners have included new technology, media, archive documents, memory and testimony together with the body to present on stage past and present political subjects, matters of public weight and interest. In the decade after 2000, the Tricycle Theatre continued its tradition of staging verbatim tribunal plays with Richard Norton Taylor’s *Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry* (2003), about the death of weapons expert David Kelly; David Hare, in his turn, wrote *Stuff Happens* (2004) – the title being taken “from the offhand response of Donald Rumsfeld [...] to news of the looting of Baghdad in April 2003” (Sierz 2011:73) –; Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo *Guantanamo: ‘Honor Bound To Defend Freedom’* (2004); and there was Robin Soans’ timely *Talking to Terrorists* (2005), (performed in the same week as the 7/7 London bombings). Many of the titles of these documentary/verbatim plays are “self-explanatory”, in Sierz’s words (2011:73). Here we have selected a few documentaries as an

example of the wealth of plays with political and historical themes performed in very recent years.

2. Production development of *Lilies of the Land*

The above short outline of the features of documentary drama is intended to prove that *Lilies on the Land* can be included in this dramatic genre. It is certainly “infotainment” as it supplies interesting information about a historical period and, at the same time, it is a highly entertaining piece because of its liveliness. The play developed from about 140 letters from former Land Girls who responded to an article in *Saga Magazine* to send any material relating to their experiences in the Second World War Land Army. In the Introduction to the play, the company members of the Lions part (this company evolved from the Royal Shakespeare Company) explain that the “letters flowed in from women from all walks of life; memories and recollections, anecdotes, poems, photos, newspaper cuttings and wartime memorabilia” (2010:v). The director of the company, Sonia Ritter, relates that the company was “amazed at the breadth of human experience”, and “the depth and dignity of each individual woman’s experience”. Many women were interviewed to tell their stories personally, and “they recounted them with clarity and vivacity” (2010 Theatre Programme: no page number).

The project of staging a play about the ex-Women’s Land Army arose from the idea of paying homage to this Forgotten Army. The company explains: “We began to realise that we knew little about the extraordinary role the Women’s Land Army played in World War II: certainly a Forgotten Army” (Introduction 2010:v). In fact, Ritter affirms that the “forgotten” army was not familiar to her. Significantly, hardly any credit had been given to the

organisation and its members; the women had received no significant post-war pension or honour. Ritter's interest in the Land Army was kindled when, in a book of war poetry, she started to read poems by Land Girls (mostly unknown) that related their experience as farm labourers (Theatre Programme: n/p). The play was devised as a counter-piece to the Lions part production of Christopher Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners*, produced in 2001, which "explores the troubled minds of four soldiers held as prisoners of war" (Introduction: v). *Lilies on the Land* dramatises the wartime experiences of those women who dedicated their lives to the welfare of Britain during the War.

3. Historical outline of the Women's Land Army

In the Theatre Programme presented by the Arts Theatre, London, where the play was first performed on 8 June, 2010, Emma Butler Smith offers a historical outline of the origin of the Women's Land Army. It had its roots in the shortages of World War I, when 50 percent of Britain's food was imported. There were serious harvest failures in 1917 and the menace of German naval blockades meant that the country was left with only three weeks' reserve of food. Out of this pressing need for survival, Miss Meriel Talbot and Lady Gertrude Denman, members of the just founded Women's Institute, were appointed to organise the first Women's Land Army (WLA). The response was startling as 23,000 women were admitted into the Army in 1918.

At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Britain faced an analogous situation. Butler Smith explains in the programme that "Britain was importing about 70 percent of its food, but needed to be as self-sufficient as possible" (Theatre Programme: n/p). Between September 1939 and March 1940, over 30,000 agricultural workers were enlisted in the army, causing an

alarming shortfall in farm labourers. Out of this necessity, on June 1st 1939, the second WLA was officially formed. The official minimum age was 17, and women joined for all kinds of reasons – patriotism, to avoid munitions work, to escape home life and for a healthy country life (Butler Smith, n/p). The women were attracted by alluring recruitment posters that presented an idealised picture of the land and land work, following the slogan “Join the Women’s Land Army. For a healthy, happy job”. However, they mainly found exhausting and demanding hardships, working about 50 hours per week, from dawn to dusk, for about 28 shillings a week (42 pounds today), half of which was normally deducted for board and lodgings, which they had to share with other workers, or with the farmer and his wife. The hygiene conditions were often appalling, and many of them were chronically underfed. “At its peak in 1943, the WLA had nearly 90,000 members and produced two out of every three meals eaten in Britain. Between 1939 and 1950, 250,000 women were members” (Butler Smith, Programme n/p). However, the number gradually decreased and the Army was officially disbanded in October 1950.

Staging and performing *Lilies on the Land*

The play *Lilies on the Land* does present genuine historical testimony of women’s work in the WLA and the jobs they had to do to keep a farm functioning: threshing, milking, ploughing, reclaiming land, rat-catching, crop-picking, hedging, ditching and handling farm machinery designed for sturdy men and difficult for women to operate. The time scheme is expertly chosen, and, as it says in the Introduction to the play (2010:vii) “[t]he nature of time in *Lilies on the Land* is fundamental to its dramatic power”. Each story in the play is realised “physically and emotionally in the moment it is

told, - in 'real time' - not as something that is being recalled with nostalgia" (vii). The company goes on to explain: "Whilst the inspiration that fires the women to speak, sparks from Sir Winston Churchill's death, and the era they recall is some twenty-five years before, the dynamic of the telling is in the present, to a twenty-first-century audience" (vii). In fact, "[t]he three timelines co-exist and move together, creating the shape of the theatrical experience: January 1965, 1939-45, and now. Apart from the lively women characters, who hold the audience's entire attention, "there are two other principal characters in *Lilies on the Land*: World War II and the land itself, both surrounding and underpinning all that happens to the women" (Introduction: vii). Obviously, the action is concerned with the women's working experience on the land during the war. The structure of the play is circular, beginning with the BBC's announcement, in 1965, of Winston Churchill's death (2010:5) and ending with the four women "*watching the funeral cortege of Churchill pass by*" (50) while the muffled bells of St Paul's Cathedral can be heard.

Churchill's celebrated speech of May 1940, initially delivered in Parliament and later broadcast, in which he reiterates "*We shall fight [...] We shall never surrender [...]*" (6) establishes the transition from his death to the beginning of the war, autumn 1939. It connects to the women recalling why they joined the Women's Land Army. They relate that they were attracted by the 'darned' poster: "A girl, head held high, golden hair, smiling and proud [...] On a hayrick" and the slogan: "Lend a Hand on the Land" (6). In fact, the women remember their bucolic picture of the land: "Green fields [...] Crops of vegetables. Perhaps flowers. All things bright and beautiful" (6). As the play unfolds, this picture gives way to all sorts of hardships. Apart from their initial attraction to the land, they were also

intrigued by the uniform which consisted of a jumper and breeches, especially as most women in this period were not allowed to wear trousers at work. Interestingly, while the women's memories travel back in time as they give their reasons for joining the Army, they “*reveal Land Army uniforms under their clothes*”, while they sing a well-known song from the war years: “Wish Me Luck as You Wave Me Goodbye” (10). The framework of the whole play is consequently based on the women's memories, related in their letters with outstanding vivacity and excitement. The four actresses of the 2010 Arts Theatre production - Dorothy Lawrence, Kali Peacock, Sarah Finch and Rosalind Cressy - succeed in transmitting this exceptional enthusiasm. Their individual, coherently intertwined stories narrating their personal journeys have an epic character, and their narrative is structured like a succession of interwoven monologues. However, as “the four performers interact, chuckling, wincing or nodding sympathetically at each other's stories” (Marlowe 2010:663), the performance acquires an extraordinary liveliness, speed and intensity, which is highlighted by the many period songs (about fifteen) that are reproduced and sung by the four actresses.

The time scheme the play follows is very skilfully devised. As the action develops in the countryside, it tracks the four seasons of a year, and, very dextrously, it furthermore illustrates the duration of the war, though it lasted not one, but six years, “covering the whole war from 1939-45” (Spencer 2010:663). It is pertinent to mention in this connection the poem *The Land*, written by Vita Sackville West in 1926, because of its cyclical nature, as the poem is divided into four sections according to the four seasons. Its structure and subject matter evoke Virgil's *Georgics*, but instead of conjuring up a bucolic idyll, *The Land* recounts “the mild continuous epic of the soil” with robust descriptions of the selfless toil of ploughmen, craftsmen,

beekeepers and shepherds. The poem is a didactic hymn to the Kentish countryside and an evocation of the cultivated landscape and its wildlife (2004: Dust Jacket Front Flap). Similarly, in *Lilies on the Land*, the initial notion of working in a bucolic environment gives way to an epic tale of back-breaking work and hardship, endured with perseverance, courage, and unyielding stamina.

The four women who narrate their war experiences on the land are representatives of all conditions of life, that is, from four distinct social classes. We have adapted the following descriptions from the character list provided in the edition of *Lilies on the Land* (2010:2):

Margie is from Newcastle. She refers to herself as a townie. She is very naïve and childlike – though not childish. Appearance-wise, she is pretty, with masses of curls. She is warm and constantly in a state of surprise. She is funny and affectionate. She was brought up a Methodist. Margie signed up because she was attracted by the uniform and expected to pick fruit and vegetables in the sunny South of England.

Peggy is a happy, confident young cockney from a large East End family – that is, until she finds herself in the middle of the country, not knowing “one end of a cow from the other”. During her time in the Land Army, Peg maintains her sense of humour and her positive attitude [...] most of the time. She enjoys the work, revels in the camaraderie of the other girls, but also loves to be on her own in the field on her tractor – her ploughing skills are second to none!

Poppy is from Oxfordshire, brought up in a happy and privileged family and used to a comfortable lifestyle. Her accent is RP. She signed up enticed by the romantic posters. The tough life on the land is a shock, but she is ready to learn, and throws herself into it all with energy and enthusiasm, finding the strength [...] within herself to cope. A confident and outgoing person, she enjoys dances and romance, and, eventually, life on the land.

Vera is educated, and frustrated with old-fashioned views of women. The war is an opportunity for her to get away from her snobby stepmother and to go out into the world and find out who she really is. She is a complex character, and perhaps she'll never be satisfied with life. Competent and hearty, she is in some ways the most lonely of the four Land Girls, and probably the only one who's read Virginia Woolf.

As mentioned before, the stories these four women narrate are an amalgamation of the numerous letters received from former Land Girls and they constitute "a cornucopia of revealing historical detail and amusing anecdote", as Shore (2010:739) has said. Indeed, the recounting of their work presents a comprehensive insight into the different tasks that had to be done on the land. As none of the women had been prepared for the hardship ahead of them, many of the stories told contain amusing and comical notes, but they also offer detailed descriptions of the land work to be done. At times their narration acquires a choral quality as the four women recount some of these tasks:

PEGGY. Carting –
POPPY. Calving –
VERA. Clearing fields –
PEGGY. Apple-picking -
VERA. More spud-lifting and –
ALL. Threshing (16).

Thus, we are given a historical insight into the type of work on the land, either by hand or with the help of some now old-fashioned, heavy machinery (the noise of which is created by the girls while they repeat the following words):

PEGGY. The threshing machine's worked by an old steam engine, which belches out disgusting smoke. When moving the machine from farm to farm - metal cleats have to be removed from the wheels and bolted on again by us girls – hard on the hands.

POPPY. One girl has to climb onto the stack and throw sheaves onto the machine with a pitchfork.

PEGGY. Another girl stands in a sort of well next to a drum, with a knife attached to her wrist with a strap, she's called the band-cutter.

VERA. The feeder catches the stook and the band-cutter slides the knife in flat, and flicks it back to cut the string, grabs the string by the knot.

ALL. You never wasted string.

PEGGY. The feeder then fans the sheaf out onto the drum, which moves along a canvas belt.

POPPY. The threshed corn comes out at the other end to be poured into sacks and loaded onto a cart. (16-17).

Apart from the main women characters, the four actresses play twenty-eight other parts - for instance, grumpy farmers, cheeky labourers, American GIs, German and Italian prisoners of war, farmers' wives, imitating their voices and gestures. These doublings contribute significantly to the enormous liveliness and hilarity of the performance.

However, the comical notes are interrupted by more serious ones when the women recount their terror on hearing doodlebugs falling out of blue skies, landmine craters in a neighbouring meadow, and, naturally, anguish for their distant loved ones. We also hear of sadistic bullying and sexual harassment by foremen and Italian soldiers. Poppy relates that she “never knew a moment's peace” because the foreman “would jump out from behind the barn door ... and grab (her)” (41), while Vera recounts her

traumatic experience when she was being hunted by an Italian chap: “[H]e jumped out at me, grabbed me round the waist and pushed me against the wall” (41). After the narration of the girls’ appalling experiences they sing: “When this Lousy War is Over, no more Land Army for me [...]” (42).

The girls’ hard and constrained lives achieve a welcome exhilaration and distraction by the arrival of American servicemen, who invite them to weekend dances to the rhythm of the latest popular music, and to share sumptuous food (in contrast to their meagre meals). A further change in their monotonous lives is produced by the appearance of Italian and German prisoners of war (POWs) who are to join them in their farm work. Each nation, as Evans (2010:663) writes, “conforms to stereotype”. The Italians were lazy workers, but sociable and talkative, while the Germans were hard-working and friendly, but homesick and downhearted. The girls were amazed that they were not Nazis at all, but “just ordinary people” (35).

The women’s testimony of their war experience and the documentary format of the play is reinforced when their narrative is interrupted by a series of BBC recordings that transmit the latest war news, such as broadcasting the London Blitz in 1940, the Japanese entry into the war in 1941, the bombing of Nuremburg in 1944, etc. (See pages 21, 25, 30, 37, 42, & 46). However, it is mainly the authentic voices of the Land Girls that recount a genuine historical record of the life and work in the British countryside during the war.

Conclusion

The play reminds us of the neglect so many women suffered while doing silent heroic work. As mentioned before, the Women’s Land Army had received no post-war pensions or honours, nor at the time were they acknowledged on Remembrance Day. It was not until 2000 that the WLA

were invited for the first time by the British government to pay their respects at the Cenotaph, and in 2008, after years of campaigning, the 20,000 surviving members of the WLA were finally awarded commemorative service medals.

Sonia Ritter and the Lions part have succeeded in vindicating the silent and heroic work of the Women's Land Army which contributed so significantly to the provision of food for the British people during the war. They have provided a vital and important historical testimony in this documentary play through the lively quartet of four brilliant actresses who represent the wide variety of women who formed the Land Army. Furthermore, the company has successfully portrayed historical events in a highly theatrical and appealing mode.

The following statement delivered by Molly Stevens, a former land girl from Oxfordshire, may represent most of the women's voices:

You took up the fight and that was it. We all survived, and I'd do it all again tomorrow (Theatre Programme:n/p).

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**WHY FEMINIST CRITICAL LITERACY MATTERS: THE
REORGANISATION OF CAPITALIST ECONOMIES AND THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED LITERATURE FOR
YOUNG ADULTS**

LILIJANA BURCAR

English Department, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

Abstract: The latest capitalist restructuring has resulted in new conditions of employment, seriously affecting possibilities for people's self-realization. Women have been hurt the most and face an increasing feminisation of poverty. This paper foregrounds the importance of literary socialisation in preparing young people to accept or reject neoliberal gendered scripts.

Key words: children's literature, critical literacy, gender, neoliberal capitalism

Introduction

The development of critical literacy is of crucial importance for fostering social awareness among adults and children, especially in times marked by the latest expansion and restructuring of capitalist economies. These processes are underlined by a new cycle of naturalisation and further entrenchment of structural inequalities, which rest in part on the re-modification and deepening of existing patterns of gendered exploitation. It is through the development of critical literacy, which usually takes place in formal educational spaces, that processes of emancipation and the fight for social justice can be encouraged or thwarted, depending on the policies pursued by those in charge of educational agendas. In Western hegemonic economies, two seemingly different, but in reality complementary strands of feminist analysis have informed state-sanctioned feminist pedagogical interventions into schooling and educational policies aimed at young adults. These are liberal feminism with its focus on a formal equality agenda that simply adds women/girls in without problematising power binaries that emanate from constructs of femininity and masculinity, and the so-called “difference” feminism with its emphasis on the accommodation of the existing binary constructs of gender difference in such a way that negative attributes of femininity are given a positive connotation. Both strands end up by essentialising gender and are therefore complicit in reproducing gender binaries, either implicitly or explicitly (Stromquist 2006, Ringrose 2007).

Critical feminist pedagogy, by contrast, builds social awareness and critical literacies by taking into consideration broader socio-political and economic contexts, within which specific subject positions are constructed and naturalised. Its primary goal is to have “students understand both the concept of ideology and how it relates to their own lives” (Gonick 2007:434). For this purpose, feminist critical pedagogy not only facilitates

students' critical engagement with binary constructs of masculinity and femininity but also enlists strategies that help students to grasp broader structural inequities within which the binaries of masculinity and femininity both operate and originate. Furthermore, critical social literacies provide an understanding not only of how dominant discourses that produce and naturalise inequalities position and circumscribe us, but also of how they can be read against the grain and possibly parsed apart in order to be replaced by a transformative vision of an alternative social order. To this end, critical feminist pedagogy, among its other strategies, relies on alternative literary texts, which function as important tools of political intervention in times when femininity itself is being "re-articulated and re-traditionalised" within neoliberal economies (Gonick 2007:443). Given the increasing feminisation of poverty today, it is essential for critical feminist education to return to materialist theories of gender instead of continuing to align itself with postmodernist strands of cultural studies that insist on identities being simply fragmented and free-floating. The time has come to once again re-connect the dots in order to understand how the production of identities is tied to "institutional and economic restructuring, coupled with reinforcing cultural and ideological processes" (Coulter 2009:26) that inform the implementation of neoliberal socio-economic policies and the accompanying construction of very specific (gendered) identities.

New global economy, or globalisation for short, is one of the terms applied to contemporary capitalism, which over the last three decades has brought about "structural transformations in the organization of work, identities, resources and power" (Peterson 2003:46) and which is itself associated with "further consolidation and exacerbation of [...] relations of domination and exploitation" (Peterson 2003:9). Neoliberal restructurings of the processes of production and society in general rest on an increase in

flexible and informal working arrangements, and consequently lead to a systematic decline in working conditions, job security, the earning ability of workers and the collective power of trade unions. The downgrading of manufacturing and the expansion of the service sector in the North have also led to an explosion of flexibilised and casualised part-time and temporary jobs in the formal sector, which has substantially decreased the actual earnings of workers who have to do more work for less pay under deteriorating working conditions (Sassen 1998, Peterson 2003). All of these structural reforms disproportionately affect women, especially already marginalised and poor women, as well as migrants and racialised others across the globe, thus contributing to their structural exploitation and spiralling poverty.

The global restructuring of the capitalist economy has an especially negative impact on the employment possibilities, earning capacity and sustainable livelihoods of all women – for unlike men, women are already positioned differently within gender-segregated labour markets and households, due primarily to the patriarchal nature of nation states and the globalised capitalist system. In this socio-political context, women have been or *in the post-socialist states are being increasingly constructed as secondary and disposable earners who merely supplement rather than complement men's wages* (Fussell 2000). Especially in the capitalist system, still marked by a prevailing breadwinner model, women's gradual entry into the formal labour market has been marked by their partial inclusion and structural marginalisation, as women have been relegated primarily to low-paying, low-skilled and low-status jobs. Since its inception this system has thus “constructed women's labour through ideologies of femininity as supplementary, pliant and patient” (Pettman 2003:159), as devalorised semi-

skilled or unskilled work and as unpaid and invisible reproductive household work, which has in turn confined women to the lower ranks of decision-making and excluded them entirely from the echelons of real power. Neoliberal reforms feed on the existing structural hierarchies and inequalities of gender, which they recompose and aggravate to produce new forms of “cheapened and submissive female labor” (Runyan 2003:145).

While women are forced to struggle with diminished work opportunities and face the increasing feminisation of poverty and survival, young people are also being drawn into these gender scripts. Literary socialisation of children and young adults plays an important part in preparing the young to accept or reject the gendered scripts naturalised by contemporary socio-economic discourses. As literary texts are themselves forms of social practice, they share in the construction of social reality, usually either by upholding and legitimising the existing relations of power and gender or by exposing and challenging the very reproduction of structural inequalities. Therefore, working with alternative or so-called “disruptive texts” (Yeoman quoted in Hurley 2005:229) of contemporary realistic fiction is of crucial importance for facilitating reflective reading and thereby cultivating critical literacy on the part of children and young adults alike. It is precisely in this respect that the importance of feminist critical literacy comes into full view. By providing a critical analysis of the structural forces that shape and condition our gendered subjectivities, feminist critical literacy is indispensable in helping us to both recognise structural inequalities and problematise the way these are engendered and perpetuated by the new round of globally restructured and very specific socio-economic systems. Feminist critical literacy thus not only provides an insight into the constructedness of gender binaries but also enhances an understanding of how mechanisms that are inherent in the globally re-constructed capitalist economy prop up and

refurbish binary constructs of gender. To develop deliberative skills and reflective reading among young readers, critical feminist pedagogy inevitably relies on situated knowledge, and it functions best when it is based on textual readings, which in turn expose and de-naturalise seemingly neutral scripts of gendered power relationships.

One such recent textual intervention in the field of children's and young adult literature is Barbara O'Connor's U.S.-published book *How to Steal A Dog*, which builds its narrative on what are deemed to be "socially significant events" (Tyson 1999:156). Specifically, the book draws the readers' critical gaze towards the increased feminisation of poverty and survival, shedding light on the way women are forced to struggle with diminished work opportunities, marked only by a dramatic growth in devalourised and flexible part-time or temporary jobs that severely affect their chances of survival as well as those of their children and other dependent family members. For this reason, the novel introduces the intertwined story of a mother and daughter, with the child protagonist functioning as the main focaliser. The re-invention of the mother-daughter dyad and its insertion into children's literature, as pointed out by Hillary S. Crew in her seminal work *Is It Really Mommie Dearest?*, functions as a ground-breaking literary device. Rather than suppressing or absenting the parent figure, which is a traditional paradigm still found in mainstream children's literature, O'Connor's narrative also foregrounds the importance and significance of a mother-daughter relationship, thus assigning value to co-operation and attachment, while still providing "literary experiences" and "agency" for the child protagonist (Crew 2000:13). Formerly obscured but now resuscitated and re-instituted mother-daughter relationships in contemporary children's literature are important as a form of social setting, for it is within them that young girl

protagonists encounter and learn to “contend with the intertwined issues of power and gender” (Crew 2000:4).

Even if O’Connor’s story is not told from the subject position of the mother, she remains an important presence. Her voice is “not absented, suppressed or objectified” (Crew 2000:25), as a result of which her social reality and the hardships she faces cannot be avoided or entirely evaded by the girl protagonist either. Her mother’s reality affects her too and the hardships her mother undergoes are seen reflected in her own mind. According to Maria Nikolajeva, such a narrative strategy, where the events are reconstructed, commented upon and filtered through the child’s insightful or naive perception before they are “released to the reader”, results in the creation of “subjective realism” (1998:229), which in children’s literature represents a significant break away from an adult, authoritarian narrator and consequently from didacticism. At the same time it also signifies the onset of a narrative which places emphasis upon the child being steeped in a very concrete reality that inevitably rests on an exploration of its “socio-political and psychological ramifications” (Zipes 1990:7)

Literary text as a political intervention

How to Steal a Dog opens with the father suddenly walking out on the family and a young girl, Georgina, and her family being evicted from a flat, as they can no longer afford to pay the rent. Plunged into abject poverty and struggling with homelessness, the mother and her children live in a car, wash in public restrooms and stave off hunger by feeding on junk food and scraps of left-over restaurant food. In one of the descriptions of her miserable existence, which points to the lack of a supportive social net in a society of ever more competitive, atomised and alienated individuals, the girl

protagonist studies her face “in the mirror of the bathroom at McDonald’s” and comments on her poverty in the following way:

My hair hung in greasy clumps on my forehead. Creases from the crumpled-up clothes I had slept on were still etched in the side of my face. I rubbed my hands together under the water and ran my wet fingers through my hair. Then I used paper towels to scrub my face and arms. The rough brown paper left my skin red and scratched (O’Connor 2007:47).

The mother, meanwhile, takes on two minimum-wage jobs, which is all she can get, and puts in extra hours working late into the evening. Yet in spite of her efforts and her increasing exhaustion, she cannot make ends meet, let alone save enough money to put down a deposit on a new flat. Her meagre savings are all too easily eroded by unexpected maintenance and other costs necessary to keep the essentials of life in place. To ease her mother’s stress and help her raise the money needed to secure some accommodation, the girl devises a plan to steal a dog. She hopes she will be able to collect the reward money once the dog is returned to its owner. She carries out the deed, but wrestles with her conscience and eventually restores the dog to its rightful and loving owner without claiming the reward money. In the end, the family move in with a woman the mother meets through her work, with whom they start to share a house – “a tiny white house with a rusty swing set in the red-dirt yard and a refrigerator with no door sitting right up on the front porch” (O’Connor 2007:47) – and help to take care of her baby and contribute to the rent. Together these two women, who keep several jobs going between them in order to scrape a living, create a makeshift community. This helps them to fight poverty more effectively, but they can never really overcome it as they

still belong to the newly-created and structurally abandoned underclass or, in Sassen's words, "serving class" (2000:510).

It is thus no accident in *How to Steal a Dog* that Georgina's mother is forced to take on two part-time, low-skilled and underpaid service jobs and work long hours in order to be able to afford to make basic provision for herself and her children. As noted by Peterson, in the North neoliberal globalisation has brought about a "shift away from material and labour-intensive production to information and knowledge intensive production" (Peterson 2003:52). This has led to the downgrading of manufacturing, but also to a rapid expansion and reconfiguration of the service sector. Knowledge-based production has put in place a new hierarchical division of labour and skill evaluation, which can be witnessed, for example, in a sharp income polarisation between overvalued "skilled and high waged professional-managerial jobs" in the banking, insurance, legal, health and education services and devalued "semi-, unskilled and poorly paid jobs" (Peterson 2003:52) in telemarketing, data processing, bank telling, cleaning, laundering, food production and retail. While the upper tier of information- and knowledge-intensive production such as software development is occupied by elite male professionals with access to education and additional training, a phenomenon Chang and Ling call "technomuscular capitalism", it is women who are disproportionately channelled into devalued and low-paid, labour-intensive service jobs, a phenomenon Chang and Ling characterise as "a regime of labour intimacy" (quoted in Pettman 2003:160).

Disproportionately locked into deskilled, low-wage and devalued routine jobs in the service sector, women have once again been marginalised and invisibilised as capitalism's "other". This time, however, there is a crucial distinction. What were formerly mostly full-time, salaried, and protected jobs in the service sector – which offered liveable wages and

upward, although restricted, mobility – have been replaced by flexibilised and casualised part-time jobs. These do not pay sufficient wages to support either oneself or family dependents, which in turn forces women to seek multiple part-time jobs in order to generate sufficient family income. This, however, can be a feat that a multiple part-time job-holder, who usually has to travel long distances between one workplace and another, may not necessarily be able to achieve in spite of monumental efforts, precisely because her combined meagre earnings can still easily fall short of a subsistence wage. In the novel, in order to support herself and her children, Georgina's mother is holding down two part-time and inevitably precarious jobs at the poorly-paid end of the service sector. As she toils away and is rewarded with a mere pittance, she has to endure difficult and hazardous working conditions. Working hard for low wages in what is also unstable and unprotected part-time work, Georgina's mother still cannot cover even her most basic expenses, a situation her children do not appreciate:

Her voice started getting louder until she was hollering again. "You think all I got to do is snap my fingers and bingo!" She pounded on top of the car. "THERE'S the rent and there's the deposit and THERE'S the gas for the car," she yelled. "And snap, there's electricity and water and phone. Not to mention food and clothes and doctors and STUFF. She kicked the car when she yelled the word "stuff" (O'Connor 2007:44).

The gravity of their financial situation is further compounded by the fact that, as a part-time worker, Georgina's mother can easily be laid off. Part-time workers are constituted as a reserve army of flexibilised and non-unionised labour and are consequently subject to little or no job protection, and often poor work safety and employment standards. One day, Georgina's

mother is indeed fired from the dry cleaners, and she bitterly complains that it was ‘cause I was late once or twice’ after having to drive the children to school or ‘cause I don’t use that pressing machine fast enough’ (O’Connor 2007:58). The pressure to secure a minimum income while having to persevere at multiple underpaid part-time jobs constitutes a source of permanent stress for women and takes a heavy toll on their health and overall well-being. Georgina, too, can’t help but notice “how her mother’s blue jeans h[ang] all baggy, dragging on the asphalt parking lot as she walk[s]” and how “she [is] getting skinnier” by the day (O’Connor 2007:48). Just as significantly, as a part-time worker, Georgina’s mother is compelled to work long and irregular hours, usually with no fixed daytime schedule. So it is often “way past dark” when Georgina can hear “Mama’s shoes click-clacking on the asphalt as she [makes] her way toward the car” (O’Connor 2007:8) her face “tired” and “worried” (O’Connor 2007:69). The novel thus demonstrates that as a part of neoliberal restructuring, women have been re-hired under new conditions of employment and pushed into the gender-segregated labour market of increasingly part-time and dead-end jobs in the expanding service and communications sector, which drastically reduces their earnings while requiring them to put in the same or even greater amounts of work.

Under the gendered regimes of global capital, women are being systematically confined to increasingly deskilled and insecure as well as decentralised and flexibilised part-time and temporary jobs that do not offer sustainable or liveable wages. Yet at the same time, and in the face of alarming cuts in state social provisions and welfare programs promoted by conservative neoliberal agendas, women are culturally expected to keep their households going and secure the survival of their family members at all costs. Cutbacks in social welfare provision also mean that eventually “social

services are shifted from the paid to the unpaid labor of women” (Peterson 2007:72). The burden of social reproduction and caring work is transferred from the public to the private sphere, which steps up the pressure for all women regardless of their class differentiation, resulting in intensification of women’s invisible domestic and care work. As women are forced to take up the burden of care in the wake of dismantled social networks, they are simultaneously left stranded to cope on their own under increasingly deteriorating economic and working conditions.

This is the grim fate Georgina’s mother too has to face. Working the long and “segmented and irregular hours associated with part-time work” and lacking accessible childcare (Caragata 2003:564-565), Georgina’s mother struggles to get by. Sometimes she is forced to leave her children to take care of themselves; on other occasions she takes her younger child to work with her. Doing two part-time jobs, working late into the night and struggling with lack of sleep while trying to fit in a myriad of domestic and child caring tasks makes for an impossible schedule. Georgina’s mother is dismissed from her morning part-time job for arriving late “once or twice” (O’Connor 2007:58) and is in no position to complain. Neoliberal agendas promote a retrenchment of social services in favour of their privatisation and, as pointed out by Peterson, insist on the construction of individuals as entirely self-sufficient and therefore in no need of public assistance, regardless of their actual social circumstances and structural deprivation (2003:158). In this way, as noted by Caragata, social issues are being deliberately and increasingly “individualized and personalized so that they become problems resulting from personal deficit and pathology rather than seen to be effects of marginalization from both social and economic life” (Caragata 2003:570).

Thus, what in Georgina’s mother’s case should be also acknowledged as a “public responsibility for child care” is “translated into a personal and

individual problem for the mother”, who thus merely undergoes “a personal crisis” while the severity of “the public issue fades from view” (Caragata 2003:571). Once the negative outcomes that neoliberal reforms have for the already marginalised and disempowered are given an individual twist and interpreted as their own personal problem, the people affected, such as Georgina’s mother, are effectively silenced and rendered isolated in their economic plight. Georgina’s mother cannot escape this kind of labelling or the fate that originates from her deepened structural marginalisation. Left to struggle on her own and against all the odds, she is pushed further to the margins of society and effectively excluded from it. Her poverty and endless struggle to make a decent living, her increased domestic workload and the long working hours she puts in, in exchange for the meagre pay a part-time job will yield are rendered invisible.

Conclusion

By making use of such contextual readings as these, critical feminist pedagogy can direct students’ attention to the way new economic arrangements and their accompanying socio-political systems feed on gendered and other structurally intertwined inequalities, which they also deepen and exacerbate. It is exactly at such a juncture that sharing disruptive texts of contemporary realistic fiction with young readers can play an important part in helping them to develop critical literacies that are based on an understanding of how such binaries and related assumptions are constructed. In O’Connor’s novel *Georgina’s mother* stands for a wider group of women in a similar situation. Her abject poverty is a structural feature and the end result of neo-liberal policies that worsen the already low status of women in the segregated capital-driven labour market. A novel like this, which obviously focuses on significant social events by keeping the

mother-daughter relationship in full view, can be instrumental in fostering critical literacy. It can help young readers to explore and question unjust social arrangements by connecting the issues, such as those of poverty and gender, raised in the fictional world to the social realities and deprivations of their own everyday life.

This can be conducive to the realisation that the reasons for our own systematic poverty and gender injustices do not stem from our own character deficiencies or personal limitations, as the official discourse of neoliberal self-blame would have it, but lie in the structurally entrenched inequalities and stratifications maintained and naturalised by the existing socio-economic arrangements and their accompanying ideologies. Barbara O'Connor's novel works towards this end by making visible the newly created identity positions global capitalism has put in place for adult women and women-to-be. The novel shows that the new economy worsens the already precarious position of women in the labour market and in their own households by flexibilising the increasingly cheapened or feminised labour force and constituting it as an "invisible and disempowered class of workers" (Sassen 1998:91). On the whole, economic restructurings have culminated in the so-called "structural abandonment" of women, worsening their poverty and contributing to their exclusion from the public sphere. All of this is not only reflected but also succinctly illustrated in Barbara O'Connor's novel.

Engaging readers in a dialogue with each other on the basis of extended text analysis and inviting them to relate their own experiences and responses to the wider social patterns of their immediate environment can be highly productive in heightening young adults' awareness of the social issues and power relations that frame their social realities, define and limit the possibilities of their becoming, and consequently have repercussions for their daily lives. Feminist critical pedagogy that uses interventionist literature to

foster critical literacy can therefore function as “a catalyst”, which on the one hand, according to Tyson, enables youngsters and teenagers to “gather information from their worlds, the world around them, [in order to] construct [...] meanings that extend [...] their understanding, responses and participation”, while simultaneously also enabling young readers to “develop and enhance the capacity to locate themselves in their socio-political places and spaces” (1999:158). This kind of “conscientisation” is one of the possible strategies for addressing and challenging notions of gender and poverty and the first step towards facilitating and “develop[ing] a critical framework for personal, communal and civic social action” (Tyson 1999:158–159).

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**Through the Lens of Gender. Sites of
Gendered Representation and Discourse**

**IS IT A HE OR A SHE?
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ITALIAN TRANSLATIONS OF
OSCAR WILDE'S STORIES FOR CHILDREN**

ROWENA COLES

Urbino University

Abstract: This paper examines how the gender of personification is affected in Italian translations of Oscar Wilde's children's stories. It shows how the conflict between natural and grammatical gender may be problematic for the translator and reveals how Italian children, who believe they are reading a text identical to the original, are in fact reading a somewhat different story.

Key words: gender personification, natural/ grammatical, translation

Introduction

This paper examines nine Italian translations of the collection *The Happy Prince and Other Stories* by Oscar Wilde, first published in England in 1888. It looks in particular at how gender in personification is affected by the translation process. The characters in these stories are frequently animals, inanimate objects or natural phenomena that have been personified, a common characteristic of stories for children. The conflict between the English and Italian language systems in the translations of personification will be discussed. What is surprising, however, is not so much that this conflict exists, but that it is rarely openly acknowledged by Wilde's Italian translators. In fact in only one of the translations (translation no. 3) does the translator note the fact that they are changing the gender of personified characters. Consequently, the child readers are led to believe that they are reading a story where the characters are gendered as they were gendered in the original, although this is frequently not the case.

Before proceeding with the analysis, some consideration must be given to the two language systems in question – English and Italian. English is a natural gender language, while Italian is a grammatical gender language. In a natural gender language, gender is attributed not by form but by meaning. This means that, for example,

nouns that English speakers refer to as 'she' are in fact biologically feminine in the real world. (Romaine 1999:73)

On the other hand, in grammatical gender languages, such as Italian, gender is an inherent, context-independent property of every noun. Thus in Italian, all nouns belong to one of two classes (masculine and feminine)

according to their form. A noun's form will determine the way the word will behave grammatically as regards the agreement of adjectives, articles, pronouns and participles.

In natural gender languages such as English, the use of the personal pronouns 'he' 'she' referring to nouns denoting animals, plants or inanimate objects instead of the neuter 'it' is stylistically expressive and deviant from the norm and may thus be considered marked language usage. By contrast, the gendering of inanimate objects and animals in grammatically gendered languages, such as Italian, is the norm and therefore unmarked language usage. So in English, awarding gender to neutral gendered entities is an attention-attracting phenomenon which creates a certain psychological effect, as Jespersen (1961:213) points out:

the use of he/she in speaking to inanimate things always implies a strong personal feeling of affection.

It is a process of 'upgrading', as Bell (2006:234) notes:

English is a language that has lost grammatical gender [...]. This is not a problem that arises with great frequency, but it is more likely to present itself in a children's book than elsewhere, because children's fiction is especially likely to contain personifications or anthropomorphized animals.

And once an animal fable of fantasy, or a personified natural phenomenon [...] has been given human characteristics, or speech, or simply enough identity to make it an important character in the story, it very likely requires (in English) a pronoun more personal than just 'it'.

And Quirk (1985: 341) comments:

The choice between a personal and impersonal gender is determined primarily by whether the reference is to a 'person', i.e. to a being that is felt to possess characteristics associated with a member of the human race.

However, grammatical gender may not be the empty category it was formerly thought to be. Recent studies have shown that grammatical gendering does in fact seem to influence our way of considering natural gender. Italian psychologists Belacchi and Cubelli (submitted) have found that:

In classifying animals as male or female, Italian speaking participants are influenced by the grammatical gender of their names. [...] Both adults and pre-school children tended to classify as males animals with masculine names and as females animals with feminine names.

Moreover, Konishi (1993) and Tawmoski-Ryck and Verluyten (1982) claim that the grammatical gender of nouns becomes part of the conceptual representation of the objects they refer to, thus determining the way such objects are thought of. Konishi (*ibidem*: 531) states:

A study of the use of human pronouns for non-human antecedents in children's literature revealed the underlying attitude towards the referent as well as its attributes affected the choice of pronoun.

So it may be supposed that if, for example, a character in Wilde's stories is masculine gender in translation, it will be conceived by an Italian child reader as having the typical characteristics and behavioural modes of a male, and if translated into the feminine gender, then it will be conceived as having the typical characteristics and behavioural modes of a female.

We shall now see how personification has been affected in the translations of 'The Happy Prince' and 'The Nightingale and the Rose'.

Although, for reasons of space, only these two stories will be examined, they are representative of the whole collection.

The Happy Prince

‘The Happy Prince’ tells the story of a statue of a Prince who, when alive, lived selfishly inside his palace, ignoring his people’s plight, but once he became a statue, saw all the poverty and suffering around him. One day a swallow lands on the statue and a deep bond is forged when the swallow agrees to help the poor on behalf of the Prince. The story ends with the death of the Swallow and the melting down of the statue.

The Swallow is personified as male in the original, a choice obviously made in consideration of the type of behaviour and the social role that Wilde assigns to the character. We must remember, as already stated, that the assigning of a personal pronoun (he/she) to an entity usually referred to by the neutral ‘it’ will automatically identify the character with a biological sex and therefore with the behaviour associated with that sex. In his study, Konishi (1993:531) found that:

Gender stereotypes played a role in the choice of he vs. she, since antecedents of ‘he’ tended to be strong, active, brave, wise and clever, whereas antecedents of ‘she’ tended to be weak, passive and foolish.

With reference to such traits, Wales (1996:148) describes as stereotypical manly attributes: strong, active, aggressive, powerful, clever, big, fierce and stereotypical womanly attributes: weak, timid, passive, loving, soft, helpful, beautiful, small etc., and indeed the Swallow’s behaviour corresponds to a certain stereotype of ‘masculinity’. The Swallow is introduced as follows:

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

The male gender of the Swallow is immediately established by linguistic means through the personal possessive ‘his’ and pronoun ‘he’, but it is already clear from these first few lines that he also exhibits male-like behaviour. In fact, the story of the Swallow’s love for the Reed (a story within the story) is revealing in this regard. We see that the Swallow is attracted by the Reed’s physical and typically feminine ‘assets’: she is “beautiful” and has a “slender waist”. The Swallow soon reveals himself to be the dominating partner in the courtship:

‘Shall I love you?’ said the Swallow, who liked to come to the point at once,

while the female Reed is the submissive partner:

[...] and the Reed made him a low bow.

During their courtship, the Swallow shows off his prowess in a very masculine way:

So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples.

He eventually tires of the Reed for two reasons. One is her passiveness:

‘She has no conversation,’ he said.

and the second, a vein of jealousy:

[...] and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind.

Again the dominance of man over woman is revealed in the Swallow's final observation as to why his love ended: although he admires the Reed's domestic inclinations, he disapproves of her unwillingness to submit to his wishes.

I admit that she is domestic, he continued, but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love travelling also.

So even before the main story really begins, we find the portrait of a character who is characteristically male, clearly identified not just by grammatical gender markers but also by his behavioural traits. As the story proper unfolds, the Swallow displays other traits of character frequently associated with male stereotypes, such as:

i) independence of spirit:

Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. 'You are blind now,' he said, 'so I will stay with you always.'

ii) self-importance:

'I am waited for in Egypt' / Wherever he went the Sparrows chirruped, and said to each other, 'What a distinguished stranger!' so he enjoyed himself very much.

iii) pride in own physical prowess:

I come of a family famous for its agility. / They never hit me of course.

iv) courageous and heroic:

'It is not to Egypt that I am going,' said the Swallow. 'I am going to the House of Death.' / The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince, he loved him too well.

Yet, despite this clear identification by Wilde of the Swallow as a character of natural male gender, in all but one of the Italian translations, the Swallow is personified as female ('la Rondine'), mirroring the feminine grammatical gender in Italian, while the Reed is personified as male ('il Giunco'), mirroring the Italian masculine grammatical gender. Moreover, in apparent contradiction with this different gender assignment, two translations (nos 2 and 5) still refer to the (now female) Swallow as being attracted by the (now male) Reed's slender waist ("vita sottile"), a typically feminine rather than masculine attribute. In translation no. 5), there is even greater confusion of roles, for the Swallow is female - la Rondine (fem.), but so is the Reed - la Canna (fem.):

ed era rimasta (ref. La Rondine, f.) talmente affascinata dalla sua vita sottile che si era fermata a parlare con lei. (back translation: and was (ref. the Swallow) so fascinated by her thin/slender waist that she had stopped to talk to her.)

The Italian child reader will be even more confused when s/he reads in Italian that the female Swallow had hoped to have a wife rather than a husband!

ma a me (ref. La Rondine, f.) piace viaggiare, e quindi dovrebbe piacere anche a mia moglie. (back translation: 'but I (ref. the Swallow) love travelling and my wife should love it too.')

Only the translator of translation no. 3 states openly, in a note to the reader, that he has changed the Swallow's gender. The note reads:

Il lettore tenga presente che, essendo la parola 'rondine' nel testo inglese di genere maschile, si crea una situazione di particolari corrispondenze, nel rapporto

rondine-principe, che la traduzione non può rendere (se non ricorrendo alla lezione “rondinotto”, esteticamente sconsigliabile).” (N.d.T.)

(my translation: The reader must keep in mind that, because the word ‘Swallow’ is of male gender in the English text, a situation of unusual relations is created in the Swallow/Prince relationship that the translation cannot render (or only if the word ‘rondinotto’ (my note: masculine grammatical gender) is used, aesthetically unadvisable.) (Translator’s note)

The translator refers to the ‘word’ Swallow as being of male gender, where it is in fact the *character* who is personified as male, not the word itself. He refers to the relationship between the Swallow and the Prince as one of “particolari corrispondenze” (unusual relations), showing his awareness that the man-to-man relationship of the original is ‘special’. However, although the translator declares his awareness of this ‘special relationship’ in the original, he falls into contradiction in his translation by ‘normalising’ the relationship into one between a male (“Il Principe”: the Prince) and a female (“La Rondine”: the Swallow). He states that the reason for not using the term “Rondinotto”, which would have respected the original male gender chosen by Wilde, is ‘aesthetic’, but Italian dictionaries give “rondinotto” (masc.) as a diminutive of “Rondine”, showing that “rondinotto” is in fact accepted in Italian as standard use. Supporting this stance is a correspondence in February 2011 between the present author and Roberto Piumini, who wrote an adaptation of ‘The Happy Prince’ in Italian in 2010. Piumini, in answer to the question as to why he had chosen to use the term “rondinotto (m.)”, replied:

la scelta di “rondinotto” nella mia riduzione del Principe Felice è avvenuta soltanto per “simpatia fonetica”: la parola mi sembrava più giocosa e confidenziale di “rondine.”

(the choice of “rondinotto” in my adaptation of *The Happy Prince* came about only for reasons of “phonetic attraction”: the word seemed to me to be more playful and familiar than ‘rondine’.) (my translation)

So it is clear that this author, by contrast with translator no. 3, finds the term “rondinotto” quite acceptable.

Only in translation no. 9 is the Swallow gendered male and the Reed female. The translator chooses to use a diminutive of *rondine*: “Rondinino”. The suffix “-ino” is an Italian diminutive which can transform a word into either masculine (-ino) or feminine (-ina). The addition of this suffix has enabled the translator to respect the male gender of the Swallow and the female gender of the Reed, showing that it is, in fact, possible to overcome the obstacle posed by grammatical gender in translating personified characters. We thus read:

Una notte un rondinino sorvolò la città. I suoi amici erano partiti per l’Egitto ... ma lui era rimasto indietro perché si era innamorato d’una bellissima femminuccia della famiglia dei verdoni.

(back transl. One night a little swallow flew over the town. His friends had left for Egypt [...] but he had stayed behind because he had fallen in love with a most beautiful girl of the reed family.

This version seems more faithful to the original. However, the original gender that Wilde chose for his characters, with their specific sexual and social roles and corresponding behaviour patterns, seems not to have been taken into proper consideration by the majority of the translators under study.

The Nightingale and the Rose

In this story, a student falls in love with a professor's daughter who refuses to dance with him at the prince's ball unless he can find a red rose for her to wear. The student cannot find a red rose, but when the nightingale hears of his sorrow, she is moved by his predicament and decides to tinge a rose red with her own blood and thus sacrifice herself for the cause of love. Wilde is writing about a sacrifice made for the sake of love, but this time the protagonist is female, corresponding to more traditional canons where a member of the fairer sex sacrifices herself for love.

In the original the Nightingale is immediately introduced as female:

From her nest in the holm-oak, the Nightingale heard
him (ref: the student) and she looked out [...]

Wilde draws particular attention to the femininity of the Nightingale when he describes her act of self-sacrifice. To explain this focusing, we must first consider the use of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives in English, which differs from that in Italian. Firstly, English, being an uninflected language, makes constant, unmarked use of subject personal pronouns, distinguished in the 3rd person singular according to natural, biological gender (he/she) or neuter gender (it), whilst Italian does not normally make subject pronouns explicit, for example 'she sang' vs. 'cantò'. Secondly, his/her indicate the gender of the person who possesses, not the gender of the objects possessed as in Italian, eg. "from *her* nest" ("her" indicating that the person who 'owns' the nest is of female sex) vs. "dal *suo* nido" ("suo" m. agreeing with "nido" m.) Thirdly, English constantly uses possessive adjectives when referring to parts of the body, whereas Italian does not, except in marked circumstances, e.g. *her* heart vs. *il cuore*. Therefore in the passages describing the Nightingale's body there is inevitably, due to the differences in the language systems described above, more frequent use of

possessive adjectives in the original text than in the Italian translations. But over and above this constriction of language code, Wilde has foregrounded the Nightingale's femininity through marked repetition of phrases containing feminine identifiers (she/her). With regard to foregrounding, Douthwaite (2000:110) gives the following definition:

Foregrounding may be seen as any linguistic element sticking out because of its strangeness against a background of routine, ordinary language use.

The following passage illustrates how Wilde constantly reminds the child reader of the Nightingale's female condition precisely through the foregrounding of the feminine gender markers. The seven gender markers are in italics:

And when the moon shone in the heavens the nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set *her* breast against the thorn. All night long *she* sang, with *her* breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long *she* sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into *her* breast, and *her* life-blood ebbed away from *her*.

In order to better appreciate this foregrounding of the Nightingale's femininity, the original passage can be compared to its 'unforegrounded' version, which contains only 3 gender markers:

And when the moon shone in the heavens the nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set *her* breast against the thorn. All night long *she* sang and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. The thorn went deeper and deeper, and *her* life-blood ebbed away.

By contrast, in all but one of the Italian translations examined the nightingale is personified as male, following the grammatical gender (masculine) of the Italian noun "usignolo". Here is how one translator (no, 1)

presents the same passage describing the Nightingale's ultimate sacrifice (in brackets in the back translation are the pronouns and possessives which are implicit in Italian):

Ma quando sorse la Luna splendette nei cieli l'Usignolo volò al roseto e mise il petto contro la spina. Tutta la notte cantò col petto contro la spina e la fredda luna di cristallo si chinò ed ascoltò. Tutta la notte cantò e la spina gli penetrò sempre più profondamente nel petto e il sangue vitale riflù da lui.

(Back transl. But when the Moon rose in the skies, the Nightingale flew onto the rose-tree and set (his) breast against the thorn. All the night (he) sang with (his) breast against the thorn and the Moon of cold crystal turned downwards and listened. All the night the Nightingale sang and the thorn entered (his) breast more deeply until (his) vital blood flowed away from him.)

The Italian Nightingale, now a "man", is clearly a different character. In the following example, more than one gender role is reversed. In fact the original text's image of the large, strong figure of a man (the holm-oak) protecting a fragile woman (the nightingale):

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for *he* was very fond of the nightingale who had built *her* nest in *his* branches.

is converted in the translations into a woman ('la quercia') who offers hospitality to the fragile man ('l'usignolo'):

Ma la quercia capì, e si rattristò, perché amava assai il piccolo Usignolo che si era costruito il nido fra i suoi rami.

(back transl. But the oak (fem.) understood, and grew sad, because she so loved the little nightingale (masc.) who had built his nest among her branches.)

Again only translation no. 3 has translator's notes. We find here the following statement:

Anche in questa novella, come ne “Il Principe Felice”, la traduzione non può riproporre fedelmente il testo: il genere della parola Nightingale, nel testo inglese femminile, è reso, in italiano, al maschile (essendo improponibile la lezione “usignola” o “usignoletta”). Si deve comunque ricordare – e questo è il significato della nota – che a compiere il sacrificio è nella storia una creatura di sesso femminile. (N.d.T.)

(back transl. In this story too, as in ‘The Happy Prince’, the translation is not able to re-propose the text faithfully: the gender of the word ‘Nightingale’, in the English text, is changed in Italian into masculine (as the terms ‘usignola’ and ‘usignoletta’ are unacceptable). It must however be remembered – and this is the meaning of the note – that in the story it is a creature of female sex who makes the sacrifice.)

Once more we see that the translator speaks of the ‘gender’ of the word as being female rather than explaining that it was the original author’s choice to endow the nightingale with feminine attributes. And once again, the translator does not explain why, arbitrarily, he has decided that the feminine form ‘usignola’ and the diminutive ‘usignoletta’ cannot be used, due to their being ‘unacceptable’. The translator even advises his reader to ‘remember’ that although in his translation the Nightingale is male, it was female in the original. At this point a question naturally arises. Will this act of ‘remembering’ have any effect on the image that the Italian child reader has formed in his mind? It is doubtful. And if it does have an effect, it may just be one of confusion – a nightingale that has been declared to be female becoming, apparently without reason, male.

A different solution is proposed in translation no. 9, which, by using the term “usignoletta”, keeps the female gender of the Nightingale. The diminutive suffix “-etta” as commonly used in Italian has endearing connotations, displaying a positive attitude towards the person. This

translator remains faithful to the original personification and, in doing so, does not consider, as translator no. 3 does, that the diminutive term is ‘unacceptable’. This term is not the only one used by translator no. 9 in reference to the Nightingale. In fact he introduces the nightingale as “femminuccia dell’usignolo” (back translation: the female of the nightingale). This expression, however, is somewhat cumbersome and in fact is only used this once, in an obvious attempt by the translator to underline the gender he wishes to give the Nightingale. In further support of this gender underlining is the feminine marked adjective “curiosa” (curious) in an explanation that is not found in the original, already quoted on a previous page:

Dal suo nido sull’agrifoglio la femminuccia dell’usignolo lo udì, e curiosa, si sorse a guardare di tra le foglie.” (back transl.: From her nest in the ivy the female of the nightingale heard it, and curious, leant out to look through the leaves.)

Again with reference to the terms used by this particular translator to refer to the nightingale, he alternates ‘usignoletta’ with ‘uccellino’. The latter, meaning ‘little bird’, is a generic term and grammatically masculine. In Italian, the masculine gender can be either exclusively masculine or a generic term that includes both male and female species (epicene). However, the translator has already clearly communicated to the reader the female gender of the bird in the text by the time he uses ‘uccellino’, often associating an adjective with a feminine ending (-a) with this more generic epicene. For example:

Ecco finalmente un vero innamorato” disse l’uccellino. “Una notte dopo l’altra sono andata (my note: feminine ending) cantando per lui pur senza conoscerlo [...]

(back transl: Here is a person really in love at last” said the little bird. “Night after night I have gone to sing for him without knowing him.)

This translation shows that the difference in language codes is not necessarily an obstacle to respecting the personification created in the original text.

In conclusion, Wilde has chosen in this story to personify the main protagonist according to the more traditional canons of womanhood. His Nightingale is a female who is attentive to love’s cry, who submits to a man’s selfish desires, and who is willing to kill herself as a supreme homage to love. By contrast, in all the translations but one, it is a male nightingale who assumes this role and who sacrifices his life for love by setting his breast against the thorn.

Conclusion

Isobel Murray, the editor of *Oscar Wilde’s Complete Shorter Fiction*, notes that although critics have tended to neglect Wilde’s fairy tales and stories these have sold in their millions. They have been dramatised, made into films for cinema and television, adapted for radio and CDs, transformed into cartoons, made into opera, into ballets, into mime plays and, last but not least, translated over and over again into many languages. And in the introduction to his translation (no. 1) of Wilde’s stories, Masolino D’Amico observes:

queste storie di cui è ormai impossibile contare le ristampe e le traduzioni in tutte le lingue. (these stories of which it is now impossible to count the reprints and translations in all languages; my translation)

In this scenario, there is a huge number of Italian translations, both past and present, of Wilde's stories for children on the market today, including several school editions which make the stories readily available to Italian-speaking children. This paper has attempted to understand exactly what text children are given in Italian, looking in particular at the question of gender in personification.

There has been space here to describe only a few examples of how translators have faced the problem, but these examples reflect the general pattern followed by the translators. This pattern reveals that most translators tend to use the grammatical gender imposed by the Italian language code for the animals or entities personified, even when this clashes with the gender chosen originally by Wilde. It may be argued that because gender is unmarked in reference to animals or entities in grammatically gendered languages such as Italian, but marked in natural gender languages such as English, it is difficult to produce equivalence in translation. It may also be argued that grammatical gender does not influence our thinking with regard to natural gender. However, as has been shown, several studies have proved that grammatical gender does in fact influence categorisation of natural gender. So we may assume that inanimate entities and animals personified in Italian will assume the characteristics of the gender assigned by the grammar of the language.

Our study has shown that, with specific regard to gender, translators seem to have produced a translation driven by form rather than meaning. Assigning gender to a personified character in English depends on the role in

the story that the writer wants to give that character. It is therefore necessary for the translator to reflect on the reasons why a particular gender has been given to an animal or entity before deciding which gender to choose in the translation. Such an evaluation should be made by considering the role and consequent behaviour that the character has in the story. In sum, the gender chosen in translation must be credible for the coherence of the story.

If, however, a change is made during the translation process in the gender of personified characters, then the reader, or in the case of school editions the teacher, should at least be informed of the change. It is, to say the least, disconcerting to find that only one of the collections examined has any translator's notes.

It has been seen that these translations of Wilde's classic stories are presented as if they were the originals, even though the text in Italian has undergone quite radical adaptation through gender changes. This phenomenon of presenting a text as if it were the original itself is indeed true of most Italian translations of children's literature. In this regard, Puurtinen (1994:83) claims:

Translations of children's books are often not even conceived of as translations but more as genuine members, operating like originals, in the target literary system.

Consequently, translators of children's stories have traditionally been more invisible than other types of translators. Riitta Oittinen (2000: 6) hopes that this will change:

the translator for children, too, should be clearly visible; and that the translator, by being loyal to the reader of the translation may be loyal to the author of the original.

In conclusion, by being loyal to gender in the specific question of personification, translators of children's stories will show more loyalty towards the author's creative scheme and present to the Italian child reader a story which more faithfully reflects the original.

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**THE ROLE OF GENDER IN VERBAL DISAGREEMENT:
A STUDY OF DISAGREEMENT STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY
HUNGARIAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

HELGA VANDA KOCZOGH

Department of English Linguistics, University of Debrecen

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to present the results of a study on the interplay of gender and disagreement strategies employed by Hungarian undergraduate students. The data for analysis is a corpus of oral face-to-face dyadic interactions; the methodology makes use of both qualitative and quantitative tools and involves identifying disagreement strategies on the basis of previous research as well as patterns emerging from the corpus. The results of the study contradict previous claims that in comparison to men, women disagree less frequently and, when they do disagree, they employ less direct strategies.

Keywords: disagreement strategies, gender differences, Hungarian, im/politeness, sociopragmatics

1. Introduction

In the past few decades, there has been an increasing interest in conflict talk in several different fields, e.g. psychology, philosophy, sociology, and linguistics. Despite an extensive body of research into conflict in the social sciences in comparison to conflict talk, the study of disagreement *per se* within conflict episodes and its features is relatively recent. In

linguistics, disagreement has been investigated within the frameworks of speech act theory (Sornig 1977), politeness theory (Holtgraves 1997), conversational analysis (Kotthoff 1993; Pomerantz 1984; Sacks 1987), discourse analysis (Georgakopoulou 2001; Kakavá 1995; Schiffrin 1985), relevance theory (Locher 2004), and even social psychological pragmatics (Muntigl and Turnbull 1998). The growing popularity of disagreement as a research subject among linguists can be attributed to the following factors: disagreement is one of the most commonly occurring speech events in everyday interactions; it has a complex nature; and it raises the widely-researched issues of im/politeness and in/appropriateness.

Another area of research which has received increasing attention over the past 40 years is the interplay of language and gender. Robin Lakoff's (1975) pioneering book, *Language and Woman's Place*, inspired innumerable studies seeking to disentangle the complex interaction between gender and communication by examining the linguistic practices of men and women.

While numerous studies have been undertaken in the two above-mentioned fields separately, so far there has been limited research on the relationship between gender and disagreements. Furthermore, these studies tend to focus on one gender exclusively and they predominantly investigate the linguistic manifestation of disagreement, ignoring its functional spectrum. Moreover, to my best knowledge, research to date on disagreement has not been carried out in Hungarian.

Hence, there remains a need to remedy these gaps observed in the literature. The aim of my paper is, thus, twofold: (1) to identify the disagreement strategies employed by Hungarian undergraduate students and (2) to examine the effect of the gender of the speaker on the expression of

verbal disagreement both in terms of frequency of use and the particular strategies utilized.

2. Theoretical foundations

2.1. Defining disagreement

There has been a great deal of variation in the literature in the way in which the term *disagreement* has been used (cf. Koczogh 2011). In my definition *verbal disagreement* is a speech act expressing the speaker's opinion or belief, whose illocutionary force is partly or fully inconsistent with that of the previous speaker's utterance. It is important to note two things here:

(1) Disagreement is interpreted here as a speech act, so the truth value of the first speaker's (S1) utterance and that of the second speaker's utterance (S2) do not have to be in contrast with each other. This point is illustrated by Example 1 (disagreement is indicated by an arrow):

Example 1

Two tourists are talking about S2's itinerary:

S1 So, are you going to visit The Big Apple tomorrow?

→S2 No, I'm going to New York City.

S2's utterance is defined as an act of disagreement, even though the propositional contents of the two utterances are not opposite to each other, since S2 lacks the world knowledge that The Big Apple is a nickname for New York City and believes that they are talking about two different entities.

(2) Analysing the speaker's belief is always problematic, as it is hard or in some cases even impossible to access. S2's utterance, however, does not always have to mirror the speaker's belief, as it can be a joke or teasing and still count as an act of disagreement. For instance, in Example 2, the

illocutionary force of S2's utterance is disagreement with S1's boasting about his looks, which is expressed by a joke. Naturally, S2 does not think that S1 has a star-like head.

Example 2

S1 No wonder that every girl in class is into me: I have a baby face and star-like eyes.

→S2 Star-like is your head!

From now on disagreement is going to be identified and analysed based on the definition above, bearing in mind the two aforementioned points.

2.2. Previous studies on gender and disagreement.

As mentioned in the Introduction, there is limited research available on the relationship of gender and disagreements. Although gender is not in the scope of many studies on conflict talk, some of them do reflect on the influence of gender in the results. I now turn to the overview of these relevant studies in the field of gender and disagreement.

Over the last three decades, a considerable number of studies have suggested that women have a greater tendency to seek agreement and avoid explicit disagreement both in single-sex and mixed-sex settings than men do (Edelsky 1981; Coates 1989; Tannen 1990). Research on gender differences in conversational style has yielded results that women are more likely than men to soften their disagreements, while men tend to challenge and dispute the utterances of their conversational partner in a direct way.

Pilkington's (1992) study on same-sex groups of workers in a New Zealand bakery provides further evidence of this pattern. The women in the study used a highly cooperative conversational style with a lot of agreement,

and positive minimal feedback and they frequently finished each other's utterances. The men, on the other hand, repeatedly challenged each other and disagreed bluntly. Another feature that characterized the male data was the occurrence of direct expression of hostility via open criticism and insults.

Similar gender-related patterns have been found in other contexts as well. Investigating the expression of agreement and disagreement in educational online discussion groups, Guiller and Durndell (2006) found that female postings were more likely to include agreement while male postings tended to include challenges and disagreement. Women's disagreeing utterances were rarely aggravated and were often attenuated through the use of "(I think) I'll have to". Intensified and personalised forms of agreement (such as "I agree completely", "I totally agree with you") proved to be a solely female feature. Men, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to disagree explicitly than women and they used controversial and challenging statements more frequently. No significant gender difference was found in the use of partial agreement (such as "Yes, but...").

Nevertheless, not all studies report findings consistent with the previous ones. Rees-Miller (2000:1106), for instance, examining the expression of disagreement in academic setting did not find gender an influential factor in either the rate of disagreement or the use of softeners of disagreement. However, her findings suggest that men are more likely to use aggravated disagreements than women.

3. Data and methodology

3.1. Corpus and participants.

The present paper attempts to fill the gaps observed in the relevant literature by analysing verbal disagreement in mixed-sex dyadic face-to-face encounters of Hungarian undergraduate students within a task-based framework employing a combined qualitative and quantitative approach to data analysis. The corpus compiled for analysis consists of 68,193 words, which is approximately 444 minutes (7hrs 24mins) of task-based speech (recorded by myself between December 2009 and March 2010).

The participants (15 men, 15 women, $M_{\text{age}}=20.4$ years, age range: 18-24 years) of the study comprised a homogenous group as they were all of similar age and of similar education (they had all passed a high school maturation exam). The relationships between the participants were at the two ends of the social distance continuum, i.e. they either had very strong ties (siblings or couples who had been dating each other for at least a year; $n=12$) or were strangers ($n=18$) (for further details on the corpus, participants, and data elicitation see Koczogh 2011).

3.2. Methodology

After transcribing the recordings, the scripts were searched for instances of disagreement. Altogether 525 tokens of disagreement were identified in the corpus, which were then manually indexed according to their function. The categories used were based on the functions of disagreement described in previous research (e.g. Culpeper 2011; Locher 2004; Muntigl and Turnbull 1998; Rees-Miller 1995, 2000) as well as on new ones (e.g. implied contradiction, clarification of speaker's meaning, disbelief), identified on the basis of the patterns found in the corpus.

Based on their function, disagreements were assigned to one of the categories listed below. Due to space limitations, these disagreement strategies are only briefly defined and only those which have not been identified in previous literature are illustrated by an example. The abbreviations of the categories used for indexing are shown in brackets.

- *partial agreement/token agreement* (P/TA): partial agreement is an utterance that makes a concession before expressing opposition in order to soften the force of disagreement. Token agreement is a polite disagreement disguised as an agreement.

- *explanation (give/ask for reason/example)* (EXPL): an utterance that gives or asks for a reason or example to indicate that the previous speaker's proposition is not true. When asking for a reason, the speaker's interrogation is usually accompanied by a critical or doubtful tone.

- *contradictory statement* (CST): an utterance that expresses contradiction by either negating the proposition expressed by the previous claim or directly stating that it is not true.

- *implied contradiction* (IC): an utterance that, by itself, "does not bear any markers of disagreement. However, in the context in which it occurs, it contradicts a previous utterance" (Rees-Miller, 1995:116).

Example 3

Discussion on gender differences in cooking skills

S1 Főzési tudományom a tojásrántottában ki is merül.

My knowledge of cooking ends with scrambled eggs.

S2 De abba teszel jó sok mindent, igaz?

But you put a lot of things in it, right?

→ S1 Tojást.

Eggs.

- *stating disagreement* (STD): an utterance that explicitly states that the speaker disagrees with the previous proposition.

- *challenge* (CH): an utterance that displays strong disagreement with the prior proposition by questioning the addressee's position and implicating that (s)he cannot provide evidence for his/her claim. It typically has the syntactic form of interrogative or imperative.

- *disbelief* (DISB): an utterance that expresses that the speaker does not believe or doubts the previous proposition and does not hold it to be true.

Example 4

Discussion about a character of a story

S1[De] hát most ő mit tehet arról? {hogy balf***}

[But] what does he have to do with it? {that he is a dumbf***}

S2M: olvasni kellett volna a sorok között.

U: hm he should have read between the lines.

→S1Jaj, UGYAN MÁ:R!

Oh, COME O:N!

- *evaluation* (EVA): an utterance that expresses a negative evaluation of the previous speaker's proposition, indicating strong disapproval.

- *clarification of speaker's meaning* (C'SM): an utterance that clarifies the usually misunderstood meaning of the speaker's previous utterance, which, therefore, contradicts or corrects the other interlocutor's previous proposition.

Example 5

Discussion about euthanasia

S1 De én azt mondom, hogy ehhez egy nagy adag pesszimista világnézet is kell. Le kell tojni önmagunkat néha ahhoz, hogy ő: ... hogy hogy ilyen ilyen esetekben hogy úgy mond 'meg akarok halni, mert izé ronda vagyok, meg itt a púp a hátamon'. (*irónikus*)

But I say that for this you need a great deal of pessimistic worldview. Sometimes we need to get over ourselves so that u:h ... that that in such such cases like "I want to die because I'm ugly and there is a hunch on my back". (ironical)

→S2 De nem úgy Maci, én nem erről beszélek.

But it's not that, Honey Bear, I'm not talking about that.

4. Data analysis and results

In order to analyse the data both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics measured the frequency of disagreements based on gender and it was also used to calculate the ratio of the disagreement strategies employed. Given the nature of the data, the study also employed the Chi-square test to investigate whether the associations between gender and the use of disagreement strategies are statistically significant. The results of the statistical procedures are presented below.

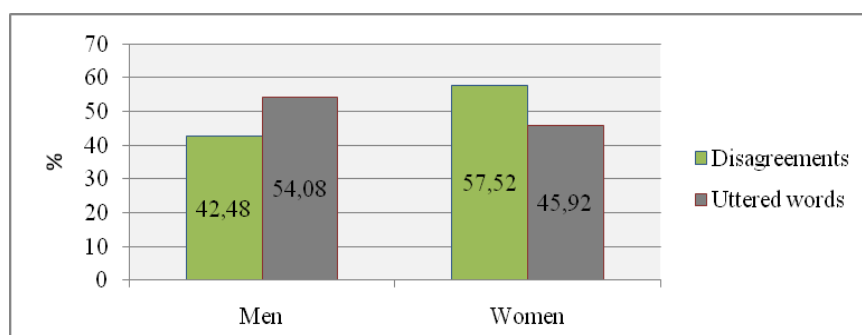
4.1. Gender and frequency of disagreements

Disagreement in my research was expressed either via a single disagreement strategy (67.05%) or optionally with a combination of two (32.57%) or sometimes even three strategies (0.38%). 34 (6.49%) tokens were unfinished, still they managed to deliver opposition and their function could also be identified.

As for the influence of the gender of the speaker on the rate of disagreements, the descriptive statistical analysis reveals that out of the 525

tokens of verbal disagreement that occur in the corpus, 302 (57.52%) were uttered by women while 223 (42.48%) by men. The gap in the ratio of disagreements used by male and female undergraduates is further broadened if we take into account the fact that men spoke more than women did. Out of 68,194 words 36,877 (54.08%) were uttered by the former and 31,317 (45.92%) by the latter. Figure 1 displays the relative proportion of disagreements and the uttered words in percentages in relation to gender.

Figure 1
Gender differences in the proportion of disagreements and uttered words in percentage



It can be observed that in my sample the number of disagreements is inversely proportional to the uttered words, i.e. the number of disagreements increases as the amount of talk decreases. The graphical representation of this pattern resembles the Roman letter “X”.

A clearer picture of the ratio of disagreements used by male and female speakers can be drawn by calculating the frequency of disagreements per 100 words. The obtained results show that men employed 0.6 token of disagreement per 100 words, while women expressed opposition in almost every 100 word (0.96 token/100 words). This demonstrates that the female

speakers in my research expressed disagreement much more frequently than their male counterparts. Thus, previous claims on women expressing their disagreement less frequently than men do were not substantiated by the findings.

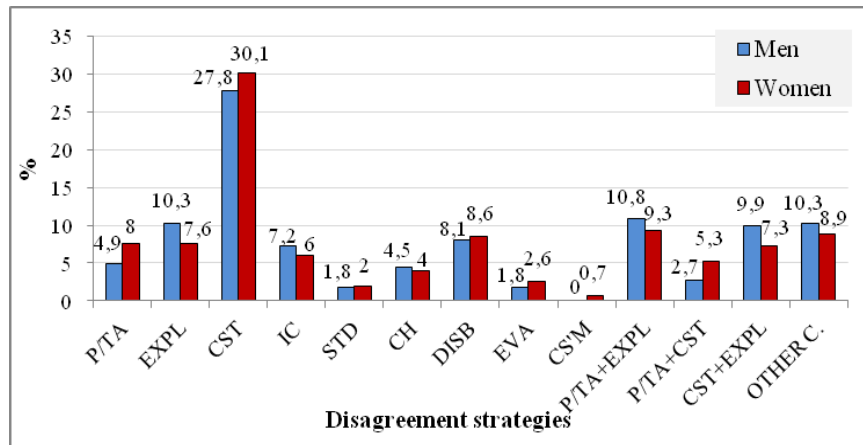
It is noteworthy that individual differences can be observed in terms of the frequency of disagreements, which might be due to, among other things, different personality traits and/or communicative styles.

4.2. Gender and disagreement strategies

In order to explore the association between the gender of the speaker and the overall distribution of disagreement strategies adopted by the participants descriptive statistics were used. As already discussed, women have generally been reported to be more indirect than men (Lakoff 1975; Pilkington 1992; Tannen 1990). Hence, in the current study, female speakers were predicted to employ proportionally more indirect and less direct disagreement strategies than male speakers do.

The overall distribution of single and combined disagreement strategies by gender is represented graphically in Figure 2. It is apparent that men adopted the strategies of contradictory statement (27.08%), explanation (10.3%) and disbelief (8.1%) the most frequently as a single disagreement strategy, while women were in favour of contradictory statement (30.1%), disbelief (8.6%) and partial agreement/token agreement (8%). Some discrepancies can be observed in the use of certain strategies in terms of their frequency in the male and in the female corpus.

Figure 2
Overall distribution of disagreement strategies by gender



For instance, when compared to men, women utilized significantly more partial/token agreement (8% versus 4.9%) and evaluation (2.6% versus 1.8%) and they accounted for all the instances of clarification of speaker's meaning (0.7%). The fact that men in this study were not observed to use the last function should not be taken to mean that in general men never use this disagreement strategy. This finding needs to be substantiated by further research that investigates disagreements expressed by men and women using a larger sample of speech.

As regards the combinations of disagreement strategies, the following patterns can be observed: men used slightly more partial agreement followed by an explanation (10.8% versus 9.3%) and more contradictory statement followed by an explanation (9.9% versus 7.3%). Women, on the other hand, employed the combination of contradictory statement preceded by partial agreement (5.3% versus 2.7%) significantly more frequently than men did.

Figure 2 indicates that although both men and women utilized explicit and implicit disagreement strategies, women in this study tended to adopt more direct strategies (e.g. contradictory statement, evaluation) than men did.

Thus, it implies that women might have a more assertive communication style than has been reported in previous literature.

Although the overall distribution of disagreement strategies used by men and women shows some significant differences, the result of the Chi-square test indicates that the association between gender and the use of disagreement strategies is not statistically significant ($p=.782$).

5. Conclusion

The aim of the present paper was to study the effect of gender on the frequency of disagreements and the particular disagreement strategies employed by Hungarian undergraduate students. On the basis of the empirical results it can be concluded that contrary to expectations, female Hungarian undergraduates do express opposition frequently. Women participating in this study tended to disagree much more frequently and often in a more expressive and straightforward way than men did. These results refute previous findings on the communication style of women and imply that the female speakers of this study were willing to sacrifice attending the other's face for the sake of efficiency of communication or preservation of one's own face. Inevitably, as a result of the relatively small sample size, the findings are not representative of a broader university community, cannot be generalized and need to be substantiated by further research.

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**METAPHORS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY – WOMEN’S
UNDERSTANDING OF SPORT METAPHORS IN POLITICAL
DISCOURSE**

BILJANA RADIĆ-BOJANIĆ

University of Novi Sad

and
NADEŽDA SILAŠKI
University of Belgrade

Abstract: Within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk 1993, Wodak 2006) we analyse in this paper the results of a survey conducted among 100 women and 20 men in order to establish the level of their understanding of sport metaphors in political discourse. The results indicate that sport metaphors may pose a serious barrier to women's understanding of political life and may discourage women's political participation.

Key words: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Critical Metaphor Analysis, politics, sport metaphors, women

1. Introduction

Due to the fact that metaphors, being a basic and indispensable feature of human understanding, have attracted much scholarly attention in the last three decades, it has now been widely recognised that political discourse in many countries of the world abounds in sport metaphors (see e.g. Orwell 1946; Lipsky 1979; Howe 1988; Semino and Masci 1996; Thompson 1996; Herbeck 2000; Russo 2001; Silaški et al. 2009; Silaški and Radić-Bojanić 2009; Radić Bojanić and Silaški 2010, etc.) and that they are frequently used to socially construct a sometimes hard-to-understand concept of politics. These often deliberately generated metaphors may facilitate the understanding of political developments by men, since sport is a part of male cultural background and everyday experience in many countries.

However, women and sport seem not to be that related. "Woman. Sport. These two words rest curiously next to each other like unrelated, detached strangers" (Boutilier and San Giovanni 1983:93). Since football is

practically an entirely masculine activity, it comes as no surprise that football metaphors are so ubiquitous in politics, which is, at least in Serbia, also perceived as a predominantly masculine activity.

Female citizens, however, may find sport metaphors an obstacle to the understanding of politics rather than a means which may help them in understanding the meanings conveyed by them, as they mainly reflect male experience. This is at the same time the main hypothesis of our analysis – that women have difficulties in understanding sport metaphors as used in politics, which, in turn, may discourage women's participation in political life. In other words, as we have argued elsewhere (Radić-Bojanić and Silaški 2010:31):

[w]e also believe that most women voters do not understand SPORT metaphors in political discourse. Although metaphors are a rhetorical device which is supposed to facilitate and simplify the act of message comprehension, we maintain that most women need to put a significant processing effort in order to understand the true nature of SPORT (FOOTBALL) [...], often without positive results.

In order to either refute or confirm our hypothesis, we conducted a survey among 100 women and 20 men in Serbia in order to establish the level of their understanding of sport metaphors in political discourse. Before giving the details of our survey results, we should first outline the basic tenets of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Jonson 1980) and of Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black 2004), the two theoretical frameworks upon which our paper rests.

2. Theoretical framework

According to the main tenet of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (as originated by Lakoff and Johnson 1980), metaphor use involves such cross-mapping from a source domain to a target domain that the source conceptual domain (in our case, sport) is almost always more structured, more experientially founded and easier to comprehend, whereas the target conceptual domain (politics) is less structured, intangible and more difficult to understand. In metaphor understood as such a cross-domain mapping, constituent conceptual elements of the source domain correspond to constituent elements of the target domain. Thus, in the POLITICS IS SPORT metaphor, constituent conceptual elements of sport (predetermined rules, teams, players, sport field, referees, etc.) correspond to constituent elements of politics (election rules, political parties, politicians, etc.).

Metaphors, however, highlight only certain aspects of the target domain, while necessarily concealing its other aspects (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), which makes them suitable for use as one of the most pervasive instruments of persuasion and propaganda in the language of political rhetoric. Simultaneously, however, metaphors may serve as a powerful ideological tool. Deignan (2005:23) claims that “[t]he case for metaphor as ideological is developed from the observation that the interpretation of situations and events presented by any metaphor is only partial, and therefore flawed”, which stems from the principle of *metaphorical* hiding and *highlighting* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2002), according to which the metaphorical source domain focuses on a single aspect of the concept, while at the same time hiding some other aspects of the concept. This allows metaphors to present “a particular interpretation of situations and events” (Deignan 2005:23), desired by their creators and users alike.

According to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black 2004), a version of CDA which draws

heavily on the main insights of the cognitive theory of metaphor, rarely are metaphors void of some evaluative stance. They are charged with an ideological component, “which reflects a bias on the part of a speech community towards other groups of peoples, mores, situations and events” (López Rodríguez 2007:18). This is why metaphors are regarded in this paper as, among other things, carriers of ideology, when they serve as powerful tools of either presenting reality in the desired manner, or of distorting the picture of the reality we live in.

3. The survey

In order to establish the extent to which women understand the meaning of sport metaphors used in Serbian political discourse (by which we mean not only *internal* political communication, referring to “all forms of discourse that concern first of all the functioning of politics within political institutions, i.e. governmental bodies, parties or other organisations” [Schäffner 1996:202], but also *external* political communication, aimed at the general public, as well as the language used by reporters and political commentators as the main mediators between the political parties and the voters), we conducted a survey among 120 participants (100 female and 20 male, the latter serving as a control group). The respondents were asked to answer several sets of questions, of which the first set contained demographic questions (sex, age, education) as well as some questions pertaining to respondents’ political behaviour patterns and their interest in sport.

The majority of the *respondents*, from three different cities in Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad and Čačak) were in the 31-40 age range (31%), while 26% of *respondents* were 20-30 and a further 26% 41-50 years of age, followed by 16% in the 51-60 bracket and 3% over 61. Respondents’ highest

educational level was divided into primary (1%), secondary (46%), university (42%), MA (9%) and PhD (2%). 52% of respondents claimed they voted regularly, whereas 42% voted occasionally. Only 6% said they never voted in elections. The vast majority (96%) of respondents claimed not to be members of any political party. The question “Do you follow sport events?” was answered with “regularly” by 20% of respondents, whereas 69% of them claimed that they followed sport events “occasionally”, with only 11% saying that they “never” did so. The next question in the first set was “How well do you know the rules of football?”, which was answered by 12% of respondents with “very well”, while “moderately well” was the answer given by 62% of respondents. 26% of respondents chose the answer “not at all”.

The second and third sets of questions related directly to our analysis of sport metaphors and the extent to which they are understood by women in political discourse. In the second task, therefore, respondents were asked to explain the meaning of the following ten key football terms, completely decontextualised and given in isolation: 1. *off-side position* [ofsajd], 2. *penalty area* [kazneni prostor], 3. *yellow card* [žuti karton], 4. *midfielder* [vezni igrač], 5. *dribbling* [driblanje], 6. *additional time* [zaustavno vreme], 7. *red card* [crveni karton], 8. *own goal* [autogol], 9. *extra time* [produžeci], and 10. *penalty shot* [jedanaesterac]. The main aim of this part of the survey was to establish the extent to which women recognise either the literal or metaphorical meaning of the ten football terms.

Due to space constraints, we shall deal in detail in this paper only with the five most typical football terms: *offside position*, *penalty area*, *yellow card*, *own goal*, and *additional time*. Table 1 shows the results obtained in this part of the survey.

Football term in isolation	Women	Men
<i>Offside</i>	correct 20% vague 40% incorrect 40%	correct 45% vague 30% incorrect 25%
<i>Penalty area</i>	correct 9% vague 40% incorrect 51%	correct 25% vague 65% incorrect 10%
<i>Yellow card</i>	correct 32% vague 57% incorrect 11%	correct 35% vague 65%
<i>Own goal</i>	correct 78% vague 12% incorrect 10%	correct 80% incorrect 20%
<i>Additional time</i>	correct 12% vague 10% incorrect 78%	correct 45% vague 35% incorrect 20%

Table 1. Respondents' answers concerning the meanings of football terms in isolation

The first football term from the survey, *offside*, despite its high frequency both in football and politics, was not understood as well as we expected it to be since only 20% of women and 45% of men defined it correctly. The results indicate that a large number of respondents have only a vague understanding, which certainly reflects on their understanding of political discourse as well.

The terms with an extremely low number of correct answers among female respondents, *penalty area* and *additional time*, did not achieve high results with men either, because in both cases men scored below 50%. Where these two terms are concerned, the number of women's incorrect answers is greater than 50% and with *additional time* it is a surprisingly high 78%, the highest negative score in the corpus.

The terms where women achieved better scores were *yellow card* and *own goal*, since only around 10% of women were not able to define them correctly. Interestingly enough, with both terms the proportions of correct answers given by women and men are almost the same (for *yellow card* ~35% and for *own goal* ~80%).

In the last part of the survey, respondents were given 10 sentences, excerpted from the *print and electronic editions of the leading Serbian political dailies and weeklies (Blic, Politika, Večernje novosti, Press, Kurir, Vreme, NIN)* in the period between 2008 and 2010, during which Serbia had conducted both presidential and parliamentary elections. Our hypothesis was the following: if women are not ardent football fans, it will be quite difficult for them to guess the (literal) meaning of the majority of the expressions mentioned, let alone contextualise them in the field of politics and understand their extended, metaphorical meanings.

Here are the sentences which we used in our survey:

1. Meni je to pokazatelj da je vlada potpuno *otišla u ofsajd*.

[In my opinion, it shows that the Government has completely *gone offside*.]

2. Tadićevci, priča se, već spremaju Aleksandra Vlahovića za premijera i u tom slučaju „svadba slonova” sa DSS bila bi logična za njih. A, i „gužva u *šesnaestercu*” tada bi bila manja.

[Tadić's (Serbian President) supporters are said to be grooming Aleksandar

Vlahović for prime minister, in which case an “elephant wedding” would be logical for the DSS (Democratic Party of Serbia). And the *penalty area* would be much less crowded.]

3. Možda je ovoga puta od sagovornika u demokratskom bloku dobio samo *žuti karton*.

[Perhaps this time he only got a *yellow card* from his fellows in the democratic block.]

4. The Serbian Renewal Movement has enough MPs to become an important *midfielder* in the team about to form a new government. [Srpski pokret obnove dobio je dovoljno mandata i tako postao važan *vezni igrač* u timu koji namerava da sastavi novu vladu.]

5. Još jedno političko *driblanje* u *kaznenom prostoru*.

[Another case of political *dribbling* in the *penalty area*.]

6. The Government, as is already known, has been formed during *additional time*.

[Vlada je, kao što se zna, ipak formirana, i to u *zaustavnom vremenu*.]

7. The second *division* of Serbian politics imagines that they can do better, having forgotten along the way the spectre of their political past.

[Druga *liga* srpske politike je umislila da može nešto više, uzgred, zaboravljajući koliki im je politički dijapazon.]

8. A big *red card* for G17+, LDP, SPS [Serbian political parties] for not supporting this meeting.

[Veliki *crveni karton* za G17+, LDP, SPS što nisu podržale ovaj skup.]

9. I look forward to the second election round with optimism, *extra time* will be played, we are starting from zero.

[Sa optimizmom gledam u drugi krug, igraju se *produžeci*, počinje se od nule.]

10. Political analyst Vladimir Cvetković points out that in the latest clashes the DSS *scored an own goal*, as they set off for a political fight without any allies in the DS.

[Politički analitičar Vladimir Cvetković ističe da je DSS poslednjim sukobima “*postigao* politički *autogol*, jer je krenuo u politički obračun bez ijednog

saveznika u DS-u”.]

Football metaphors in sentence context	Women	Men
For me that’s an indicator that the government is totally <u>in the offside position</u> .	correct 14% vague 35% incorrect 51%	correct 35% vague 15% incorrect 50%
That would make the crowd in the <u>penalty area</u> smaller.	correct 18% vague 14% incorrect 68%	correct 30% vague 25% incorrect 45%
He was given a <u>yellow card</u> by his interlocutors in the democratic block.	correct 9% vague 40% incorrect 51%	correct 25% vague 65% incorrect 10%
With the latest conflicts, the DSS <u>scored</u> a political <u>own goal</u> because they had no allies in the DS.	correct 48% vague 26% incorrect 26%	correct 85% vague 10% incorrect 20%
The government was formed during <u>additional time</u> .	correct 32% vague 11% incorrect 57%	correct 45% vague 10% incorrect 45%

Table 2. Respondents’ answers concerning the meanings of football terms in context

Again, due to space constraints, we shall deal in greater detail with only five of them. Table 2 above shows the results obtained from the last question of the survey.

Just a glance at Table 2 reveals that women achieved under 20% of correct answers with three contextualized football terms, *offside*, *penalty area* and *yellow card*. Men’s scores for these three terms range between 25

and 35%, which is not a particularly high score either. For both men and women, the contextualised terms *own goal* and *additional time* were more understandable, as evidenced in the scores.

If the results of isolated and contextualised terms are compared, it cannot be said that the context helped respondents in defining metaphorical meanings of football terms. With some of these terms the tendency was quite the opposite, as can be seen with *offside*, *yellow card* and *own goal*, where the majority of respondents scored less than in the part of the questionnaire with uncontextualized terms. This illustrates the fact that the not-so-well understood language of football becomes even less transparent when used in the domain of politics, which does not help the electorate relate to the issues politicians and journalists talk about.

As for the metaphorical meanings of the terms *penalty area* and *additional time*, the score is higher when the terms are placed in a context, which shows a tendency opposite to that exhibited for the other terms, which achieved higher scores in isolation. One possible explanation for this finding is that the respondents used their own world knowledge and personal experience from the political life of Serbia and were able to interpret what it meant, for example, for the government to be formed *during additional time*, as the fact that political parties were not able to form a government was featured in all the news reports at the time.

4. Discussion

We have argued elsewhere (Radić-Bojanić and Silaški 2008; 2010) that the conceptually superior POLITICS IS FOOTBALL metaphor as used in Serbian political discourse may be divided into three submetaphors (POLITICAL PARTIES ARE FOOTBALL TEAMS, ELECTIONS ARE A FOOTBALL

MATCH, and DEMOCRATIC ELECTION RULES ARE FOOTBALL RULES), of which the last, DEMOCRATIC ELECTION RULES ARE FOOTBALL RULES, is of crucial importance for our research. Thus, politicians get a *yellow card* ('žuti karton') or a *red card* ('crveni karton') as a caution from the electorate for inappropriate behaviour, a political mistake or a bad political move. If a politician makes a rash decision, a wrong move or a damaging statement which backfires, he/she is said to have *scored an own goal* ('autogol'), whereas an *offside* ('ofsajd'), an illegal position in the game of football, is an attitude or a decision of a politician that puts the government and people in a difficult situation and should somehow be punished, etc.

The results of our survey, in which we tried to check whether these and similar football terms are understood by men and women when used in Serbian political discourse, indicate several things. Firstly, as far as the football terms used in isolation are concerned, it is surprising that many men were not able to define them correctly, which means that they were not familiar with their exact literal meaning. This is contrary to our expectations as we assumed that it would be mostly women who would have problems understanding the rules of football and its key terms. In addition, women exhibited a very high level of misunderstanding of certain key football terms, with the exception of *own goal* and *yellow card*. This clearly indicates that conventionalised or even lexicalised metaphors – “those that are taken up and used by an ever-increasing number of other speakers, so that they gradually lose their uniqueness and peculiarity, becoming part of the established semantic stock of the language and being recorded as such in the dictionary” (Dagut 1976:23), are much more easily understood by women, compared to some other terms which still remain rather confined to their literal use. These are the terms that are “generally accepted as being no longer recognizable as

[metaphors]” (Leech 1981:228). We therefore think that women correctly defined the terms in isolation (*own goal* and *yellow card*) not because they are familiar with football rules, but because these two terms have already entered the lexicon of the Serbian language and as such are very frequently used metaphorically, in political discourse as well as in many other types of discourse. With other terms women are only vaguely familiar.

However, the results are much more contrasting when it comes to the understanding of football terms used metaphorically in the sentence context within political discourse. Namely, despite the fact that men scored fairly highly with the terms in isolation, they scored below 50% for all the contextualised terms except, again, *own goal*. As far as women’s understanding of contextualised metaphorical football terms is concerned, the results indicate that, with the exception of *own goal*, all sentences remain either vaguely or incorrectly understood.

Therefore, our starting hypothesis – that most women voters do not understand SPORT metaphors used in political discourse – has definitely been proven. In light of the results obtained from our survey, we argue the following: if metaphors are a mechanism by which we are supposed to understand one abstract entity in terms of another, concrete, entity, deeply embedded in our experience, and if, on the other hand, football is not part of women’s entire corpus of experience, then FOOTBALL metaphors, as used in political discourse, are an obstacle to women’s understanding of political reality rather than a means which helps them comprehend political developments. Moreover, although widely thought to be more than familiar with football rules, men have difficulties in finding their way in sport-related and football-loaded political discourse. It seems as though their presumed acquaintance with football does not help men in discerning the messages

hidden in political discourse when it is covered with a finely embroidered metaphorical veil, which only increases the number of voters in Serbia who actually do not know what the politicians are talking about in the first place!

Such mystification of political discourse has a twofold mechanism: as for women, the majority of them are automatically repelled by their lack of knowledge and experience in football and choose not to delve into the subject at all, thus abstaining from the political process completely, whereas men's understanding of metaphorical political discourse does not go beyond a very superficial level.

5. Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to show the extent to which SPORT metaphors are understood by women in Serbian discourse. The results of the survey have proven our hypothesis that women need to expend a significant processing effort in order to understand the true nature of football metaphors, often without positive results. In the light of the fact that women account for 52% of the total population in Serbia and that they make up 53% of the electorate, their participation in institutional political life being at the moment disproportionately small, this may indicate that such gendered and masculinised political discourse in Serbia, manifested through the frequent use of SPORT metaphors, is one of the reasons for voting abstinence among the female part of the electorate. This, in turn, may potentially exclude them from political participation, both passive (via voting) and active (via membership in political parties and holding political positions). Sport metaphors seem to clash with the female cognitive framework, which is not saturated with the concepts of sport. This results in an incongruence between political rhetoric and women's experience, reflected in a potential abstinence from political life on the part of women.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to remove any metaphors from political discourse which may prevent both male and female voters from understanding the true meaning of political messages. Only in this way will Serbian political discourse become gender neutral and hopefully free of metaphors which indicate hegemonic masculinity, by which it has so far been characterised.

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**THE INNOCENT AMERICAN GIRL IN HENRY JAMES'S
INTERNATIONAL NOVEL**

DIANA- GABRIELA LUPU

“Al. I. Cuza” University, Iași

Abstract: In his international novels, Henry James used the idea of innocence and loss of innocence in connection to his American characters, especially American girls, as opposed to the personality of the Europeans. He explored the differences between the two civilizations and the effect that these have on the identity of the innocent coming from the New World. Being presented by the author as childlike, unaware human beings, Henry James's heroines come to Europe to learn something of 'life', but they can't preserve their innocence as they are forced to recognize that the world is ambiguous, divided. Their drama is a result of their resistance to acknowledging the foreignness of the Other.

Key Words: American girl, innocence, New World, Other, Self

Henry James represents a key figure for the beginnings of modernist literature. One of his main concerns was the international theme, the European experience of young Americans, who came to the Old World to enrich their knowledge, but who found themselves placed against a space of difference. One important aspect related to the New World is its innocence, and whether or not the American can preserve this quality in an area of vice and complexity. The contrast between Americans and Europeans is remarkably used by James with the purpose of emphasizing the American's innocence. Henry James noted in *The American Scene* his impression that America reflected "the incoherence and volatility of childhood" (James 1968:171) which made Americans "unaware" and innocent by treating Europe while visiting it "as a vast painted and gilded holiday toy." (James 1962:189) The seriousness with which he treats the theme of the innocent, unaware American arriving in Europe varies from novel to novel.

Innocence is obviously connected to childhood. For a better psychological understanding of James's innocent characters, the theory of the Freudian revisionist Jacques Lacan offers major solutions. (Wilden

1968:191) Like Freud, he says that the primary experiences of childhood represent the paradigms that will dictate the subsequent experiences of the adult. The most important of these early experiences is the children's discovery of the distinction between themselves and the rest of the world, the Other, and this enables the child to progress to the subjectivity of 'I.' This happens only by periodic absences of the mother and the experience of a divided reality. That is why it is an uncomfortable, perturbing experience as the human has to accept the ambivalence and ambiguity of a divided reality and the impossibility of a unified 'self'. The reaction is that of resistance, and this is done through identification with the Other.

In Henry James's international fiction, the American character has to deal with the challenge of becoming a subjective 'I', accepting the uncertainty and ambivalence of this state. The Americans are presented by the author as childlike, unaware human beings, coming to Europe to learn something of 'life'. Their drama is the result of their resistance to acknowledging the foreignness of the Other. They are forced to recognize the world as ambiguous and divided for the first time.

Henry James himself was a promoter of the fictional American girl. The idea of the American girl was a popular one and it appeared in the context of the Victorian ideology of the feminine which was similar on both sides of the Atlantic. Idealization of women became domestic in the nineteenth century with a strong emphasis on marriage and women's moral influence on men. Marriage was the highest expectation both in England and America. The difference was that they were more indulgent and their role of social connector was more important in America, as American society was still an unstable one. They also played another major role, that of representing America to Europe, as many European travelers met with, talked to or even married American girls in the nineteenth century.

As representative, the American female was both a recognized and civilized woman ('we are as good as the English') and a provocatively youthful and egalitarian girl ('and we are superior in our differences'). It was the American girl who really produced the effect, though it was a surprisingly long time before she became a stock character of fiction. When she did, however, the American girl contained her own paradox in a new and vivid fashion. (Allen 1984:17)

The independence of women was lost within the bonds of matrimony. "The young, unmarried girls had a freedom greater in America than in Europe; they went out by themselves, had 'gentleman friends' and enjoyed themselves generally at their own leisure. Often given greater education than their European counterparts, and certainly greater freedom of knowledge" (Allen 1984:22) they could talk and think. The American girls showed the superiority of freedom but also moral purity, being both bold and innocent. They gradually gained the right to self-education and development of 'self', but their freedom was for others and not for themselves.

Feminine innocence depended on its existence in a rigid society. James's novels often deal with the fundamental conflict between individual women and social structures. Innocence and openness were part of the idealist illusion of an untouched material waiting to be shaped by the external subject and this aspect was tackled by Henry James in *The Reverberator*:

Don't you see that she's really of the softest, finest material that breathes, that she's a perfect flower of plasticity, that everything you may have an apprehension about will drop away from her like the dead leaves from a rose and that you may make of her any perfect and enchanting thing you yourself may have the wit to conceive. (James 1908-9: vol.XIII, 206)

For James, she symbolizes America itself, being grown in an atmosphere where the European dangers did not exist, yet at the same time unable to face the assault of life.

Inherent in James's perception of the American heroine is the central paradox that though in her innocence, spontaneity, and purity she offers an alternative to the old corruption of Europe and the rampant materialism of America. (Fowler 1948:8)

The American female is presented by James as independent, free, innocent, moral with an asexual attractiveness. Her self-consciousness developed out of her absorption by Europe or her destruction by it. Henry James's main American girls were Isabel Archer, Milly Theale, and Maggie Verver. They encounter an Other who they in some ways long to be, as Isabel meets Madame Merle, Milly meets Kate Croy, Maggie meets Charlotte Stant. Their drama is a consequence of the encounter with Europe, the land of experience. They are unequipped for withstanding the assault of life, even if their reaction is different: Isabel endures it, Milly dies from it and Maggie triumphs over it.

Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady*

The Portrait of a Lady (1881) is about a spirited young American woman, Isabel Archer, "a female counterpart of Newman" (James 1920:179), who "affronts her destiny" and finds it overwhelming. She inherits a large amount of money and subsequently becomes the victim of Machiavellian scheming by two American expatriates. The narrative is set mainly in Europe, especially in England and Italy.

Isabel's portrait is a complex one, full of contradictory qualities. She has an American past, as she is actually "an Americana, with more established traditions and more intellectual values than the ingenuous Daisy Miller: she is independent and imaginative, high-minded to the point of moral austerity, ignorant of evil, and avid for self-improvement. In all the tergiversations of her life, her choices and decisions will be complicated by a shaping, provincial heritage that will itself be reshaped by the actualities of an older, less innocent world." (Gargano 1993:124) The reader encounters her at a turning point in her existence, when the dreams of youth must end and she must enter life, being "an eager, imaginative creature, singularly well equipped for an intense, eventful career, as, in fact, hers turns out." (Liljegren 1920:17)

The most captivating aspect of Isabel is revealed at the beginning of the novel, in her appearance at Gardencourt. Ralph Touchett, her cousin, and Lord Warburton are fascinated by her spontaneity and enthusiastic responsiveness to the surroundings. Her idea of happiness is a "swift carriage, of a dark night rattling with four horses over a road that one can't see." (James 1947:144) She wants to see people, to look about her, to imbibe knowledge by daily intercourse and conversation. Isabel's hunger for knowledge could only be overcome by European civilization.

On the other hand she doesn't have enough courage to taste from the "cup of experience" as a "poisoned drink". (James 1947:130) The centre of James's drama is in Isabel Archer's consciousness. She is the right character to represent a real superiority for American values. James is very much confident that she has all the chances to attain a 'completed consciousness', so that he doesn't make any effort to hide her deficiencies:

Altogether, with her meager knowledge, her inflated ideals, her confidence at

once innocent and dogmatic, her temper at once exacting and indulgent, her mixture of curiosity and fastidiousness, of vivacity and indifference, her desire to look very well and to be if possible even better, her determination to see, to cry, to know, her combination of the delicate, desultory, flame-like spirit and the eager and personal creature of conditions; she would be an easy victim of scientific criticism if she were not intended to awaken on the reader's part an impulse more tender and more purely expectant. (James 1947:53)

Her marriage to Lord Warburton, with the comfort it promises, would have represented an escape from everyday dangers, from her moral responsibilities, a denial of her exercise of freedom. She chooses the possibility of freeing moral choice from the pressure of one's conditioning, an inescapable destiny. She manages to follow her straight path and refuse this persuasive appeal. She is rational that her moral sensibility is submerged under Osmond's aestheticism:

The desire for unlimited expansion had been succeeded in her soul by the sense that life was vacant without some private duty that might gather one's energies to appoint [...]. She could surrender to Osmond with a kind of humility, she could marry him with a kind of pride: she was not only taking, she was giving. (James 1947:381-382)

The first part of the novel seems to be a long preparation for catastrophe and not a prelude to pain and spiritual awakening. Later, in the second part of the book, the innocence of the vivacious girl is replaced by a haunted inwardness, which becomes a source of strength. Her destiny is mapped out by three major actions undertaken by Mrs. Touchett with her decision to transplant Isabel from Albany to Europe, by Ralph who wants to give her a fortune, by Madame Merle who manipulates her into marrying

Gilbert Osmond, her previous lover. In her naivety, she is persuaded by her aunt to believe that she was travelling to Europe at her own expense. Isabel was made to believe herself a free agent while she was actually following Madame Merle's vicious scheming. She can be even associated with the image of a doll, moved about without her own will. Even if she is an independent spirit and she seems to make her own choices in refusing marriage to the two men, Warburton and Caspar Goodwood, actually her imagination works against her, transforming reality into ethereal ideality. She hardens herself into resisting the temptation of status, wealth, sexual appeal, aspiring to live in an Emersonian way, existing "at the height of sheer community with ideal beauty." (Tanner 1965:208) She prefers to idealize Osmond's poverty, isolation and the relationship to his daughter. Richard Poirier says that her "marriage to Osmond is the most predictable thing that could happen to her." (Poirier 1960:218)

Isabel's final decision to return to Osmond implies neither renunciation nor defeat, as she believes that: "Deep in her soul - deeper than any appetite for renunciation - was the sense that life would be her business for a long time to come." (James 1947:612) Moreover, she is now conscious of the lie that governed the household and her intention is to purify the atmosphere. She has promised not to leave Pansy, "my child" who "has become mine" (James 1947: 488), as she tells Countess Gemini. This is how her final decision can be explained especially if we take into account what Dorothea Krook said: "Isabel Archer takes a 'sacramental' view of marriage, as a 'sanctified' union which is to be regarded as [...] indissoluble". (Krook 1962:358)

Isabel Archer embodies the image of the innocent American girl, with little experience. She begins her European initiation without knowing "what her self is, or what it may do." (Tanner 1965:150) Despite her innocence, she

also has the “duty” to fulfill other characters’ incomplete selves through her own. If at the beginning Mrs. Touchett takes her to Europe as a perfect companion, her cousin Ralph inspires Isabel with his ideals that he cannot possibly accomplish on his own; later on she is manipulated by Madame Merle who doesn’t care at all about her happiness: “I don’t pretend to know what people are meant for [...] I only know what I can do with them” (James 1947:210) and by Osmond, who is attracted by her new fortune.

Her naïve faith that she can create a marriage for herself in which her life will be shaped and directed by herself will be her doom. Her freedom is just an illusion. She is innocent as she has an imperfect sense of the system rules and of her place as woman within it. She suffers as she recognizes her existence as a ‘portrait of a lady’.

Isabel is placed in a European external world of social relations, but, unlike her predecessors, she has a consciousness capable of understanding, judging and accepting the values of that world. She suffers because of her many social limitations dramatically revealed in an European context:

Many of Isabel’s limitations result instead from James’s determination to present a realistic portrait of a particular kind of nineteenth-century woman, and such a realistic portrait was determined in no small way by the conditions of the world the heroine inhabited. The social and economic restraints suffered by an ordinary woman of the nineteenth century are necessarily suffered by Isabel Archer, who is not, even after she inherits a fortune, an ‘heiress of all the ages.’ (Fowler 1948:65-66)

Isabel’s growth is made possible by her own grim marriage, even if she has viewed it as a cage that would limit her freedom. Freedom for Isabel is tantamount to the power of rejecting suitors.

Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*

In his later fiction, Henry James returns to the international theme, but he goes beyond the strict social analysis to contemplate “both a manifestation of and a metaphor for the gap between the Self and the Other”. (Armstrong 1983:144) Europe is obviously “the Other” and the American “Self” is no longer characterized by innocence and vulnerability alone, as it is able to use innocence to win power. *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) tells the story of Milly Theale, an American heiress stricken with a serious disease, and her impact on the people around her. Some of these people befriend Milly with honorable motives, while others are more egocentric. James stated in his autobiographical books that Milly was based on Minny Temple, his beloved cousin who died at an early age of tuberculosis.

In this novel, the Self becomes an Other to the Other. “The international material thus dramatizes the complex, dynamic interactions of the Self and the Other and reveals a gap that can rarely be traversed, let alone bridged.” (Fowler 1993:183) The international theme becomes a metaphor for the distance separating the Self from the Other. In comparison to the characters from the early international novels, here the Americans have the power and responsibility derived from their fabulous wealth. Their innocence is presented in ironic contrast to this power and they become complicitous in the plots that exploit them. Milly Theale comes to realize that she can use the attributes of the American girl, of dove or princess to her own advantage. She can show her power to Kate and Densher, leaving them no contestation ground.

The image of the dove with which she is associated is obviously a symbol of innocence. She consciously adopts this association, spreading her wings to protect and even redeem the world she leaves behind as she dies:

“[she] found herself accepting as the right one, while she caught her breath with relief, the name so given her. She met it on the instant as she would have met the revealed truth; it lighted up the strange dusk in which she lately had walked. *That* was what was the matter with her. She was a dove. Oh *wasn't* she?” (James 1908-9: vol.XIX, 283)

Apart from the dove role, she plays that of the American girl, for Merton Densher, and of the princess, for Susan Stringham and all these identities actually mask her inner emptiness. “She becomes, in fact, a greater presence in the novel the more she is absent from it, just as she is more real, in her death, for Merton Densher than she was in her life.” (Fowler 1993:194) Milly, as well as Kate, suffer from the constraints of their gender, but concomitantly are freed of many of the external restraints on the individual. If Kate’s value resides solely in her beauty, Milly’s lies in her wealth. She is conscious of the roles assigned to her by others so she learns how to act accordingly. At the same time she is also aware that the popularity she enjoys at Lancaster Gate is based on her fortune. Both of them are betrayed by Merton Densher, the third person in this female triangle.

The heroine perceives her difference from Kate as a lack, as a flaw in her character. “Kate represents Milly’s first experience of the Other” and obviously this “discovery of such a lack leads to a desire for unity, which in itself prompts a kind of identification with the Other. This desire for unity is, of course, ultimately a desire for death.” (Fowler 1948:92) She becomes alienated from herself and begins to experience her own life as a drama unfolding before her. She prefers to identify herself with the lady of the Bronzino portrait rather than with the vibrant Kate because she is afraid she cannot be as beautiful and passionate as Kate. The possibility of love between Kate and Densher is the main source of her anxiety. Her disease is a refuge from active participation in the world, a source of security. “Incapable of

actively asserting herself in the London world, she views herself as being at the mercy of others and begins almost to invite their victimization of her.” (Fowler 1948:97)

Milly’s illness remains mysteriously unnamed. Her physician Sir Luke Strett suggests that love may be a cure for it. In the novel and in the Preface, James suggests that her illness is rooted in her cultural identity, as she is “the last fine flower [...] of an ‘old’ New York stem.” (James 1962:292) Not only her physical malady makes her a victim of Lancaster Gate, but her own personality and character make her unable to cope with life. In the Preface to *The Wings of the Dove*, James says that “a young person so devoted and exposed, a creature with her security hanging so by a hair, couldn’t but fall somehow into some abysmal trap.” (James 1962:293) She has difficulty in living within the subjective ‘I’, and she is surrounded by characters who deny her this status and this leads to a defensive isolation. She can exert an influence on the world, but she can do this only by dying, “since I’ve lived all these years as if I were dead, I shall die, no doubt, as if I were alive.” (James 1908-9: vol. XIX, 199)

Milly herself reflects on her innocence as “it pressed upon her then and there that she was still in a current determined, through her indifference, timidity, bravery, generosity - she could scarcely say which - by others; that not she but the current acted, and that somebody else always was the keeper of the lock or the dam.” (James 1908-9: vol. XIX, 274) This timidity makes her aware of the extreme fragility of her position in a world not designated to protect fragility. When Kate calls her a ‘dove’, she is actually offered a role to stick to:

It was moreover, for the girl, like an inspiration: she found herself accepting as the right one, while she caught her breath with relief, the name so given to her.

She met it on the instant as she would have met revealed truth; it lighted up the strange dusk in which she had lately walked. *That* was what was the matter with her. She was a dove. Oh *wasn't* she? (James 1908-9: vol. XIX, 283)

Milly Theale is highly representative of Henry James's American girls who are unable and afraid to become wholly human and to achieve full maturity. Her inability to achieve a sense of self leads inevitably to her death. It is not only her innocence and goodness that lead to her victimization in an European context, but also her culturally determined psychology.

Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl*

The Golden Bowl (1904) is a complex study of marriage and adultery that completes the "major phase" in James's career as novelist. The book explores the tangle of interrelationships between a father and daughter and their respective spouses. In this novel, Henry James makes the international theme more central than in any other novels.

For the first time in his major fiction, he imagines an actual uniting of American and European that not only does not result in the destruction of either but actually generates an offspring. In *The Golden Bowl*, James's fascination with the enigmatic relationships of appearance and reality, of power and innocence, of the individual and society, is given its greatest range. (Fowler 1993:198)

The incestuous relationship between Adam and Maggie Verver is definitely the cause for Maggie's innocence and her difficulty in attaining a sense of identity. Like Milly Theale she is characterized by a sense of loneliness and emptiness, but only at the beginning of the novel, because, unlike Milly, she chooses to live. She rejects her father and covets an adult

marital relationship. She is actually the only American girl who accepts sexual desire. The novel also deals with the differences between appearance and reality that Maggie Verver and Prince Amerigo have to discover. Maggie is no longer an aloof, detached observer, but an engaged participant. She observes the connection between Charlotte and the prince and she is not innocent anymore. She counters manipulation with her own machinations. She manages to live with the knowledge of betrayal and eventually regains her husband's loyalty.

The novel actually depicts not only Maggie's budding self and her struggle to obtain an autonomous identity, but also the pain and the difficulty which accompany the painful process. It dramatizes the deception to which the individual must resort to realize the break with the family. The encounter between Americans and Europeans is actually that between the Self and Other, individual and society. In this novel, James insists on the power of the Self to cope with the pain of the violation that derives from intimacy. Maggie's decision requires violence toward her Self and the others.

Maggie Verver finally opens her eyes to knowledge and accepts the suffering accompanying it, but then goes one step further: she determines that her own self and her own desires must, if they are to be realized, take precedence over the selves and desires of others, and, in acting on that determination, she acknowledges her willingness to enter a fallen world and share its taint. (Fowler 1948:139)

The present paper draws a line between the innocence of the American girl and that of the American man, as James himself was deeply aware of the gender aspects of his novels. The gender code of his society imposed certain cultural, political and sexual roles upon its women and men.

His male characters are in business and his female characters are mainly responsible for the preservation of American mores. The innocent American girls who come to Europe have to deal with the challenge of becoming a subjective 'I', accepting the uncertainty and ambivalence of this status. Childlike, fragile and immature, they come to Europe to learn something of 'life', but the experience they thus gain comes at the expense of their innocence. Their drama stems from their resistance to acknowledging the foreignness of the Other.

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**The Female as Alterity, Subversion and
Transgression**

METAPHORICAL MIRRORS AND SUBVERTING SELVES IN ADRIENNE KENNEDY'S ONE-ACT PLAYS

GABRIELLA TÓTH

University of Szeged

Abstract: Beginning her career in the 1960s, Adrienne Kennedy was one of the most influential writers of the period. Her plays subverted both Western and African American theatre. Although like her contemporaries she reacted to the political events of the period, in contrast with them she presented racial issues in a non-realistic mode. Her plays exemplify the re-theatricalisation of the African American stage.

Keywords: African American drama, Feminist theatrical aesthetics

Introduction

Adrienne Kennedy began her career in the 1960s. At the time of the flourishing of the Civil Rights Movement, her plays subverted both African American and Western European theatrical traditions. I will be examining the links her plays have with Western playwriting. Concurrently, I will be highlighting the elements in her oeuvre that subvert this connection. Kennedy's plays are significant in African American drama. She entered the literary arena in a highly politicised era with highly "poeticised" dramas. This paper focuses on her early one-act plays, in particular *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1962), *The Owl Answers* (1966) and *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* (1976). The paper launches an enquiry into how the stage – as a heterotopic space – is able to construct new identities.

Adrienne Kennedy's early one-act plays delineate the – by definition – fragmentary nature of a postmodern self. In *A Movie Star Has to Star in*

Black and White, Clara, a young, Black, intellectual woman, asks, “Each day I wonder with what or with whom can I co-exist in a true union?” (Kennedy 2001:63) Her words do not apply only to this play and character, but basically to almost all the dramatic figures in Kennedy’s plays. These characters are all tormented by their troubled psyches, resulting from the personal ontological crisis they face in a white, patriarchal world in which being African American, a woman and an intellectual are all reasons for being marginalised.

Kennedy’s critics, such as Georgie Boucher (2006:84), Rosemary K. Curb (1980:180) and Claudia Barnett (199:374), argue that the dramatic figures in her works are characterised by split personality disorder. They tend to represent the ‘mad woman in the closet’. According to Georgie Boucher, “Kennedy’s plays have remained controversial because of their failure to comply with the nationalistic orientation of the Black Arts Movement of 1960s America.” (Boucher 2006:84-103)

Not only political but also economic and artistic reasons have prevented Black women playwrights such as Adrienne Kennedy from becoming part of mainstream theatrical trends. African American female dramatists, as Dana A. Williams argues, are “seldom given the degree of attention that is given to male playwrights.” (1989:xvii) The reason “many published female playwrights go unnoticed” (1989:xvii) is that anthologies which collect only female playwrights “have limited space” and they are also few in number.” (1989:xvii) Moreover, they remain “unread and unproduced” for various other reasons that range from “inherent shortcomings to the playwright’s failure to promote a work extensively to discrimination by a male-dominated theatre world.” (Williams 1989:xvii)

Being on the ‘margin’, however, is not seen exclusively as a disadvantage. Post-colonial feminist critics often see a form of resistance and

a plethora of discourses challenging mainstream, white, patriarchal culture in this marginalised position. Sydné Mahone (Mahone quoted in Williams 1989:xvii), for instance, notes that African American women dramatists are excluded from mainstream American theatrical tradition since their plays “simply do not reflect the images and interest of the financially dominant culture, the white patriarchy.” (1989:xvii) These playwrights present an alternative viewpoint to mainstream (Western) theatre. Thus they are celebrated more by forums that serve alternative and liberal art. Consequently, African American woman playwrights are marginalised in both American and patriarchal African American theatre. On the other hand, bell hooks points out in *From Margin to Centre* that “the margin need not be defined as a place that holds markings of less value. Rather for African Americans, it is a ‘site of resistance’ to racial and gender oppression, silence, despair and invisibility.” (hooks quoted in Mahone 1994:xiii)

The subverting theatre

In the following section I focus on *Funnyhouse of a Negro*. Sarah is the protagonist of the play. This chamber play is an exciting montage of hallucinations, projected by the central character. The structure of the play not only signifies the protagonist’s mental turmoil but also reflects the previously discussed challenging position of Black feminist drama, thus contributing to the creation of an autonomous Black female identity. Defining Kennedy’s play as a Black feminist drama, we have to note that such definitions are never entirely adequate to label a piece of work. Nonetheless, the play that I am now discussing shows several characteristic features of both feminist and Black drama. According to Patricia Schrooder, in our approach to defining feminist drama as such, we have to focus on dramatic forms that “reflect women’s experience.” (Schrooder 1996:71) As

she puts it, “a feminist play resists the oppression of traditional dramatic practice in theme and form, as well as in characterization.” (Schrooder 1996:71) The form of Kennedy’s plays is the key issue in this approach. Her plays resist the traditional, “hierarchical structure” (1996:71) of Western, male-dominated theatre. Such theatre forms are “male.” (Reinhardt quoted in Schrooder 1996:71) As Nancy S. Reinhardt claimed:

The structure of traditional western drama ‘imitation of an action’ is linear, leading through conflict and tension to a major climax and resolution [...] One could even say that this aggressive build up, sudden big climax and cathartic resolution suggest specifically the male *sexual* response. (Reinhardt qtd. in Schrooder 1996:71)

Kennedy’s plays, such as *Funnyhouse*, *The Owl Answers*, *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*, are kaleidoscope-like. Not only do they lack a linear plot structure, they also question the images that African Americans could gain from nationalistic representations of Black culture. The scenes follow each other as in a mosaic. Kennedy’s dramas usually do not contain coherent dialogues, but rather monologues, monotonously performed by the characters, who imitate a ritualistic chant with the trope of repetition. Her protagonist is a young Black intellectual girl, named Sarah. She is a student of English, living in a small chamber-like room on the top floor of a brownstone building in New York City’s Westside. Struggling for a cohesive identity, she projects four iconic selves: Queen Victoria, the Duchess of Hapsburg, Jesus and Patrice Lumumba. Melanie Klein suggests that the play takes place in Sarah’s mind (Klein quoted in Barnett 1997:123); Sarah projecting her inner turmoil. This would suggest, however, that the

play has a central character. Negro-Sarah and her selves, however, are of equal importance.

We learn her family story from her first monologue and from the other characters, who are also her selves. She had a white mother; “she was the lightest one”, who had straight hair like any white woman. Her father, on the other hand, was a black man, “the darkest one”, who raped her mother. This mixed-race character lives in a society that excludes her from valuable human relationships, for she belongs neither to white nor to Black culture. Understandably a harmonious family and/or love relationship is her only wish:

I clung loyally to the lie of relationships, again and again seeking to establish a connection between my characters. Jesus is Victoria’s son. Mother loved my father before her hair fell out. A loving relationship exists between myself and Queen Victoria, a love between myself and Jesus but they are lies. (Kennedy 2001:15)

Me, myself and I: the mirror as heterotopia

Sarah wants to identify with her white friends: her Jewish boyfriend (who does not love her), and her white mother, as well as with white culture. She completely rejects her African heritage via her father’s bloodline. Through her Queen Victoria self, she identifies with whiteness:

Victoria always wants me to tell her of whiteness. She wants me to tell her of a royal world where everything and everyone is white and there are no unfortunate black ones. For as we of royal blood know, black is evil and has been from the beginning. Even before my mother’s hair started to fall out. Before she was raped by a wild black beast. Black was evil. (Kennedy 2001:14)

Her desire for whiteness is not only expressed by the obsessive identification with the historical figures of the Queen and the Duchess, but is also materialised in that she herself wants to be an “even more pallid Negro [...] pallid like Negroes on the covers of American Negro magazines; soulless, educated and irreligious.” (2001:14) Her room is full of old books and artefacts: photos of English castles and monarchs, an oriental carpet and a large white statue of Queen Victoria that dominates the room. Besides these objects, mirrors appear on stage, both as part of the scenery (a mirror at a dressing table) and as props (e.g., a hand mirror). These mirrors, which appear both as actual objects and as connotation (via the title *funnyhouse*), are of major importance in the identity creation of Kennedy’s play.

Using poetic language and montage stage settings, the play is surrealistic, dreamlike, as described in feminist aesthetics. In an interview, Kennedy said of her writings: “I see my writing as a growth of images. I think all my plays come out of dreams...” (Kennedy quoted in Patsalidis 1995:301) Her rather nightmarish settings are – as Savas Patsalidis notes – the “stage version of the conceptual problem of Otherness and heterotopias.” (Patsalidis 1995:301-2) Kennedy applies heterotopias in a Foucauldian sense (like the mirrors in *Funnyhouse* and other media, such as the movie screen (in *A Movie Star*)). According to Foucault, heterotopias are places which are capable of “juxtaposing in a single real place several places; sights that in themselves are incompatible.” (Foucault quoted in Patsalidis 1995:301) The mirror of Kennedy’s *funnyhouse* pluralises the heterotopic nature of her play and thus strengthens the aspect of theatricalisation. The heterotopia in this case is the stage or theatre itself, which is a real space that brings together incompatible sights. In this way the mirror of the *funnyhouse* and the

mirroring function of the theatre are copied onto each other, forming one unit. The two images construct a new metaphor that is the theatre itself.

Theatricality in the mode of character representation is the other key issue in Kennedy's play. Sarah creates four selves which all work as alternative subject positions for her. She is able to switch among these selves, resulting in a continuous acting out of roles. She imagines living together with these characters:

The rooms are my rooms; a Hapsburg chamber [...]a chamber in a Victorian castle, the hotel where I killed my father, the jungle. These are the places myself exist in [...] I find there are no places only my funnyhouse. (Kennedy 2001:15)

At other times, Sarah believes that she is actually the characters herself and that instead of living with her boyfriend Raymond (the Jewish poet) she is living with the husband either of Queen Victoria or of the Duchess of Hapsburg: "Part of the time I live with Raymond, part of the time with God, Maxmilian and Albert Saxe Coburg." (Kennedy 2001:13)

By the same token, as she is the creator of these roles/selves, she functions as metaphorical author/director. By this, Kennedy subverts the world-as-theatre analogy, in which, typically, "the white man" (and in some cases the white woman) has "traditionally been a despotic director or an omniscient dramatist." (Patsalidis 1995:301-2) Her authority, however, collapses when she loses her control over her multiple selves, which ultimately leads to her death.

The background story of Sarah's family relations is one of the key elements in subverting the traditional topic of black theatre, which is either "blacks confront white world, like in revolutionary theatre" (Fabre

1983:111) or “blacks confronting one another, which depicts whites only parenthetically.” (Fabre 1983:111) In this play the conflict is not external, i.e. social-based, but internal, that is psyche-based. The *funnyhouse* in the title is significant not only because it is the “metaphor of America” (Fabre 1983:111) but also because it represents Sarah’s identity crises, “Who am I?” The mirror, in Jaques Lacan’s theory of subject formation, symbolises the mirror stage, which is necessary in order to develop a well-balanced, healthy ego. The mirrors in the *funnyhouse* help the protagonist to glimpse her identity (even if this is only a mirror image). Moreover, they also serve as the metaphor of the function of traditional classic-realistic theatre: that is, to hold a mirror up to society. Thus, *Funnyhouse of a Negro* does not eliminate the white audience but on the contrary universalises Sarah’s mental struggle to find her identity and make peace with her ancestry with a gesture of theatricality.

Surrealistic characterisation: the owl and the dog

The story of Kennedy’s characters in general could be represented in a realistic mode, as was done by some of her predecessors, for example in *Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. In such a representation, there had always been a correlation between representation and referent. In other words, this kind of theatre creates the illusion of the harmony between character and actor, role and the social sphere, as well as between actions, meaning that actions follow each other in a teleological order.

This mode of representation – in Ihab Hassan’s understanding – follows the structuration of postmodern drama, in which “Things and subjects are simultaneously out of their proper time and topos.” (Patsalidis 1995:305) The play represents pluralism, e.g. in the mode of staging Sarah’s story. It

applies both tools of an analytic play (we learn about her family from the characters) but the audience is dropped into the surrealistic imagery of a split mind. Randomness and discontinuity are the chief ingredients of plot organisation, because the order of the scenes could be changed or exchanged. Instead of the integration of the subject into the proper social order, disintegration ends the play, with Sarah committing suicide. Representational reality is eliminated from Kennedy's plays since it cannot, by definition, characterise African American culture. As Kennedy notes: "ambivalence, deterritorialization, heterogeneity, plurality, eclecticism, discontinuity, parody, paradox reign supreme" instead.

In this section, I highlight the common denominators of character representation in *The Funnyhouse*, *The Owl* and *The Lesson in Dead Language*. The notion of character is the most problematic in this mode of representation, since it is deconstructed throughout these plays. So far we have seen that Sarah, by projecting her selves, is acting out four roles. Her role playing, however, is imperfect. Although she wants to be a queen or a duchess she can never become one, and the ultimate result of her fantasy of being someone else is her death. Turning this problem upside down and inside out, the projected selves of Sarah also act a role. They all appear as Sarah's created egos, and thus we can interpret them – as if in a *reversed minstrel* show – as playing Sarah herself. The characters constantly estrange themselves from the roles in which they are cast, by announcing that they are the people who they are playing, thus revealing the very constructedness of theatricality. Negro Sarah acts two female and two male roles. At the same time, from the projected selves' point of view, these characters act out Sarah. Either way, the harmony between actor/role/character is questioned. Thus the play theatricalises the role-playing nature of the search for an identity.

I used the term *reversed minstrel* to refer to a phenomenon that can be defined as *play passing* in subject theory. Kennedy's alter egos, Sarah in *Funnyhouse* or Clara Passmore in *The Owl Answers* and Clara in *A Movie Star*, all apply some form of "passing" in their lives. The reason for this is the same – their gender and/or race is not good enough in their surroundings. "Passing" in African American lingo refers to someone's desire or ability to successfully conceal their blackness to the extent that they "pass" for white. The outcomes of the various characters' attempts at passing, however, differ in nature.

Enikő Bollobás differentiates two types of *passing* in subject formation theory. Passing, as she defines it, is "a way of escaping metaphysical or logocentric binaries, whether between genders, races, sexualities or classes". (Bollobás 2010:14) It is, in other words, a form of "social performance." (2010:14) Passing can be either *full* or *play* passing. In the first case, the "aim is to deceive, to be altogether the same", which is always a *performance*. (Bollobás, 2010:14) In the latter case, however, we can consider it an "interrogation and subversion of the binary system and as such [is] always a performative creation of new ontologies." (Bollobás 2010:14)

Full passing (*performance*) and play passing (*performativity*) according to this theory represent the two procedures through which the subject comes into being. In the first case, the subject is created to be an inactive entity, obediently acting out the socially prescribed roles that are assigned to his or her subject position. In the latter case, however, the subject constructs itself to become an "active agent" (Bollobás 21). Kennedy's heroines progress on this scale of performance—performativity. We usually see them in a catachrestic state of mind, in other words, in a personal

ontological and epistemological crisis. This mental existence means that the characters act performance that goes beyond the normativised gender, race or class ascribed to a given person. In such writings, women construct themselves into new subjects” (Bollobás 14).

In both *The Owl Answers* and a *Lesson in Dead Language*, the character—role harmony is deconstructed in the extremities. In *The Owl*, the protagonist is “She who is CLARA PASSMORE who is the VIRGIN MARY who is the BASTARD who is the OWL.” (Kennedy 2001:29) While in *The Owl* the characters keep their human nature most of the time, in *Lesson in Dead Language*, the pupils’ costumes look identical, as if deprived of any personal features. The central character (not protagonist though) is played by an actor wearing the mask of a white dog, who is completely dehumanised.

Clara Passmore in *The Owl Answer* is in her thirties. She is a school teacher from Savannah, Georgia, who goes to England. Her story is even more blurred than Sarah’s. While in Sarah’s case the character’s parentage was clear, in the case of Clara we cannot be entirely sure who her ancestors are. Her DEAD WHITE FATHER for whose burial she arrives at St. Paul’s Chapel in London, is either THE RICHEST WHITE MAN IN THE TOWN or REVEREND PASSMORE (or the GODDAMNED FATHER). Likewise, her mother has plural identities. She is the “BASTARD’S BLACK MOTHER who is the REVEREND’S WIFE who IS ANNE BOLEIN”. (Kennedy 2001:29) In both cases, the heroine identifies with white culture, which is represented by great historical figures; in the latter case by SHAKESPEARE, CHAUCER and WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR. These figures play the guards at St. Paul’s Chapel and slam the gate shut in Clara’s face when she tries to enter to see her dead father. Her right to take part in her white father’s burial is denied from her

THEY. Bastard. [...]

SHE. You must let me go down to the Chapel to see him. He is my father. [...]

THEY. Keep her locked there, guard. ...

SHE. We came this morning. We were visiting the place of our ancestors, my father and I. We had a lovely morning, we rose in darkness, took a taxi past Hyde Park through the Marble Arch to Buckingham Palace, we had our morning tea at Lyons than came out to the tower. We were wandering about the gardens, my father leaning on my arm, speaking of you William the Conqueror. My father loved you William ...

THEY. (*Interrupting*) If you are his ancestor, why are you a Negro? (Kennedy 2001:30)

Clara Passmore and the rest of the characters change and exchange their roles as if it were costumes and masks and fake hair. In the stage directions Kennedy writes:

The characters change back and forth into and out of themselves, leaving some garment from their previous selves upon them always to remind us of the nature of She who is Clara Passmore who is the Virgin Mary who is the Bastard who is the Owl's world. (Kennedy 2001:29)

This passage again exemplifies the issue of passing. The protagonist has a talking name that refers to the act of *full passing*, since she is longing to identify with white culture; she attempts to *pass more* – more than the “unfortunate blacks” as Sarah says. However, her passing is imperfect, indeed impossible. But explicitly revealing the impossibility of such an act by presenting and deconstructing it at the same time results in the act of new self construction as *play passing*. By presenting the drama of *passing* (either full

or play), Kennedy's plays unmask the social constructedness of gender, race and class with one hand and unveil the role playing nature of one's identity with the other.

What she saw in the movies

The idea of identifying with white culture through various media, and simultaneously the impossibility of it, are recurring themes in the Kennedy corpus. The fourth drama discussed here, *A Movie Star has to Star in Black and White*, is the most conspicuous one in this regard.

Thirty-three-year-old Clara is the protagonist of this very complex play. She is represented within a society that forces her into a double bind, affecting her entire life. She is expected to fulfil the role of an angelic woman in her domestic realm, as well as in her public domain. She experiences normativising processes of her immediate as well as of her extended environment through both the heritage of her family and the media. In a catachrestic state of mind, she is alienated from herself and her environment; she fails to achieve a cohesive identity. In this alienation, she gives up her efforts to maintain harmonious relationships. Instead, she reconstructs herself – her subject position – through the act of writing. Her femininity is defined in relation to her writing: menstrual blood becomes her 'écriture feminine', and her labour of creative output is symbolised by her pregnancy.

There are two basic attitudes that African American women have regarding their position, which is mainly ascribed to them through an unspoken ideology that comes through the media, ranging from Hollywood films of the era, via magazines (with photos of "pallid Negros"), to European cultural heritage, conveyed via school books ("old volumes") and photos of castles and great monarchs. The first attitude is the one that is embraced by Clara Passmore, Sarah, and the girls in a *Lesson in Dead Language*. They

all turn to a special heterotopic place, a metaphorical mirror, to find the object of their identification. In their case, the movies and other media alike function like a “mirror”, like the *Lacanian mirrors* in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (see section 2).

Kennedy – like her alter ego, Clara – in her childhood also experienced a fascination with Hollywood movies and the persona of Bette Davis in particular. In her biographical book *People, Who Led to My Plays* she writes:

She was plain. She was troubled. She was controlled by her mother and then one day she took a trip on an ocean liner and total fulfillment came to her because of this trip on the ocean. She became beautiful and loved. One day I’m going to take a trip on an ocean liner, I thought, and all of my dark thoughts and feelings, all my feelings that I don’t belong anywhere, will go away (Kennedy 91).

Applying the theory of the mirror stage in Lacan’s psycho-analysis, Deborah R. Geis argues that Kennedy/Clara turns to the symbolic realm of the movies to find a mirror, but instead sees the reminder of her Otherness (1992:173). Clara, the heroine of the play, at a certain point in the drama asks: “Each day I wonder with what or with whom can I co-exist in a true union?” (Kennedy 2001:65). Critics such as Geis argue that this means that Clara is an alienated subject, who “speaks to re-inscribe herself as an ego ideal, but who can only do so at the imperfect level of identity with an object” (Geis 1992:174). The “true union” – as Geis puts it – “is as unlikely as the possibility that she could become her Bette Davis persona” (1992:175).

Clara's position resembles that of Sarah in *Funnyhouse* or Miss Passmore in *The Owl*, whose complete identification with whiteness is just as unlikely.

A critical position is attributed to Clara. She is a playwright, writing her own drama, by which she takes the first step towards gaining her own voice. Creativity and writing, as such, usually characterise male characters/authors. In their essay *Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar write that the author "is a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis" (Gilbert and Gubar 1979:6). Although it is debatable whether or not female writing can be defined in terms of biological essentialism, Gilbert and Gubar propose the question, regarding creative metaphors: "If the pen is a metaphorical penis, from what organ can females generate texts?" (Gilbert and Gubar 1979:7) The logical answer to this question seems to be the womb. The text, then, the 'écriture feminine', comes forth from the body as milk and blood.

In *Lesson in Dead Language*, the Pupils all wear white organdie dresses, white socks and black shoes. (Kennedy 2001:43) Visible on the backs of their uniform dresses (as they stand with their backs to the audience) are great circles of blood. (2001:44) The pupils in the play are faced with the terrifying experience of menstrual blood, both as a physical sign of the end of their childhood and the beginning of their womanhood, and as the metaphor of their creative abilities.

PUPIL. I bleed Teacher, I bleed. It started when white dog died. It was a charming little white dog. He ran beside me in the sun when I played a game with lemons on the green grass. And it started when I became a woman. My mother says it is because I am a woman that I bleed. (Kennedy 2001:44)

If *Lesson in Dead Language* allegorises the beginning of womanhood, the loss of a girl's innocence through experience and the beginning of feminine creative power, *A Movie Star* presents female creativity at its peak. The heroine is pregnant, bleeds and writes at the same time. In this way the menstrual blood turns into the metaphorical ink.

This play presents a multi-layered theatricality by presenting Clara's life (and drama) through two media: film and theatre. With this she occupies a critical position in opposition to Hollywood representations. Each scene of Kennedy's play starts with a film set, in which the leading roles are played by actors who look exactly like Bette Davis, Jean Peters, Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift and Shelley Winters. The "real characters", who are people from Clara's life (her father, mother, husband and brother) appear only as "Supporting Roles" (Kennedy 2001:63). Clara actually plays only "a bit role" (2001:63). The movies *Now, Voyager* (1942), *Viva Zapata* (1952), and *A Place in the Sun* (1951) appear in the play. By the fact that white actors act out the lives of Clara and her family, Kennedy critiques Hollywood's American Dream fantasy and its exclusion of African American actors. Laura Mulvey argues that the type of visual representation (narrative cinema) which these films represent "manipulated our sense of visual pleasure through the coercive act of cod[ing] the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal structure" (Mulvey in Geis 173). The powerful impact of the cinema does not influence female audiences alone. Female and male African American film-goers alike face similar difficulties in finding an object of identification when they watch movies with exclusively white actors.

At this point we can conclude that the beauty and body images in Clara's life that come from the idealised movie images and her emotional

attitude within her family are closely interwoven and are the cause of her catachrestic – or, as she puts it, “catatonic” (Kennedy 2001) – state of mind. These types of Hollywood movies offered only a limited set of positions with which women film-goers could identify, such as the figure of the well disciplined, obedient girl (Bette Davis in *Now, Voyager*) or the *femme fatale* type (Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun*). Nonetheless, these women characters, according to Enőkö Bollobás’ criterion of performance/performativity, can be all categorised as women acting out performances at the beginning of the film plot and become performative by the end of their actual or mental journey. One example of this is the role of the ‘angelic woman’ that is expected of Clara in Kennedy’s play. Bette Davis (for Clara) says: “I’ve always felt sad that I couldn’t have been an angel of mercy to my father and mother and saved them from their torment” (Kennedy 2001:64). The women in the play – and this is also common in popular representations – blame themselves for their unsuccessful family life. Note that not only Clara, but her mother as well, tries to fulfil the role of a perfect wife and mother, i.e., the ‘angelic woman’. Despite all of her efforts, however, Clara’s mother fails. In the second scene, she asks of Clara in the utmost despair: “What did I do? [...] I don’t know what I did to make my children so unhappy” (Kennedy 71).

Susan J. Douglas argues that the miserable life of a poor black family would evoke nothing but “repulsion” (Douglas 1995:8). In Kennedy’s drama, these miserable scenes are acted out by white actors. In this way, the ideology of the perfect world conveyed by Hollywood movies is subverted, with the result that identification will be equally difficult with these lives on both sides. The play would, however, lose much of its subverting nature if it were not been for the character of Clara. The playing of black lives by white actors would simply reinforce the position of African American people in

society, since this playing is only the performing of already existing social roles.

Conclusion

Adrienne Kennedy's plays subvert the traditional Western European theatre by applying postmodern dramatic features. Her works are comprised of non-linear, non-teleological scenes in order to best represent the characters' identity crises. Negro-Sarah in *Funnyhouse* or Clara Passmore in *The Owl Answers* and their multiple selves do not have traditional dialogues. The plays consist of parallel monologues. Instead of a hierarchical relationship, they are related to each other paradigmatically; none of them is more important than any other. The connection of the characters to one another on the one hand, and the non-teleological plot on the other, result in a feminist aesthetics.

The characters' identity crises in the plays often, as we have seen, result from the various forms of media (films, magazines, photos, cultural artefacts) which communicate the *ideal of whiteness*, family life, and ascribed subject positions (mother, daughter, angel or fallen woman) to these female characters. They turn to these constructed images as if to a mirror, yet their *Otherness* becomes only the more striking. Their solution is either *full* or *play* passing. The first, by its impossibility, and the latter, through its subversive nature, are both capable of showing the constructed nature of race, gender and class categories.

Clara's ambition to become a writer allegorises the performative nature of the play. Clara's inability to take either the angelic or the demonic female role makes her character subversive. Her pregnancy and menstrual blood (just like the blood in *Lesson in Dead Language*) are both the

metaphors of female artistic creativity, which might be a way out of her trapped situation. Creativity, as such, helps the characters to gain a voice; they thus become – using Enikő Bollobás' term – active agents, instead of passive submissive ones.

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VISIONS OF THE FEMALE SUBJECT IN THE BORDERLANDS

MARIA-CRISTINA GHIBAN (MOCANU)

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași

Abstract: Drawing on distinctions among concepts regarding the female experience, as well as on postcolonial theory, the proposed paper aims at identifying a series of specific features of the Chicano/a vision of the female subject. It also focuses on apparently irreconcilable differences between Chicano and Chicana literary strategies in dealing with feminine imagery, as well as on a taxonomy of female instances that could be configured in both literary and social spaces.

Key words: female subject, Chicano/a literature, feminism, *méztizaje*, indigenous imagery

Introduction

‘Textbook’ feminism (if we consider it a synonym for white feminism) treats the concept of ‘woman’ not as a matter of individual gender consciousness but as a political category. ‘Femaleness’ is a cultural construction created to counter oppressive male images of women; this concept functions as the basis for the social, economic and political

betterment of women. Some feminists attack the psychoanalytic preference for a fragmented female subject, which is seen as free to reconstitute itself in new and liberated forms.

As a result the female subject is treated distinctively and the literary forms in which it develops are consequently strikingly different as well: ethnic feminism prefers a type of writing that represents the self as fractured and fragmented, as against the realist texts with a clear sociological context preferred by non-ethnically bound feminism.

It thus becomes imperative for the Chicana to construct a feminist voice for women of colour with which to speak to white women as well as to men. Gloria Anzaldúa explains the manner in which Chicanas are oppressed by the cultural imperative that women remain silent, unquestioning and invisible within traditional Chicano culture; even the language that is available to these women expresses masculine rather than feminine consciousness: 'Chicanas use *nostros* whether we're male or female. We are robbed of female being by the masculine plural' (Anzaldúa 1987, p. 54).

Hence, besides being an oppressed subject in the male-female opposition of the community, the Chicana also face the issue of speaking from a discredited cultural position, in a literary environment that has been established and devised to express the lives and thoughts of men (be they coloured or white) and white (only) women. Therefore, the construction of the female subject of the borderlands follows a number of strategies to respond these issues, among which the attempt to re-design inherited stereotypes, the construction of an alternative literary tradition and the challenging of conventional distinctions among literary forms of expression could be mentioned. Furthermore, by an enactment of what has been called 'border feminism', Chicanas also advance the issue of performativity, in that

the taxonomy of female subject positions is configured through both their theoretical and their literary practice.

In her *Feminist Theory and Literary Practice* (2000), Deborah Madsen argues that Chicana feminists are somewhere inbetween the socialist and the psychoanalytic trends – that is they focus on the social consequences of being an oppressed subject, while constantly seeking to produce a third space of imagination through their fiction writing.

Anzaldúa's definition of the female subject as *nepatlera* or as a *mestiza* ("carrying all five races") is taken further by Ana Castillo in her *Massacre of the Dreamers*, by introducing the term *Xicanista* to stand for the politically aware female subject in search of a voice, all the while preserving a somewhat individualistic perspective and foregrounding concern for the self. The introduction of all these apparently striking terms functions as a re-configuring of the female subject in the borderlands, previously and traditionally associated with stereotypes of feminine psychoanalysis. The Chicana theoretical framework stands on the ground of revolt against the stereotypical construction of the female as the "other", with its subsequent modifiers – "the castrated", "the coloured", "the banished-from-heaven", "the submissive", basically, "the inferior". Furthermore, some Chicanas (Emma Perez in *The Decolonial Imaginary*, 1999) even distance themselves from the colonial/postcolonial framework, while introducing a third, the decolonial, as the imaginary through which history could be re-written by paying particular attention to the experience of the marginalised, "that interstitial space where differential politics and social dilemmas are organized" and the imaginary "conjures fragmented identities, fragmented realities, that are 'real,' but a real that is in question" (Perez 1999:6).

And the Chicana/feminine identity is such a marginalised instance. This marginalised position, both in the psycho-social background of the community and in the Western literary tradition, has always given the Chicana female subject various labels. It is in fact these labels that the Chicana feminists have to deal with, before and while introducing ‘the decolonial’.

The well-known Freudian concept of the ‘castration complex’ is challenged primarily by feminists, regardless of their racial attributes, as it constitutes one of the first instances of a male intellectual discriminative position.

The fact that the male subject has been rigidly fixed in the common understanding as superior to the female subject is a result not only of the impositions of tradition, but also of the recognition of the latter as justified and ‘scientifically’ explainable, a characteristic which both Freud and Lacan have contributed to. In this way, the ‘castration complex’ might be considered to have become, through the scientific praise that Freud received, an almost involuntary response to gender differentiation, a reflex.

Judith Butler offers another analysis of identity from a poststructuralist view that is helpful in discussing Chicana rewritings of gender (Butler 1990). Instead of seeing gender identity as a result of linguistic construction, she uses the ideas of agency and performance, defining gender as “the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts” (33). Her aim is to justify the assumption according to which female identity is self-stylised, and that by repeated acts/performances it creates the illusion of an essentialised identity. What is even more important for the analysis of the Chicana female subject is the fact that Butler relates performance to an “act of conscious affiliation”, rather than to natural reasons.

The foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be taken. My argument is that there need not be a 'doer behind the deed,' but that the 'doer' is variably constructed in and through the deed (Butler1990:142).

Butler's concept of gender performance could therefore be extrapolated to a series of 'deeds' that involve the construction of a specific identity, even though that identity is fragmented in itself. The 'doers' perform the fragmentation in order to render explicit their discontent with the others performances, perpetuated by history and repetition. Performing as Chicanas, the feminists deny the Freudian assumptions of inferiority just as much as they make a political statement of self-determination. Although they might perform their true selves (if that notion could still be maintained without essentialising it), the Chicanas do so in a mediated manner, consciously assuming the role language and previous situations have in shaping their current being. The female subject in the borderlands responds to the historical moment and the way in which it has been conceptualised by others by wearing the mask of fragmentary identity and by employing a set of strategies that further perpetuate that fragmentariness. The Chicana writers and theorists thus employ a set of female subject positions of which some are performed in response to the phallogentric order, while others are performed in an undisclosed manner, so as to contribute to the complexity of instances the feminine can manifest itself in. To this end, they employ a set of images, 'drags' in Butler's terms, which may be seen as constituting a taxonomy of female subject positions characteristic of the Chicana environment.

In order to sustain the extent to which these categories respond to the previously mentioned 'dichotomous categories', it is, however, unavoidable to also look at the male configuration of the topic. Although the Chicano movement is primarily concerned with the ethnic polarisation of American society and culture, and hence the marginalisation of minority subjects, there are tendencies towards including or excluding gender performance, depending on the identity assumed at a particular moment. The male configurations of identity inevitably respond, in their turn, to the development of feminist theories within the Mexican-American environment, and while some preserve stereotypic female imagery in a 'traditional' manner, others tend to incorporate a different approach to femaleness, as they (un)willingly portray instances of empowered women.

In this context of Chicano and Chicana performances of identity, to place them together would help to express not only the affiliations they establish in performing the Mexican-American identity, but also the assumption that gender differentiation is not necessarily bound to dissipate one, but rather to help perform both. As Mexican-American identity in general, and female subjectivity in particular, is constructed on the bases of fragmentation, the slash in 'Chicano/a' is actually a unifying principle, however paradoxical that may sound, in that it places an emphasis on the "infinite divisions" (Rebolledo 1993) that might actually unite.

Towards a taxonomy of the female subject

Without purporting to be exhaustive, the discussion of the female encounters in the Chicano/a literary environment could encompass a number of recurring images. On the one hand, they serve the previously exposed principle of identity performance, aiming to establish themselves as counter-prototypes to the male-dominated tradition. On the other, some of them are

inferred from the constant preoccupation of female authors predominantly to generate a new terminology to define and identify the Chicana.

In this respect, Maria Herrera-Sobeck's *The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis* (1990), based on more than three thousand *corridos* (which are considered the most traditional and representative forms of artistic expression in the Chicano environment) explores five major female archetypes: the Good Mother, the Terrible Mother, the Virgin of Guadalupe, The Lover—both faithful and treacherous— and the Soldadera. Most of these archetypes represent both positive (Good Mother, Virgin of Guadalupe, Faithful Lover) and negative (Terrible Mother, Treacherous Lover – La Llorona, La Malinche) examples of feminine prototypes that have influenced the general and (self)perception of women in the borderlands. The final one, however, reconfigures “positive female behavior” to include political agency in the form of armed struggle for the revolution. It is this *soldadera*, somehow portrayed by the corridos as a possible feminine instance, that occupies most of Herrera-Sobeck's study, in order to show that the gender roles assigned by the patriarchal system allow for a certain praise of the woman who goes beyond traditional gender roles, even within the male-dominated community. However, she goes on to explore the ways in which this incipient form of liberation is dealt with by male authors, apparently abandoned by strongly-oriented social ones (such as Luis Valdez's portrayal of women as voiceless others), and concludes that both traditional and non-traditional gender roles are based on the assumption of heterosexuality, which generates oppression on multiple levels: as members of a minority group, as females, and as inheritors of a culture that tends to be dominated by males. In a performance of authorship, Herrera-Sobeck manages to take one first step

in issuing a taxonomy of the female presence in the borderlands, all the while providing the comparative approach of 'traditional' and postmodern analysis.

When expanding this taxonomy of the female subject positions in Chicano/a literary production, some other 'categories' can be included, depending on whether one is guided by the revisionist or the innovative principle. The revisionist performances include legendary female figures, rediscovered by the Chicana as being the initial perpetrators of the 'castration complex': La Virgen de Guadalupe, la Malinche, La Llorona and the other Catholic or Indian/Aztec deities serve as objective instances of oppression. These are symbols that the 'spectators' can easily recognise, and a re-enactment of their patriarchal nature under the light of the feminist atmosphere of the movement enables the latter to re-evaluate their validity as solid figures of ideology. Furthermore, the incorporation of general terms that have been traditionally associated with a subaltern position (such as daughter, wife, or even mother, lover/mistress and female worker) functions as yet another re-enactment. By assigning the female subjects the role they have stereotypically been confined to, the Chicana female writer tries to display the possibility of change. And in most cases, change is a synonym for creation, initially in terms of language and eventually of identity. The innovative principle functions on the same level of performance, but while tradition is assumed as drag in order to strip it off, the 'new' female identities are proudly performed, at times at extensive levels. They include the *soldadera* image that Herrera-Sobeck enlarged upon in her analysis, but also Gloria Anzaldúa's *new mestiza* or Ana Castillo's *Xicanista*, overall the prototype of the empowered, self-confident woman, able to negotiate an in-between space from which to reconfigure the male/female dichotomy. In the same creative endeavour, the issue of lesbianism seems to function as the ultimate performance that challenges the validity and consistency of the male-

normative discourse. Queer theory, as reflected in the works of the Chicana, interrogates not only categories of sexual orientation but also the social constructedness of male/female relationships and their susceptibility to change. All these purport to be subsequent images of the feminine principle, in order to justify the fragmentariness of an identity in the making, which is never stable yet always somehow in opposition to the 'canonic' imaginary. What is noteworthy in the realm of feminist readings by Chicana is the fact that they rarely give up antagonism to the male completely. The Chicano writer, on the other hand, rarely focuses willingly on female stereotypes, which is why the fractured identities of women are still present, even though not emphasised. When bringing out the female in a male-dominated narrative structure, the performance is still one of difference, but leaves room for undisclosed developments. In a sense, writings such as those of Luis Valdez, Jimmy Santiago Baca or Rolando Hinojosa contribute to female revisionism by reinforcing the positions that the Chicanas are aiming at deconstructing.

Female indigenous imagery

The rewriting of myth, which necessarily entails rewriting ideology and cultural norms, operates within the theoretical framework of Chicano/a cultural criticism. Certain stories have been created and perpetuated in order to subordinate the female image to the ascribed phallogentric order, and some of them have evolved independently, up to the point where the mythic/unreal can no longer be separated from the reality of the status quo.

The three most eminent figures of Chicano/a culture, La Malinche, La Llorona, and La Virgen de Guadalupe, demarcate the patriarchal boundaries of feminine behaviour, and their legitimisation comes from the combination of indigenous and Catholic traditional views. In *Borderlands/La Frontera* Gloria Anzaldúa states:

La gente Chicana tiene tres madres. All three are mediators: Guadalupe, the virgin mother who has not abandoned us, la Chingada (Malinche), the raped mother who we have abandoned, and la Llorona, the mother who seeks her lost children and is a combination of the other two [...] In part, the true identity of all three has been subverted—Guadalupe to make us docile and enduring, la Chingada to make us ashamed of our Indian side, and la Llorona to make us long-suffering people. (30)

Acknowledging these figures as portraying the female subject in a subaltern position, the Chicana feminists point out the ‘distortions’ of the patriarchal system, as “feminism is a way of saying that nothing in patriarchy truly reflects women unless we accept distortions – mythic and historical” (Alarcón 1982:189). The revisionist Chicana sets out to recognize these distortions and perform a shift in ideology by deconstructing the stereotype.

La Malinche, the Mayan translator who worked for Hernán Cortés, is probably one of the most condemned figures in Chicano culture. Her story as a translator for the conquistadores was turned into “his-story” of a traitor to her people. It has come to incorporate the idea of betrayal of nationhood, as a consequence of uncontrollable sexual desire. In a way, la Malinche is the incarnation of the Freudian subject, driven by her libido. Her knowledge of two languages and her ability to learn Spanish, which eventually led to her translating for Cortes, enabled her to become a mediator between the Aztecs and the Spanish. She was Cortes’ mistress and presumably the mother of the first *mestiza* when she gave birth to a daughter. As Norma Alarcón states in her study of La Malinche, the story evolved into portraying an intelligent young woman into an “evil goddess and creator of a new race [...] mother-whore, bearer of illegitimate children, responsible for the foreign Spanish

invasion” (182). She is “the Mexican Eve” (188), whose weakness led to the destruction of the Aztec empire (the lost paradise of Mexican culture). One of the most contested instances of La Malinche theory is Octavio Paz’s “The Sons of La Malinche”, which nonetheless offers an insight into the way in which the story has influenced male perception of the Mexican woman, from within the borders of the ethnic community: “violated mother [...] Her passivity is abject: she does not resist violence, but is an inert heap of bones, blood, and dust. Her taint is constitutional and resides, as we said earlier, in her sex [...] And yet she is the cruel incarnation of the feminine condition” (208).

La Llorona, the “Weeping Woman,” the second of the Mexican mythic figures, bears some similarities to La Malinche, in that it defines womanhood as monstrous, incapable of control. There are numerous variants of the myth, but all of them describe a woman who is sexually abused and betrayed by a man she still longs for and after going mad kills all her children and haunts creeks, wailing in pain.

Both La Malinche and La Llorona are failed mothers, and while some see La Llorona as merely another incarnation of La Malinche, the origins of her myth precede the Spanish conquest. Américo Paredes elaborates on the legend as striking “deep roots in the Mexican tradition because it was grafted on an Indian [Nahuatl] legend cycle about the supernatural woman who seduces men when they are out alone on the roads or working in the fields” (103). At times, the same myth has been associated with that of the ‘Woman Serpent’, a Toltec deity said to walk through the city at night, whose wails were considered an omen of war (Stavans 2007). Chicana feminist theory has placed a great emphasis on these two female images as they served to reinforce the idea of woman as inherently sinful, similar to the Catholic belief. Cherrie Moraga (1983) suggests that in this way the image of

womanhood is turned into an “aberration, a criminal against nature” (145) and that the male order is installed on the basis of this assumption.

In contrast to these images of female evil, the figure of the Virgen of Guadalupe comes as yet another patriarchally-imposed figure. In what seems to have been the story of an Aztec fertility and earth goddess, the Catholic ideology found the imagery that could help Christianise the colonised people. Guadalupe has gained extreme importance for the Chicano/a culture as she has become a unique deity, a combination of the Virgin Mary and Coatlicue/Tonantzin. Her special features of being a nurturer and protector of all Mexicans regardless of gender made her a more “attractive” role model; even for the revisionist Chicana, its story of the oxymoronic origin of life and death (in Aztec mythology) enabled a counter-narrative of female matriarchal power.

The perpetuation of these archetypal images “pervades not only male thought, but ours too as it seeps into our own consciousness in the cradle through their eyes as well as our mothers’, who are entrusted with the transmission of culture” (Alarcón 1982:183). The internalised myth follows the generations, and even though the stories themselves are rendered unbelievable by contemporary notions of the unreal, they have instilled into the Chicano/a consciousness a negative way of characterising the feminine.

However, the mythological figures have served the Chicana authors in their attempt to reconceptualise the Mexican woman, as they turn them into “symbols of resistance”. But while for Chicanos this resistance is directed against Anglo domination, for the Chicanas the figures are problematic in that they do not correspond to the reality of a new border performance. While for the Mexican *macho* the female figures are non-conflictual, for the Chicanas they are more than so, and writers like Sandra Cisneros acknowledge this by saying that: “Part of being [Chicana] is that love and

that affinity we have for our culture [...] [Yet] I felt, as a teenager, that I could not inherit my culture intact without revising some parts of it [...] We accept our culture, but not without adapting it to ourselves as women” (Arnada 66).

By taking a stand on the mythological perspectives inflicted by traditional male-hegemonic structures, Chicana authors allow themselves to perform the fragmentary identity of the mestiza. They maintain a link with the traditions and stories that they associate with Mexican culture while still asserting a female perspective, incorporating both positive and negative elements.

The female legendary figures are constant in their presence as Chicana revisionist symbols. Whether subjects of theoretical insight (*Goddess of the Americas, Our Lady of Controversy*), or as performances associated with a symbolic order (in Ana Castillo’s *So far from God* 1993), these figures are constantly referred to as being fragmented identities that cannot be confined to a single authoritarian position but rather serve as shifting elements of the Chicana identity. Once a ‘Virgen’, afterwards a modern Malinche, the Chicana feels as if she is no longer bound to the stereotype and thus can reinterpret the symbols according to her own momentum.

The ‘regular’ woman

From the emblematic figures of Aztec and Catholic tradition, the Chicana female subject reveals itself as complicated and poses the question of reversibility. On the one hand, the ‘goddesses’ might have been images of regular women turned into myth. Marina Warner (*Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* 1976) speaks of the Virgin being “one

of the few female figures to have attained the status of a myth—a myth that for nearly two thousand years has coursed through our culture, as spirited and often as imperceptible as an underground stream” (xxv). Or feminine behaviour has been shaped by iconic figures inflicted with patriarchal ‘commandments’. In each of the cases, however, the idea of ‘the regular woman’ in Chicano/a culture complies with the normative aspects of the male-dominated ideology. The term ‘regular’ becomes significant in itself when discussing the female position, as from the notion of an attribute of something being ‘in conformity with a fixed principle’ it has evolved into designating a ‘common, usual and normal trait’. Feminists in general and Chicanas in particular struggle to charge these ‘regular’ images of women as mothers, daughters and sisters, etc. with yet a different set of energies, guided by a “possible vision for social change”: “I write the myths in me, the myths I am, the myths I want to become,” explains Anzaldua in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (71). By challenging and transforming old myths, the new *mestiza* participates in the collective birth of a new culture:

I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. (80-81)

Sandra Cisneros calls this attempt to re-fashion the regular woman a result of the ‘trauma’ of ‘reinventing ourselves’ (Aranda 1990:66), and other critics identify the symbolic figures as ‘reference points’ used ‘not only for controlling, interpreting, or visualizing women, but also to wage a domestic battle of stifling proportions’ (Alarcon 1982:182). While the stereotypical

roles have been assigned to enforce the values of chastity, humility, self-sacrifice and long-suffering motherhood for women, the Chicanas try to add the values of strength, endurance, intelligence and tolerance, on the basis of female creativity. In *Nepantla. Essays from the Land in the Middle* (1993) Pat Mora elaborates on the different 'regular' positions the female has in the Chicana culture and calls for a 'shift in meaning' for all the terms designating the women of the Chicana culture:

You will find yourself disoriented at times by the use of the word *we*. I know the feeling. I purposely let the meaning shift and slide as it does in my life. Who are the *we* of me? My family, writers, Chicanas, Southwesterners, mothers, women of color, daughters, Latinas, college graduates, Hispanas, wives, Mexicans, U.S. citizens, readers, advocates, Mexican Americans, women, educators, learners? [...] And the *we* of us is a problem. [...] These labels produce strong reactions. Our labels continue to evolve. We cannot allow them to separate us and must grant one another the right to name ourselves. Given all that confronts us, we need to avoid the convenient trap of using linguistic debates to resist the discomfort of change, of learning to work with those who share our dissatisfaction with our cities, states, nation, the new world that is supposedly being ordered. [...] Labels and labelers, the power of naming, do, of course, merit our scrutiny. (Mora 1993:7)

In the work of Chicanos, the female subject is persistently seen in terms of these 'regular' types: either as a 'good' woman (a sister, mother, granddaughter, daughter, wife) or as a 'bad' woman who deviates from the norm (the aggressive 'masculine' woman, the sexually driven whore, the alienated daughter). Nevertheless, some new writings especially of urban-raised authors indicate that Chicanos are beginning to write in a less dichotomous manner, in what has been called (Mirandé and Enríquez 1977)

a 'spirited' image of the female as consciously deviant from the cultural norms of her community and of the patriarchal system in general.

Nonetheless, deviance does not take a revisionist form unless this is purposely done through a performance of difference. The Chicanas employ various 'unnamed' women stereotypes in their pursuit of the same goal of modifying the patriarchal status quo and furthermore of educating younger generations in the equalitarian, if not reversed order of gender dichotomy. The Chicana female subjects are strikingly submissive at times, in order to allow for an even more striking evolution towards self-determination.

An awareness of the difficulty of dealing with such regularly associated typologies is preserved, and at times irony serves as a counterbalancing device. What cannot be changed *per se*, or the alteration in the patriarchal vision of the female would take too long, is rendered unavailing, so that the 'rule' is still contested. Furthermore, the re-evaluation of female 'regularity' brings about a change in male portrayal as well. The Chicano role-model of the *macho* is fuelled with negative connotations of violence and lack of intellectual abilities, so as to signal a reversal in stereotypes. The Chicana, although at times not explicitly, becomes a positive figure by contrast with the male uncontrollable drives to (self)impose. The mistress stereotype is turned into the positive one of lover, for instance, by adding the value of honesty and the inability to escape *machismo*.

It is noteworthy to refer in this context to an interesting subject position the Chicanas assume, that of the victim. While acknowledging the inferior position women have had throughout the evolution of the Chicano culture, the Chicanas apparently enact, to certain degree, a victimisation of the present subject: "you will hear many voices speaking, questioning our public discourse, affirming the right of Latinas and Latinos to be heard, to

participate in shaping the future of this country. [...] No one of us committed to social change lives a serene, lyrical life.”(86) The victim position is twice relevant for the Chicana, as it resonates on both sides of the social environment. On the one hand, it enables women to resonate with the political and cultural activism of the (self)proclaimed representatives of their culture (the Chicana feminists), while on the other, it provides the ‘promise’ of a better future for those committed to standing up and trying to make room for their own subjectivity and agency. And in order to provide a way out of the victim position, numerous Chicana authors strive to formulate theories of new identities, performing the role of ‘facilitators’ for those oscillating in their quest for a liberated identity.

The new mestiza

Herrera-Sobeck’s *soldadera* image is one of the examples of this facilitating performance. By emphasising the role women play in the development of a traditional male-narrated story of the border, the cultural critic reinserts the female subject in its apparently rightful place. The *soldadera* is still an archetype, but one that has consciously been omitted from most of the analysis of the *corrido*, as it posed no question of evolution: “The *soldadera* was forced to fade into the woodwork by male leaders who, taking complete control, encouraged women to return to the home and become, once again, mothers and daughters. It was easier to glorify the *soldadera* and to mythify her than to grant her the vote.”(116). Women are thus prevented from pursuing an independent attitude, as the patriarchal tradition emphasises the mystifying elements of such an archetype and not on female strength and masculinity.

The concept is similar in this way to Ana Castillo's *Xicanista* theory as developed in the ten essays of *Massacre of the Dreamers*. Castillo offers a valuable critique of mainstream feminism from which, she argues, Chicanas feel justifiably alienated. She uses concepts such as "the feminine principle" and defines it through the "Mother-Bond Principle" (223) or "the Virgen de Guadalupe/Tonantzin - the feminine principle within ourselves" (88), which binds all activist mestiza feminists or "Xicanistas" together (204).

Thus the female subject, or "the feminine" is always considered in relation to ethnicity and culture but not always in relation to class. The process of identity formation central to Castillo's work is linked not only to a genetic hybridity but to a cultural hybridity. The two, however, become intertwined in the particular trait of women, their spirituality: "[T]his undercurrent of spirituality - which has been with woman since pre-Conquest times and which precedes Christianity in Europe - is the unspoken key to her strength and endurance as a female throughout all the ages" (95). In fact, the mestiza's identity is defined by this spirituality (95) along with her sexuality (136). By emphasising the negative effects of Catholicism and Marxist theory, Castillo attacks them as being "doctrines that are inherently male dominated" (87). Her challenge to patriarchal institutions has to do with the image of Tonantzin/Virgin of Guadalupe, as the single dual (Aztec/Catholic) embodiment of the "feminine principle". Furthermore, Castillo comes to define the modern theoretical and political *soldadera* by using her *Xicanista* term, encompassing social and cultural activism and female spirituality. The *Xicanista* is 'at a crossroads' where she decides to no longer deal with male intellectual power and to reintroduce the creativity principle for which she stands:

Here is the juncture in our story where I believe Xicanisma is formed: in the acknowledgement of the historical crossroad where the creative power of woman became deliberately appropriated by male society and woman in the flesh, thereafter, was subordinated. It is our task as Xicanistas, to not only reclaim our indigenismo - but also to reinsert the forsaken feminine into our consciousness.

(12)

Furthermore, the *Xicanista* calls for action on multiple levels and provides the positive vision of a less patriarchal future: “I define the activista as Xicanista, when her flesh, mind and soul serve as the lightning rod for the confluence of her consciousness. Xicanistas may also arrive at this consciousness from roads other than the ones discussed here, to be sure; and one generation later, young Xicanistas are contending with the polemics of the Bush-Reagan years that affected their generation” (93).

Last but not least, Gloria Anzaluda’s *new mestiza* consciousness seems to have been the most influential of the Chicana modern female types. The *mestiza* consciousness, in Gloria Anzaldua’s terms, “is a product of crossbreeding”, of mixing Mexican heritage with Indian and Western blood, all the while departing from any simple genetic determination. It is a cultural construct intended to define the experience of those women of mixed origin, balancing at the crossroads between multiple ideologies, conflicting personal quests with the (self)imposed rules of the community. The role of the *mestiza* is that of actively working towards the creation of a new space to call her own, a space in which she will be able to reassign racial and gender roles. Therefore, for Anzaldua, being a *mestiza* is not only a name-bearing for a hybrid of races, but also of a special type of cultural activism – “The mestiza documents the struggle [...]. She reinterprets history, and using new symbols she shapes new myths.” (Anzaldua1987:6). Her *Borderlands/La Frontera*

(1987) focuses on mestizaje and hybridity in a “woman centered narrative” (Quintana1996:127) in a performative strategy of offering a feminine version of the mythology of masculine cultural nationalism. Anzaldua’s self-fashioning quest and her commitment to “ancient indigenous culture” (127) are a conscious effort to construct a new mestiza community, hence a new identity for the Chicana female subject, one that is able to tolerate and incorporate difference and no longer resents the masculine but rather ignores it. In a prospect world depicted by a fragmented narrative of female consciousness, Anzaldua hopes to integrate ‘ambiguities’ and recover the harmonious atmosphere of indigenous pre-historic times. Hers is probably the most elaborate account of how Chicana identity is able to function within the newly issued revisionist atmosphere of the feminist movement, as it also incorporates the idea of lesbianism, as the (in)voluntary response to the patriarchally constructed identity that has been ascribed to the female subject through tradition and ideology.

Conclusion

The female subject re-configuring within the Chicana feminist literary tradition poses the duality of exclusion/re-integration within a traditional framework. Both narratives and theoretical texts originating in the “marginal” space of the Chicano community have been systematically excluded from traditional American literary history. Being a Chicana feminist writer is thus another way of responding to oppression, but by forcing the ‘other’ (in this case tradition) to accept the interventions of a different community (namely the Mexican American one).

The female subjects of the borderlands, both in their social and theoretical construction, have assumed a new position in respect to their counterparts. Although initially concerned with revising stereotypes, a feature which is still to be observed on a subsequent level in recent writings by

Chicanas, contemporary literary and artistic representations of the Chicana female subject no longer comply with that initial mode of expression – revolt. Instead, Chicanas nowadays (as writers, academics, or characters portrayed in books) have already reached a state of political and self-awareness which enables them to claim a different role and give up the set of “modifiers” traditionally associated with the gendered ‘other’.

A taxonomy of the female subject in the borderlands is thus bound to focus on both the ‘traditional’ imagery, re-performed by the Chicanas in order for it to be deconstructed, as well as on neo-constructivist imagery. By formulating theories of difference, the Chicana female subject becomes a mediator between the canonical perceptions inflicted by Freudian psychoanalysis and the postmodern approaches to gender performativity. From being a ‘traitor’ through translation (Alarcon 1989:57-87), the female subject regains its creativity and is able to initiate another trajectory for its further existence in the no longer male-dominated world.

Although not exhaustively, this analysis of the female subject in the borderlands has revealed a set of images that could configure this taxonomy, in both literary and theoretical writings by Chicanos/as. The categories identified correspond to the three major preoccupations of the Chicana feminists. In revising tradition, they employ legendary figures such as La Virgen de Guadalupe/ Tonantzin, La Malinche, La Llorona in order to deconstruct their patriarchal upbringing as female ‘role-models’. Revisionism also entails a different approach to the ‘regularity’ of female subject positions as mothers, daughters or wives, by striving to charge them with a new set of meanings. By writing their own ‘myths’, Chicanas are going beyond the patriarchal ‘ruling’ power and issuing a new code with which to denominate the female experience. Lastly, the third category of femaleness in the borderlands encompasses new identities, fragmented and re-constructed from

the perspective of a self-conscious individual. The *soldadera*, *Xicanista* or *the new mestiza* stand for the evolutionary tendencies the postmodern subject implies, all the while incorporating race, ethnicity and sexuality in defining the female.

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**ALICE WALKER'S WOMANISM: PERSPECTIVES
PAST AND PRESENT**

ALEKSANDRA IZGARJAN

and

SLOBODANKA MARKOV

University of Novi Sad

Abstract: The article charts the development of womanism as a movement which has presented an alternative to feminism. It advocates inclusiveness instead of exclusiveness, whether it is related to race, class or gender. Womanism provided political framework for colored women and gave them tools in their struggle with patriarchy which imposed restrictive norms and negative stereotypes on them. It also tackled the restrictiveness of feminism which was especially evident in the field of literary scholarship. Womanism is also related to new movements within feminism such as womanist theology and eco-feminism.

Key words: colored women, feminism, patriarchy, womanism.

1. Introduction: Definition of womanism

Alice Walker who founded womanism is one of the most renowned African American writers today due to the broad spectrum of themes in her work which reflect the diverse experiences of the African American community in the U.S. Starting with her first novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* to the latest collection of essays *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For*, Walker has examined the whole history of the African Americans, from the troubled period of slavery and the long struggle for civil rights to the victories scored in overcoming negative stereotypes and restrictions imposed by the white community. This struggle represents an integral part of the African American matrilinear heritage which can clearly be traced in Walker's novels, especially in the portrayal of her female characters who find strength in their female precursors and oral heritage they had bequeathed to them. As Walker's literary scope expanded and she developed into a more mature writer and political activist, she became aware of the need for a movement which would be different from feminism and which would offer colored women a space to formulate their policy. She named it womanism. At the center of womanism is the concern for women and their role in their immediate surroundings (be it family, local community or work place) and more global environment. Walker defines a womanist as a "black feminist or feminist of color" who loves other women and/or men sexually and/or nonsexually, appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength and is committed to "survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female" (Walker 1983:xi). She firmly locates womanism within black matrilinear culture deriving the word from *womanish* used by black mothers to describe girls who want to "know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for

anyone” and whose behavior is “outrageous, courageous or willful” (Walker 1983:xi). Thus, the emphasis is clearly on a behavior which is at the same time responsible and playful, fearless and compassionate. In Walker’s more metaphorical definition of womanism: “Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender” (Walker 1983:xii), she distinctly extols womanism and sets it apart by comparing it to the strong color of purple which is often described as the royal color. Feminism pales in comparison by being associated to weaker lavender and this appraisal reminds one of the debates whether feminism really lost its appeal to many women during the 1980s and 1990s. Lavender as paler color is also cleverly associated with the notion that feminism is related more to white women than colored. As Montelaro aptly notices: “This contrast of hues in Walker’s definition is consonant with her political intention to demonstrate the crucial difference between the terms ‘womanist’ and ‘feminist’: according to the semantic analogue she constructs, an exclusively white, bourgeois feminism literally pales in comparison to the more wide-ranging, nonexclusive womanist concerns represented by the rich and undiluted color purple” (Montelaro 1996:14).

3. Past perspectives on womanism

The divide between white and colored women can be traced back to the very beginnings of feminism as a movement. Although at the start, the goal of feminism was to win equality and suffrage for women, already in the nineteenth century it became clear that there were two separate women’s movements since white women refused to support the struggle of black women for their rights. For example, in the U.S., white women, especially in the South, built their ego by oppressing black women who were at the bottom of the social ladder. Refusal of white women to acknowledge the basic rights of black women can be found in many testimonies of slave women such as

Harriet Jacobs and Harriet Wilson. In her famous speech “Ain’t I a Woman” Sojourner Truth questioned such policies of white women and demanded equal rights for all women. Frances Harper emphasized the painful choice black women had to make during their struggle for suffrage in the 19th century since they had to seek the support either of the black men who demanded their own right to vote or of the white women. Since white women rejected black women’s claim to the same civil and political rights, they decided to support black men in their struggle although that meant postponing attainment of their rights. Another good example is the story of Saartjie Baartman who was taken from Africa as a slave and then paraded in England and France as a freak because her physique did not correspond to Western standards. Instead of being treated as a human being, she was objectified and derogatorily dubbed as the Hottentot Venus.

The rift between white feminists from western countries (or so called First World countries) and colored women from minority ethnic groups and economically underdeveloped countries (often referred to as the Third World countries) remained. Similarly to patriarchy which rests upon binary oppositions in which man always occupies the first part in the equation and is seen as the norm, while woman is seen as his opposite, as weak, unfulfilled, as the Other, feminism started to operate on the same principle of binary oppositions, but this time it was the colored woman, the poor woman who was seen as the Other because of her difference in terms of origin, race, ethnicity and class. Michie contends that white feminists wanted to preserve their position of speaking subject and that they marginalized colored women because they did not fit into the prescribed norms (Michie 1991:60). Spivak and Allen also criticized white feminism which according to them consisted of various forms of elitism and cultural imperialism reflected in the imposition of white women’s norm upon the rest of womanhood. In their

opinion, feminism kept the axioms of imperialism alive by accepting and utilizing the ideology of individualism which was at the center of colonial forces designating the first place to white western citizens who were seen as subjects and second or third place to colored people who were then seen as objects (Allen 1995a:2; Spivak 1991:798). Hence the division into First and Third world countries. Feminists accepted patriarchal policy and built their dominance at the expense of women of color's gains, by distancing themselves from them and excluding their work. As Baym puts it, "a difference more profound for feminism than the male-female difference emerged: the difference between woman and woman." (Baym 1991:73). In catering to the needs and goals of white First World women and operating from the premise of exclusivity, it did not include the needs and goals of colored women and Third World Women. Liu states that:

A key aspect of white women's privilege has been their ability to assume that when they talked about themselves they were talking about all women, and many white feminists have unthinkingly generalized from their own situation, ignoring the experiences of black women, or treating them as marginal and "different." Many have also projected western concerns and priorities onto the rest of the world, measuring "progress" according to western liberal standards and identifying a global system of patriarchy through which "differences are treated as local variations on a universal theme" (Liu 1994:574).

Showalter who charted parallel histories of African American and feminist literary criticism and theory ascertained that they remained separate and that the Other Woman, the silenced partner in feminist criticism, has always been the black woman (Showalter 1991:169). Eminent African American writers and scholars such as Barbara Christian, Mary Helen

Washington, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Gwendolyn Brooks, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker kept pointing out that racism became part of feminism and feminist scholarship. Walker especially begrudged feminists for not perceiving colored women as women, but as a completely different species, thus reserving for themselves the prerogative of womanhood. In her opinion, the reason for it was the desire of the white feminists to avoid assuming responsibility for the lives of colored women and their children so they denied them the rights they had (Walker 1983:374).

Exclusiveness of feminism was particularly evident in the field of literary scholarship since white feminist critics in the 1970s and 1980s largely ignored the work of colored women or relegated it to the margins of literature. Alice Walker in her description of the circumstances that prompted her to create the womanist movement recalled how her colleagues Patricia Meyer Spacks and Phyllis Chesler rejected the inclusion of African American women writers in their survey of women writers' history. When Walker questioned such a stance, Spacks and Chesler tried to justify themselves by saying that they could not write about women whose experience was so different from theirs. That, however, did not stop them from writing extensively about eighteenth and nineteenth century British women writers whose experience was also presumably quite different from that of Spacks and Chesler who are American scholars living in the twentieth century. Phyllis Chesler also stated that Third World women have a special psychology which scholars have to master in order to be able to write about their work (Walker 1983:372). While this example shows that the existence of racial and cultural differences was ignored, when at the end of the twentieth century the growing body of ethnic writers made it no longer possible, feminists placed a lot of emphasis on racial differences stating that a special knowledge and expertise were necessary to enable analysis of the work of ethnic and minority women

writers thus effectively marginalizing them again. Mridula Nath Chakraborty is one of the scholars who posits that as soon as white feminists realized that they could no longer insist on unified subjectivity or singular identity of women because this position was contested by colored women, they started claiming that feminism was dead just like literary scholars proclaimed the death of the author precisely at the time when multicultural authors started dominating the literary scene (Chakraborty 2007:102).

Womanism reflected the decision of colored women to clearly state their objections to such an exclusive position of white feminists and to create a paradigm which would incorporate values important to them. Not only did womanism distance itself from feminism, it also presented itself as stronger and more original thus applying the feminist strategy of distancing in order to underscore the restrictiveness of their paradigm. Womanists wanted to decenter white feminists and challenge the 'normality' of their perspective (Bryson 2003:228). As an alternative to dominant patriarchal and feminist models, womanism served as an example of different modes of behavior and thinking, and retrieved the submerged history which led to the transformation and redefinition of existing norms and to the broadening of traditional views. According to Valerie Bryson, black women's analysis of the interlocking and interdependent nature of oppression has constituted a paradigm shift in feminist understanding: "Placing African American women and other excluded groups in the center of analysis opens up possibilities for a both/and conceptual stance, one in which all groups possess varying amounts of power and privilege in one historically created system" (Bryson 2003:229). While womanism does not claim that black women have discovered the "truth", their insight into the multi-faceted and interlocking nature of class, race and gender can enable awareness of other systems of oppression such as age, physical ability and sexual orientation (Bryson 2003:230).

Womanism thus grew from an answer to the exclusionary practices of feminism into a larger form of political activism and became a tool for colored women with which they could not only challenge policies which marginalized them, but more importantly, provide the framework for the empowerment of colored women and women from ethnic minorities all over the world. In order to build a womanist paradigm which rests upon notions of inclusion and support among women, womanism insisted on the self-sufficiency and self-confidence of women since they had to deal with racism and denigration on a daily basis, and emphasized the need for a strong community of women who would help each other and provide the support needed to resist oppression and patriarchal dominance and transform traditional systems into new ones in which they would have more possibilities to express themselves. In order to provide women with the positive values which would sustain them, Walker found inspiration in the matrilinear culture of African American foremothers which is largely based on the tradition of building networks among women. Many African American scholars and writers supported such solidarity among women. Solidarity enables different groups of women to support each other without insisting that their situation is identical; it also enables women to form alliances with oppressed groups of men. Womanism strived to challenge all power structures which inhibit human growth and development and it largely contributed to the discussions about dynamics of power not just within feminist and womanist circles but also on a more global scale. In her works, Walker painstakingly demonstrates that women become supporters of patriarchy when they subscribe to power games whose aim is to win dominance through the subjugation of others which can take many forms such as racism, sexism and classism. The answer obviously lies in steering away from dominating behavior and accepting a broader platform of

interaction among women. That is why womanism placed to the forefront the commonality of female experience and introduced nonexclusive womanist alternatives to enhance social equality.

Precisely because it provided a broader framework than feminism, many prominent female scholars and writers such as Buchi Emecheta, Mariana Bâ, Miriam Tlali identified themselves as womanists rather than feminists and used womanism as a paradigm in their analysis of the texts of women from ethnic minorities or economically undeveloped countries. Women from Africa and the African diaspora have particularly embraced the idea of a network of women who support each other, especially mothers, since mothers are most vulnerable in the early stages of their children's development and need additional sustenance in African countries which often struggle with poverty, diseases and political turmoil. The womanist concept of universality also underscores as its utmost goal the wellbeing of the whole community or as Walker puts it: survival and wholeness of entire people and love for the Folk (Walker 1983:xii). These tenets gain special value in societies torn by ethnic divisions and civil wars in Africa. Mehta maintains that

[t]he communal mother, who occupies a privileged place in West African societies, exemplifies Alice Walker's definition of a womanist who is committed to the integrity, survival and wholeness of entire peoples due to her sense of self and her love for her culture. Several African feminists like Filomena Steady and Chikwenye Ogunyemi are self-identified womanists who have demonstrated how the philosophy and practice of womanism have enabled them to propose a new model of femininity for African women that is independent of patriarchal and western definitions of the feminine. Situating itself at the grassroots level, womanism posits the impracticality and inviability of feminist

utopias, by seeking total commitment, as the woman factor is an integral part of the human factor. (Mehta 2000:396).

Mehta draws a parallel between colonialism and white feminism which both operate from the position of dominance and subordination of African nations. The split between womanism and feminism has resulted from the complicity between white western feminism and white patriarchy to further marginalize the experience of women of color by representing them as the negative instance of the white, middle class female model (Mehta 2000:396). In her groundbreaking essay “Under Western Eyes”, Chandra Mohanty has also shown how these representations have centered on a sensational or exaggerated sense of a daily reality of indigenous and Third World Women defining them in terms of their literacy, poverty, social and religious victimization (Mohanty 1990:180). These women consequently have to confront a dual system of discrimination, articulated by a white male and female patriarchy. It is important to note that exponents of womanism do not see it simply as a theory of and for feminists who happen to be black. Rather, it is a self-conscious epistemological standpoint which argues that feminist struggles cannot be confined to gender issues and that, if other perspectives are excluded from feminist thought, its attempt to understand even the situation of white women will be seriously flawed. The idea that oppressions interconnect and therefore *cannot* be challenged in isolation is now widespread amongst black and third world feminist writers (Davis 1990:31).

Inclusiveness of womanism allowed it to become a functional paradigm not just for colored women in the U.S. and Africa, but also for women in Latin American countries. Latin American women rejected feminism because they saw it as too “Eurocentric” and because it did not deal

with problems such as racial violence, health issues, unemployment (Walters 2005:118). Unlike feminism, womanism did not concentrate just on gender inequality, while ignoring issues of race and class, which also made it a more viable option for many women around the world. Women in Latin America, as well as in Third World countries, must struggle against postcolonialism, ethnic and tribal divisions and rigidity of religious patriarchy and they embraced womanism since it gave them tools to confront various forms of oppression. It also enabled them to gather around a movement which expressed their concerns which were different from the concerns of white feminists from economically developed countries. These differences and the need of womanists to address them were apparent during the conferences on women rights in Cairo and Beijing in the 1990s. Feminists from western countries were mostly interested in issues of contraception and abortion, while women from ethnic minority groups and economically undeveloped countries were more interested in issues of racial discrimination, poverty and family and community violence. In Bryson's opinion, more developed and systematic analysis of the ways gender, class and race discriminations overlap, influenced various movements of colored women, including womanism, to move beyond mere critique of white feminism to develop original theory which has serious implications not just for white feminism, but for all women (Bryson 2003:226).

3. Present Perspectives on Womanism

While during the 1970s and 1980s the focus of womanism was predominantly on political activism and the struggle against racism, sexism and classism, during the late 1990s and in the first decade of 21st century, womanism changed under the influence of the fragmentation of feminism but most significantly under the influence of multicultural feminism.

Multicultural feminism shares many of the tenets of womanism such as insistence on the analysis of the influence of the social categories of race, ethnicity, sex and class on the lives of women and the decentralization of feminism. Multicultural feminists criticized womanism for its exclusionistic stance in relation to white feminists which influenced Walker to change her original standpoint and to allow for the possibility of including all women, colored or white within the span of womanism, including men who respect women and their rights. One of the reasons for this change of opinion was the fact that under the constant criticism of colored women, some of the white feminists changed their stance and recognized the need to incorporate different voices and discourses into feminism and to avoid divisions along the lines of race and class. It also became clear to Walker and other womanist scholars that womanism is in danger of becoming similar to feminism if it continues its policy of exclusion. As Bryson observes: "Any claim that black women have a superior 'standpoint' upon the world is highly suspect" (Bryson 2003:231). Heidi Mirza also expresses reservations about the notion that there is a fixed identity possessed by all black women since she thinks it is a "naïve, essentialist universal notion of homogenous black womanhood" (Mirza 2004:5). She states that depending on the context, black women may be aware of themselves as black, female or black women. This means that black women should explore "this fluidity by facilitating the construction and articulation of more positive black female identities" and use their view from the margins to challenge "dominant ways of seeing the world" (Bryson 2003:232). Womanists heeded such criticism and worked to diversify womanism which resulted in some significant changes of the movement during the 1990s.

The focus of womanism most importantly shifted to the exploration of the spiritual and religious aspects of womanism. Walker developed the

spiritual side of womanism in her novels *The Color Purple*, *The Temple of My Familiar* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* in which she examines the ways dominant Judeo Christian religion subjugates women by imposing on them strict norms and modes of behavior which objectify women and assign only two possible roles for them: pure Virgin mother or sullied Mary Magdalene. She goes back to the beginnings of civilizations on the African and Latin American continents and explores the ways matriarchal societies were suppressed by patriarchal and pantheistic religions and worship of Mother Goddess was supplanted by Christianity and Islam. She offers a more integrative vision of religion resting upon the premise of equality of all beings and celebration of both male and female aesthetics. As Montelaro states: “Womanism allows women to weave together their maternal identities and histories in order to revise their oppressive circumstances and to rewrite more acceptable scripts for themselves” (Montelaro 1996:71). This broadening of the scope of womanism corresponds to other women’s movements within and without feminism which also combined political activism, spirituality (with particular emphasis on female manifestations of divine power) and ecology in the 1990s. Most notably, in its more recent forms, womanism has integrated aspects of eco-feminism in its dedication to wholeness, ecology and preservation of natural resources. Since eco-feminism is based upon an assumption that all forms of life are sacred and interconnected, it opposes patriarchal attitudes, which led to the exploitation of the earth’s resources without concern for long-term consequences. Many eco-feminists see a link between the way society treats animals and the natural environment and the way it treats women. A parallel can also be drawn between womanism and spiritual eco-feminism in their concern for the preservation of Earth, respect for all beings and the spiritual component of people’s lives.

The branch of womanism concerned with spirituality developed into womanist theology which gained in significance during the first decade of the 21st century. Nnaemeika observes that the concept of womanism has had a profound influence on the formulation of theories and analytical frameworks in women/gender studies, religious studies, African American studies, and literary studies. Because of the interweaving of womanism and spirituality in Walker's project, many African American female theologians have incorporated womanist perspectives in their work. African American womanist theologians question the subordination of women and assume a leadership role in reconstructing knowledge about women. Prominent black womanist theologians and scholars of religion – such as Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Katie Geneva Cannon, Delores S. Williams, Emilie Maureen Townes, and Marcia Y. Riggs – bring womanist perspectives to bear on their church, canon formation, social equality, race, gender, class, and social justice. The impact of womanism goes beyond the United States and many women scholars and literary critics have embraced it as an analytical tool. (Nnaemeika)

Thus, womanism continues to reinvent itself and functions as an operational paradigm which carefully monitors processes of creation and definition of the roles women play in their communities so that previous mistakes can be avoided and essential balance maintained. Womanism is still dedicated to the struggle against oppression and fragmentation and against any kind of behavior whose goal is to denigrate a community or an individual based on the difference in race, culture or class. It can therefore be asserted that womanism evolved from a policy to a philosophy of life. Walker voices this philosophy in her call to all women to create a platform based on the communality of female experience which would allow them to communicate better with one other.

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**CONTAINING OTHERNESS THROUGH RATIONAL
DETECTION: FEMININE CHARACTERS IN ARTHUR CONAN
DOYLE**

ELENA MARIA EMANDI

"Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava

Abstract: The present paper is intended to focus on the feminine characters in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Sussex Vampire*. Starting from the analysis of imagery in these two texts I shall exemplify traits of the complex process of encoding otherness.

Key words: irrational, other, patriarchy, rational, vampire

Arthur Conan Doyle is considered by many scholars just a marginal writer of Victorian literature, dealing with a sub-literary genre, the detective story. Still, detective stories attract people all over the world, and one of the classics is Sherlock Holmes's series. Jaqueline Jaffe viewed Conan Doyle as "one of the few remaining Victorian writers who has not been 'rediscovered' by contemporary critics" (Clausson 2005:4). Taking into consideration the fact that imperialism and the woman question are key elements in the cultural complex of ideas that define late-Victorian England, I intend to broach a reevaluation of Conan Doyle by approaching the feminine characters in two of his writings: *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Sussex Vampire*. They share the metaphor of the vampire in feminine guise, either covertly (in the former – at a symbolical level, of course) or overtly (in the latter). They are overcoded with otherness through rational detection. Like Bram Stoker whose England is a land in love with modern science and technology, Arthur Conan Doyle's detective fiction illustrates his preoccupation with the tension between rational deduction and the presence of the irrational. Conan Doyle's "othering" of the foreign and of the female "is evident in his construction of character traits and placement of subjects in plot positions" (Favor 2000:398); his fiction also underscores the superiority of the English versus the Other and of the male over the feminine "other".

In both *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Adventures of the Sussex Vampire*, the detective has to solve a case that strikes the common reader as being out of the ordinary. The troubling elements are represented by a vampire and a terrible demonic hound. A character in itself, nature (the moor) is more than part of the setting: it is a covert vampire figure that shelters the demonic hound. The Gothic connotations of the setting emphasize

the suspense: “behind the peaceful and sunlit countryside there rose ever, dark against the evening sky, the long gloomy curve of the moor, broken by the jagged and sinister hills.” (Doyle 2004:72). The violent character of the landscape is suggested by means of sound symbolism: violent consonants suggesting wilderness alternate with gloom-suggestive vowels:

Our wagonette had topped a rise and in front of us rose the *huge* expanse of the moor, mottled with gnarled and craggy cairns and tors. A cold wind swept down from it and set us shivering. Somewhere there, on that desolate plain, was lurking this fiendish man, hiding in a burrow like a wild beast, his heart full of malignancy against the whole race which had cast him out. It needed but this complete grim suggestiveness of the barren waste, the chilling wind and the darkling sky. (Doyle 2004:73, 74).

The elements containing the semantic trait [+Evil] accompany the description of the desolate unfriendly moor: *fiendish man, heart full of malignancy, wild beast*. One could even sense the moor as having something criminal in it as long as it shelters such a man. Both the untamed nature in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and Mrs. Ferguson in *The Adventures of the Sussex Vampire* share this criminal feature, somehow speaking about the “New Woman Criminal”. This type of woman represents a “specifically public form of femininity for a culture that was redefining and redistricting ‘public’ and ‘private’ amid modern social change.” (Miller 2008:4) As opposed to real female criminals of the time, these new criminal women indicate that this type of woman was a figure of fantasy rather than a reproduction of the headlines of the epoch. She was not a realistic representation subject in her society, but “an imaginative creation within a wildly expanding culture of crime narrative.” (Miller 2008: 5). Critics such as Elaine Showalter have underlined the connection between the intense

feminist social reform and such new representations of criminality. One can describe this new type of woman as controversial since in a culture so much concerned with detectives and police, she seems to represent “not the new circumscriptions of modern society, but its new freedoms.” (Miller 2008:5).

One could not but remark that the rational urban Holmes, whose actions are in support of social order, appears in contrast with the chaotic disorder and uncontrollable force of the moor. Taking into consideration Geoffrey Hartman’s assertion according to which “the mystery story has always been a genre in which appalling facts are made to fit into a rational or realistic pattern” (Clausson 2005:5) this opposition between good and evil is necessary since the literary construction of the sublime in Conan Doyle and in any other Gothic atmosphere texts is a space that generates danger, terror and death. Nature, a feminine character, appears in strict connection with the devilish hound. Therefore, it possesses gloomy features:

Beyond, two copses of trees moaned and swung in a rising wind. A half moon broke through the rifts of racing clouds. In its cold night I saw beyond the trees a broken fringe of rocks, and the long, low curse of the melancholy moor. (Doyle 2004:79).

This passage brings to the reader’s mind another “melancholy” atmosphere text – the one written by Edgar Allan Poe. Sound symbolism suggests a gloomy background: the alternation of vowels and diphthongs creating a low musicality on the one hand and of consonants suggesting the violence of the surroundings culminate in the Poesque alliteration long, low curse of the melancholy moor. The fertile country is presented in contrast with the barren land:

We had left the fertile country behind beneath us [...] The road in front of us *grew bleaker* [+Unease] *and wilder* [+Strange] over huge russet and olive slopes, sprinkled with giant boulders. Now and then we passed a moorland cottage, walled and roofed with stone, with *no creeper* [+Dullness] to break its *harsh outline*[+Dullness]. (Doyle 2004:74)

Such surroundings contain something ominous in them, foretelling terrible experiences. An oxymoronic presence, the moor is gloomy and extraordinary at the same time. One could say it has mesmeric forces:

‘It’s a *wonderful place*, the moor, said he, looking round over the *undulating* downs, *long green rollers*, with *crests* of *jagged granite* foaming up into fantastic surges. ‘You never tire of the moor. You cannot think the *wonderful secrets* which it contains. It is so vast, and so barren, and so mysterious.’ (Doyle 2004:86)

The duplicitous nature of the bog’s surface feeds on everything that traverses it and generates legends. The covert female vampire generates uneasiness in the beholder, linguistically rendered as follows:

What would Holmes say to this? How about that hour of darkness in which the power of evil is exalted? As if in answer to his words there rose suddenly out of the *vast gloom* of the *moor* [+Dread] that strange cry [Mystery] which I had already heard upon the borders of the *great Grimpen Mire*. It came with the wind through the silence of the night, *a long, deep mutter* [+Gloom] then a *rising howl*, and then the *sad moan* [+Gloom] in which it died away. Again and again it sounded, the whole air throbbing with it, strident, wild and menacing. The baronet caught my sleeve and *his face glimmered white through the darkness* [+Dread]. *My blood ran cold in my veins* [+Dread], for there was a

break in his voice which told of the *sudden horror* [+Dread] which had seized him. (Doyle 2004:121)

Doyle uses a significant variety of stylistic means to convey the strangeness and dread created by the moor: epithets (*vast gloom, strange cry long, deep mutter, rising howl, sad moan, sudden horror*), sound symbolism (*vast gloom of the moor, strange cry, great Grimpen Mire, long, deep mutter, rising howl, sad moan*), accumulation (*It came with the wind [...] then a [...] and then [...]; Again and again it sounded, the whole air throbbing with it, strident, wild and menacing*), metonymy (effect for cause: *his face glimmered white through the darkness*), metaphor (*my blood ran cold in my veins*). An unsettling presence, the moor denies the much craved sanity of family and society at a broader level.

The suspected vampire (in *The Adventures of the Sussex Vampire*) threatens the idealist Victorian middle-class domestic harmony and so does the difficult-to-tame wilderness that houses the terrible hound. In a certain way, both Mrs. Ferguson and the gloomy moor behave like vampires: they are overcoded with otherness through rational detection. Unstable grounds operate as equivocal forces and they are therefore connoted as treacherous and fearful. They generate a dangerous attraction and are construed in the feminine gender. Very much like vampire monsters, the treacherous grounds in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* mask “a latent instability that physically and psychologically threatens those who seek to transgress their boundaries” (Wyne 2002:77). They create simultaneously fascination and fear: the moor that protects the hound can be viewed as a covert vampire, a female presence that absorbs secrets and propagates legends:

The melancholy of the moon, the death of the unfortunate pony, the weird sound which had been associated with the grim legend of the Baskervilles, all these things tinged my thoughts with sadness. (Doyle 2004: 93).

The same feelings of unease and awe are created by the unexpected behaviour of a Peruvian mother – “The lady began to show *some curious traits, quite alien* to her ordinary sweet and gentle disposition” (Doyle 1994:72). As the reader might expect, Holmes’s reaction to the suspicion of vampirism positions as representative of the patriarchal world governed by reason and logical explanation:

‘Rubbish, Watson, rubbish! *What have we to do* with walking corpses who can only be held in their grave by stakes driven through their hearts? *It’s pure lunacy.*’

‘But surely,’ said I, ‘the vampire was not necessarily a dead man? A living person might have the habit. I have read for example, of the old sucking the blood of the young in order to retain their youth.’

‘You are right, Watson. It mentions the legend in one of these references. But are we to give serious attention to such things? This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. *The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply.*’

As in the case of the dangerous hound sheltered in the gloomy moor, feminine sexuality in the second vampire story is an element that must be controlled in order for rationality and realism to prevail. The work done by Holmes and Watson is meant to keep at bay the threat of the independent, sexual Woman. Holmes proves successful in his goal of defending Victorian values. He therefore dispels the threat of the demonic hound (living in an ill-omened environment symbolically associated with a vampire) and of

vampirism (that can be interpreted as a metaphor for feminine sexuality). An aspect that is worth mentioning is the emphasis on Mrs. Ferguson's role of devoted wife and mother at the expense of her sexuality and independence. After all, through her silence she proves to be a self-effacing type of woman. She conforms to the general pattern of sheepish obedience like other women in Doyle's writing: Miss Stapleton or Mrs. Laura Lyons.

Mrs. Ferguson and her story provide a space for the exploration of otherness: she is suspected to be a vampire, therefore she is otherized. She is also non-English. Her vampirism, sign of her sexual nature, represents a threat to her family. Mrs. Ferguson and the mire represent the female evil festering within a patriarchal structure that creates anxiety about the female body and its threatening claims to prestige and power. Going one step further, one may understand the tension emerging between rational deduction and the presence of the irrational suggestive in their turn of the tension between romance and realism, as Cyndy Hendershot (1996:10) states in "The Restoration of the Angel: Female Vampirism in Doyle's *The Adventures of the Sussex Vampire*". She views Holmes as a representative of bourgeois realism working on a case involving Gothic romance figures such as the vampire or the demonic hound, we might add. The vampire cast as the wayward woman failing to live up to Victorian virtue. As a consequence, she becomes chaotic and eventually, evil. Christin Leon Alfar (2003:32) speaks about a spectralization of the female identity as women turn, figuratively, into spectres haunting a masculinist order. For Jacques Derrida the spectre is "among other things, what one imagines, what one thinks or sees and which one projects – on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see" (Alfar 2003:32). The feminine characters appear as embodiments of this need to stabilize which is inherently and irrevocably insecure.

This paper is an attempt at reevaluating Arthur Conan Doyle - an important if not major Victorian writer, and its main aim is to exemplify the pattern followed by the detective stories as far as the relationship between the presence of the irrational and the immediate rational is concerned, where the irrational stands for other/ non-English and its rational counterpart stands for male / English.

The feminine characters that appear as embodiments of female vampires/ other in the two works analysed are controlled through Holmes's rational actions, drawing the reader's attention towards an essential aspect: the difference between male vampires and female vampires consists in the fact that while both of them break social and sexual taboos, it is "the female vampire in Victorian examples of the genre that crystallizes Victorian fears." (Hamilton 2004:4). In other words we come across the complex encoding of the tensions between the masculine norm and the feminine other, "between the rational world of the detective and the Gothic romance world of the vampire." (Hendershot 1996:13). The recontainment of Mrs. Ferguson and the explanation found in the case of the demonic hound threatening the Baskervilles fit the pattern outlined above, Holmes succeeding in his effort of defending the Victorian home and the the status quo.

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LADY AUDLEY'S SPHINXIAN MYSTERY?

ADRIANA RĂDUCANU

Yeditepe University Istanbul

Abstract: The present study is based on the analysis of the themes of madness and monstrosity, depicted through the female character, in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's well-known *Lady Audley's Secret*. It discusses the elusive nature of madness and monstrosity that may be perceived as attributes of reader, writer and characters alike; it also considers the possibility of 'madness' as subversive survival strategy and/or escape from narrow patriarchal, political, social and cultural confines.

Key-words: gender, Gothic, madness, patriarchy, strategy, womanhood

Introduction

In many an instance, reading a text through Gothic lenses involves an undeniable proximity to mental disturbances of various kinds, transitorily or permanently damaged psychologies, *monstrosity* and ultimately *madness*. However, the attempt to grasp *madness* and confine it to comfortable definitions more than once escapes even the most assiduously interested researchers. Centuries before *Lady Audley's Secret* was written, the pedantic and obnoxious Polonius, "labouring as ever, to be wittily wise", rhetorically asked: "To define true madness what is't but to be nothing else but mad?" (Shakespeare 2006, qtd. in Porter 2002:1). When reading and attempting to

interpret texts focusing upon debates related to the state of mental sanity, Brewster suggests we should be wondering about “whose pathology is in the question” when “defining madness in a Gothic text”, in other words, when capturing the essence of psychological monstrosity as clear deviation from the norm. Is it possible, or even desirable, to content ourselves with the approach taken by traditional psychoanalysis according to which we should be able to “detect” traces of madness in the very biography of the authors and their characters, and interpret the texts accordingly? Moreover, doesn’t this kind of approach invariably lure us also, as readers, into fictive *madness*, thus hindering *objective* interpretation and offering instead a critical re-production of *madness* which may or may not be there in the text in the first place? (Brewster 2001:281). If we are to escape this vicious circle, then we should somehow become empowered and avoid what Punter calls “the Gothic delirium” from which we may all suffer at certain times (Punter 1996:186). However, there are poems, short stories, plays and novels which simply cannot be approached without deep immersion in the Gothic tropes of *madness* and *monstrosity* which, in turn, can provide answers to more ‘quotidian’ and poignant issues, such as family relations, economic status, alienation, cultural and geographical mobility, etc. Brooks’ system of psychoanalytic criticism emphasises that relating to madness in Gothic fiction involves “a willingness, a desire, to enter into the delusional systems of texts, to espouse their hallucinated vision, in an attempt to master and be mastered by their power of conviction.” (Brooks 1987:16) *Mastering and being mastered by texts* where *madness* plays an important role means, in my opinion, both succumbing to the aesthetic power of such texts *and* attributing *meaning* outside *irrationality*, thus reading beyond the disguise and the ‘discourse’ of pathology. With these observations in mind, the present paper

will focus on Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and analyse the various ways in which *madness* and *monstrosity* can be interpreted as 'informing' reader, writer and character alike, subtly insinuating themselves into the key elements of the text, such as plot and atmosphere. The aim of such a reading is also to argue for *madness* and *monstrosity* as both subversive survival strategies and/or escapes from narrow patriarchal political, social and cultural confines.

Lady Audley's Secret

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's career may be read as symptomatic of a sustained, albeit unwilling, effort to break many Victorian taboos regarding middle-class women. Her biography could not be more offensive to the overpowering *Angel in the House* ideology which controlled the destinies of many a Victorian woman; thus, hardly anything could be perceived as more scandalous than Mary Elizabeth Braddon's supporting herself and her mother by going on the stage. She then abandoned this less-than-honourable profession in order to become the author of anonymous thrillers for the penny-dreadfuls. Her personal life was also an affront to Victorian respectability. For ten years she 'lived in sin' with her publisher John Maxwell, whose wife was confined in a Dublin insane asylum. She worked constantly to support herself, Maxwell, their illegitimate children and his children from his legal marriage. This domestic burden undoubtedly helps to explain her incredibly prolific career as an author; she wrote over eighty novels, among them the best-selling *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), *Aurora Floyd* (1863), *John Marchmont's Legacy* (1863), and a reworking of Goethe's *Faust* entitled *Gerard, Or the World, the Flesh and the Devil* (1891). Apart from this, Braddon also authored nine plays and numerous

short stories and edited several magazines, including *Temple Bar* and *Belgravia*. Her reputation nowadays is mostly based on *Lady Audley's Secret* and the many pressing issues it tackled: identity, taboos, secrets, irrationality, adultery, anxiety, bigamy, blackmail, fraud, all of them typical of nineteenth century Gothic, alternatively known as *domesticated Gothic* and *sensation fiction*. The plot of *Lady Audley's Secret*, in spite of the complex issues it deals with, needs little review. The title character, horrified by the prospect of a life of poverty after giving birth and being abandoned by her husband, decides to entrust her child to her father and remarries into a wealthy family. Thus, by knowingly committing bigamy, she creates a new *identity*, that of the pampered and adored wife of a middle-aged man, an identity which she is determined to keep at all costs. When her first husband returns and naturally demands explanations, she tries to murder him, sets fire to a house in which a blackmailer lives (he dies shortly afterwards of his injuries), attempts to murder her second husband's nephew, and finally pleads madness in order to escape the rigours of the law. After spending a year confined in a mental asylum in Belgium, she dies (a case of extreme nostalgia and despair, perhaps - reasons are not clear), and herself becomes the dark, mysterious page in the family history.

Among the many problematic issues that plagued the Victorian era, society's response to the mentally ill was one of the most pressing, as well as one that led to the creation of purpose-built asylums throughout the country. As mentioned by Beveridge and Renvoize, this concern was highly ambiguous; on the one hand, Victorians were eager to isolate the insane, on the other hand, they were also terrified by the possibility of "the wrongful confinement of sane people." (Beveridge and Renvoize 1988:411). Cases of mental illness, generally but not always confined to the private sphere, were

also part of many Victorian writers' lives. Thus, Thackeray's wife lost her sanity after she gave birth to her third child, the wife of Bulwer-Lytton was committed to a private asylum (in her later memoirs she rebutted the charge of insanity), Dickens was interested in visiting asylums in England and America and was a good friend of Dr. John Connolly, the Brontes were fascinated by phrenology and were the unfortunate witnesses of the gradual psychological deterioration of their brother, and Charles Reade successfully obtained the release of a wealthy man whom he thought wrongly confined to an asylum. (Beveridge and Renvoize 1988:411). Victorian literature also abounds in characters whose lives are tainted by *madness* (or episodes of it), and whose interaction with others is depicted as either a social evil that has to be contained or as benevolent eccentricity and a source of generosity. Among the most famous literary *mad characters* are Mrs. Rochester (*Jane Eyre*), Catherine Earnshaw (*Wuthering Heights*), Mr. Dorrit, Mrs. Clennam, Mr. F's aunt, Maggy (*Little Dorrit*), Mr. Dick (*David Copperfield*), Alfred Hardy (*Hard Cash*), Louis Trevelyan (*He Knew He Was Right*), Anne Catherick (*The Woman in White*).

With so many Victorian characters whose literary destiny revolves around *madness*, what claims to originality can Lady Audley's make? In order to understand the novel's influence on Victorian society, and the subversive ways in which *madness* was depicted in the novel, the opinions of some of Braddon's contemporaries may open the way for interpretations. Margaret Oliphant (Queen Victoria's favourite writer), while acknowledging Braddon as "the leader of her school", warned against the female sensationalists who, although they "reinstated the injured creature Man in something like his natural character", also managed to mould "his women on the model of men." (Oliphant 1867:265, qtd. in Schroeder 1988:88). E. S.

Dallas also mentioned the impossibility of achieving a refined plot with a woman protagonist who, by definition, had “to be urged into a false position”, and “described as rushing into crime and doing masculine deeds.”(Dallas, II:298, qtd. in Schroeder 1988:88). Both Oliphant and Dallas therefore complained about and warned against female characters who willingly broke the Victorian gender-taboos imposing submissiveness and passivity on women; in their view, such characters were less than authentic and representative, but rather dangerous and even monstrous.

Lady Audley’s character, it should be noted, although *playing* the part of madness, most certainly does not *look* it. Frequent passages in the text refer to her angelic features, a “childishness and a charm which few could resist”, the “innocence and candour of an infant” which “shone out of her large and liquid blue eyes”, “the rosy lips, the delicate nose, the profusion of fair ringlets”, which rendered her “the character of extreme beauty and freshness”. (Braddon 1997:43) Nevertheless, when Braddon offers the readers the portrait of Lady Audley for scrutiny, in an extremely well-achieved example of *ekphrasis*, the demon lurking behind the perfect façade is also powerfully present. Robert Audley’s character attributes the painter’s ‘third eye’, capable of grasping reality even in its most frightening aspects, to the supposition of the artist having “copied quaint medieval monstrosities until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of her, had something of the aspect of a beautiful *fiend*.” (Braddon 1997:57) However, as readers, we know better; if the portrait of the beautiful blond angel seems to also contain a fiend, a monstrous entity, it is because Lady Audley can, when the circumstances are right, behave like one. The incongruity between, on the one side, her considerable physical charms rendered as in a Pre-Raphaelite painting, her appearance of virtue, and, on the other hand, the

monstrosity of her deeds is what mainly disconcerted the Victorians and made her into a figure of horror. However despicable and un-womanly Lady Audley's actions were, it was the final revelation of her altered mental state, i.e. her *madness*, that both made it seem sensational to peruse the novel or watch the play on stage, *and* fostered repulsion towards the protagonist. As mentioned by Henderson:

Reading *Lady Audley's Secret* was not, then, simply a matter of learning to intuit vice in the presence of sweetness, it entailed a radical disturbance of the orthodoxies of signification. For the only thing more disconcerting than a surface appearance that signified its opposite in moral worth, was a surface appearance that signified nothing at all. If at the Court of St James crowds gazed upon the indubitable embodiment of all that was 'happy and fair', incorporating in her person, what is more, the stately continuities of British aristocracies, at St James's Theatre audiences thrilled to look upon a gorgeous creature whose unmediated violence and greed embodied the ferocious realities of global *Victorian modernity*. (Henderson 2006:4).

It is the rise of the realities of global *Victorian modernity* that female characters such as Lady Audley were part of, albeit in a distorting and aggressive manner. The fact that she moves freely, unencumbered in any way by her gender, is able to manipulate, deceive and perfect the plausible persona of the governess as a social trampoline for her final achievement may be read as an inevitable response to the new culture of global imperialism, characterised by a lack, an "absence of transcendent morality." (Henderson 2006:5) From this angle, Lady Audley's *madness*, in spite of the protestations of the character herself, is at best questionable, at worst non-existent. One of the most famous readings of Braddon's work, dealing with the issue of mental insanity, is that of Elaine Showalter, who argues that "as

every woman reader must have sensed, Lady Audley's real secret is that she is *sane* and, moreover, representative." (Showalter 1977:235). Although Showalter's essentialist feminist formula appears to favour the social context over the text itself, a close perusal of the novel sustains such a reading, which was also embraced by later critics. Jill Matus' approach runs along the same lines; according to her, "Braddon suggests to the reader that Lucy is not deranged but desperate; not mad (insane) but mad (angry)." (Matus 1993:344) Lynn Voskuil emphasises the confrontational episode between Dr. Mosgrave and Lady Audley, in which the former is asked by Robert Audley to confirm a diagnosis of *madness*. Thus, she prefers to focus on the difficulty of establishing a clear diagnosis, and remarks that the mixture of behavioural truthfulness and crafted theatrical performance displayed by Lady Audley confuses Dr. Mosgrave's diagnostic abilities. The diagnosis then sounds less than convincing and appears as an almost-failed attempt to restore and reassert male, scientific, middle-class authority. (Voskuil 2001:634).

Interestingly, besides the theatrical performance meant to baffle and 'tease' the abilities of the professional brain (according to Voskuil), Henderson aptly notices the absence of "the physical signs of mental causes." The consequences of such an absence are almost comic, if read in terms of a gender struggle; instead of being governed by a cool, professional rationality, Mosgrave "finds himself frenziedly attracted to an aggregate of disturbingly desirable signs", so that "he would throw himself upon the abysmal symbolism that constitutes my lady." (Henderson 2006:13).

'I have talked to the lady', he said quietly... and we understand each other very well. There is latent insanity! Insanity which might never appear; or which might appear only once or twice in a life-time. It would be *dementia* in its worst phase: acute mania; but its duration would be brief, and it would only arise under

extreme mental pressure. The lady is not mad; but she has the hereditary taint in her blood. She has the cunning of madness and the prudence of intelligence. I will tell you what she is, Mr. Audley, she is dangerous!' (Braddon 1997:301)

My own interpretation of the paragraph above both reinforces and adds to those of former critics. I find this key quotation indicative for the establishing of a clinical, social and linguistic reading of *madness*. Almost as if it were an infectious disease, *madness* appears easily transmissible from patient to doctor; as can be noticed, there is increasing confusion and acceleration in the professional's list of possible diagnoses, which may be read as incompetent guesswork, pathetically failing to convey the impression of professional, mature and well-informed judgement. At the same time, such blathering may also point to the acuteness of the gender struggle and the male inability to 'cope' with the mental 'traps' set by an attractive and intelligent woman. The above episode reminds contemporary readers of a similar gender-confrontation that is carried on in the cinematic world. As many of us surely remember, the erotic thriller *Basic Instinct* revolves around the sexual and intellectual games masterfully played by an increasingly aroused detective (Michael Douglas), who, under the spell of a stunningly attractive and intelligent crime novelist (Sharon Stone), perhaps fatally 'blabbers' his way in establishing her guilt. The increasing sexual tension between them demands gratification, but the end of the film offers no final answers regarding the identity of the killer; certainly, an ending as ambiguous and rich in possibilities as the novel in discussion. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Mosgrave's professional discourse baffles readers by its constellation of hesitations, almost as much as he himself is baffled by Lady Audley's self-appraisal, interestingly carried on behind closed doors. In Mosgrave's own words, as rendered in the quotation above, Lady Audley's condition displays

signs of “latent insanity” competing with “dementia”, opening the way to “acute mania”, obviously explained by the “hereditary taint in her blood”, and reinforced by “the cunning of madness and the prudence of intelligence.” The irresolute nature of such diagnoses, feeble as they are, appears even more questionable in the light of Mosgrave’s final exclamation. The fact that he perceives her as “dangerous” transforms the exercise of medical diagnosis into a gender confrontation that can only end with the verdict of *monstrous* female power and assertion, which demand immediate isolation as the ultimate and most effective solution for punishing Lady Audley’s ‘un-feminine’ transgressions.

Monsters “are in the world but not of the world”, “paradoxical personifications of *otherness within sameness*”, “threatening figures of anomaly within the well-established and accepted order of things.”(Beal 2002:4). The paradox represented by the monster can be best understood through Sigmund Freud’s concept of the *unheimlich*, that is, the “unhomely” or “uncanny”. *Unheimlich* refers to that which threatens the home not from the outside, but from the inside. Read as symptomatic for the manifestations of the *unheimlich*, obviously the character of Lady Audley haunts the Victorian psyche as a monstrous figure, disguised as the very epitome of female beauty, charm and grace, which nevertheless endangers, through her actions, the male protagonists’ “sense of at homeness”, “of security, stability, integrity, well-being, health and meaning.”(Beal 2002:5). The *uncanny* and hence the *monstrous* within the body is interestingly supported by the latest medical discoveries. Anolik, in her Introduction to *Demons of the Body and Mind*, draws on the idea of *Visible vs. Invisible Disability*, as instrumental in organising her selection of essays on disability in Gothic literature. According to recent developments in the problematical field of disabilities of various

kinds, ranging from physical ones to psychological ones, we might look at Lady Audley's condition and regard her as suffering from a species of *Invisible Disability* affliction. As explained by the website of The Invisible Disabilities Advocate:

A person can have an *Invisible Disability* whether or not they have a "visible" impairment or use an assistive device like a wheelchair, walker, cane, etc. For example, whether or not a person utilizes an assistive device, if they are debilitated by such symptoms as extreme pain, fatigue, cognitive dysfunctions and dizziness, they have invisible disabilities. (quoted in Anolik 2010:8)

Anolik connects Invisible and Visible Disability to the well-known Gothic types of fear, or tropes, *Terror* vs. *Horror*. As staples of Gothic, generally present in one form or another in whatever Gothic text we may choose for perusal, *terror* and *horror* have remained influential since Ann Radcliffe's seminal distinction and subsequent definitions in *On the Supernatural in Poetry* (1826). According to Radcliffe's distinction *horror* demands visibility and a strong impact on the senses to cause fear, and has at its centre the figure of the *monster*. *Terror*, as the less visible but none the less effective counterpart of *horror*, relies on the invisible, on what prowls unseen in the dark. (Anolik 2010:8) However, Gothic texts are very often seen to willingly blur the boundaries between *horror* and *terror*. The nature of Lady Audley's *madness* appears melted and insidious, between boundaries of manifestation or concealment; generally not visible, lurking, uncertain and obscure but all the more horrible when revealed and reclaimed by the physical appearance of angelic beauty.

What deserves attention in the novel is the fact that the authorial voice prefers to preserve the atmosphere of doubt and ambiguity regarding firstly

the very existence of a case of *madness* and secondly the nature of it. It may be argued that part of such vagueness can be explained by the lack of scientific and properly categorised data regarding mental insanity. It may also be superbly employed Gothic art. Alternatively, Braddon's silence can be read as a highly effective strategy directed at penetrating the stifling set of Victorian gender-conventions, mirrored by Lady Audley's invocation of *madness*, which is meant to protect her from a worse fate. Maintaining a tone of ambiguity is, in this case, more than just a matter of creating and preserving authorial success - notwithstanding the best-selling author benefits that Braddon reaped - but rather a female strategy for initiating heated debates on pressing gender-related subjects, and the nature of *madness*, much too readily ascribed to *all* women, by mere virtue of their physiology. As Brewster suggests, following Foucault's arguments in *Madness and Civilization*, ascribing *madness* to anything outside the strict boundaries of the clinic and the asylum may be read as "a crisis of reason":

This crisis must be evoked, however, beyond the language of reason, eschewing the compromised discursive systems that have monitored and silenced madness for several centuries. Foucault claims that madness opens up such a privileged space within literature from the late nineteenth century onwards [...] The increasing proximity of madness and literature suspends the 'reign of language', bringing the phrases 'I write' and 'I am delirious' into intimate relation. Interrupting the work of art, madness 'opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without answer [...] where the world is forced to question itself.' (Foucault 1967:288 quoted in Brewster 2001:282)

Braddon's novel, interpreted from a Foucauldian perspective, emphasises powerful but invisible connections between language and

madness, connections that frustrate attempts to read behind her novelistic strategies and argue either for a questioning of the world or for a muting of its most pressing issues. Lady Audley herself, in the novel, draws attention to the materiality of language, which can dissolve in the appearance of *madness*: “Repeat the commonest word in the English language twenty times, and before the twentieth repetition you will have begun to wonder whether the word which you repeat is really the word you mean to utter.”(Braddon 1997:228). Alternatively, Lady Audley’s words can be echoed, if we listen carefully, by Braddon’s voice, heard between the lines, urging us to repeat the word “madness” twenty times, assuming that it covers the whole of Lady Audley. and for sure we will begin to wonder whether the complexity of the character can possibly be done justice to in terms of a monomania which conveniently simplifies Victorian games of significances. Braddon never allows her readers and her critics a ‘moment’s peace’ with respect to the true mental condition of her protagonist. Should we even for a split second content ourselves with explaining Lady Audley’s murderous actions as a result of her *madness*, the very same character’s statements baffle us again. Thus, Lucy Audley quite unequivocally thwarts Dr. Mosgrave’s medical expertise, since Braddon renders *her* as far better qualified to attempt to explain the nature of her own mysterious disease. This female Hamlet’s intellectualisation and rationalisation of her condition fosters verbosity and, as stated before, baffles male characters and audience alike. In Lady Audley’s own telling, *madness* visits only during stressful times, the first fit having occurred after the birth of her child. In this she claims that she tragically reproduces the fate of her mother, who also lost her reason after giving birth. Showalter, in her critical study, writes that “puerperal insanity” accounted for “about ten percent of female asylum admissions” in the Victorian era. (Showalter 1977:323). In

Lady Audley's own words, the revelation of her mother's condition triggers the series of her willing metamorphoses, all aimed at putting a distance between her and what she perceives as a cursed inheritance:

'I brooded horribly upon the thought of my mother's madness. It haunted me day and night. I was always picturing to myself this madwoman pacing up and down some prison cell, in a hideous garment that bound her tortured limbs. I had no knowledge of the different degrees of madness, and the image that haunted me was that of a distraught and violent creature, who would fall upon me and kill me if I came within her reach. This idea grew upon me until I used to awake in the dead of the night, screaming aloud in an agony of terror, from a dream in which I felt my mother's *icy grasp* upon my throat, and heard her *ravings* in my ear.'
(Braddon 1997:277, emphasis mine)

As the *icy grasp* and the *ravings* are but figments of a sensitive child's imagination, soon to be dispersed by a real encounter with a beautiful, chattering, wearing-flowers-in-her-hair mother - although she is the inmate of an asylum - Lady Audley's tone in her confession of her criminal deeds displays nothing but cold, calm, detached recollection and faultless logic. Her disguised appeal to Robert Audley's, and implicitly the readers', sympathy when she claims that "the hidden taint that I had sucked in with my mother's milk", "possible to drive me mad" is the only thing responsible for the attempted murder of her first husband (Braddley 1997:312) certainly reminds us of a similar appeal voiced by Lady Audley's famous prototype:

[...] what I have done/That might your nature, honour and exception/Roughly
awake, I here proclaim was *madness*./Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never
Hamlet:/If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,/And when he's not himself does
wrong Laertes,/Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it./Who does it, then? His

madness: if't be so,/Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;/His madness is poor
Hamlet's enemy. (Shakespeare 2006:711)

From her first rash marriage to George Talbot, whom she had thought to be rich but who was disinherited by his father upon the news of his misalliance, to the sweet, docile, ultra-feminine behaviour displayed for the world to see and for Sir Audley to decide to marry her, Lady Audley's actions speak of just this: *action* as opposed to *passivity* and acceptance of a life spent in poverty and under the spectre of permanent surrender to hereditary *madness*. In other words, the only manifested *madness* in Lady Audley's behaviour may be read as her *difference, out-of-the ordinariness*, and her *venturing* outside of one system of thought into another which under Victorian circumstances could only be read as a case of authentic *madness*. Her incarceration at the end of the novel befits the circumstances more than the individual. Non-normative female assertion and sense of power can only lead to social suppression and the inevitable reinstallation of the temporarily disturbed gender paradigms. As Kungl notices "perhaps aware of her role as a Gothic heroine manqué [sic], she romanticizes her situation" (Kungl 2010:173) and "looked upon herself as a species of state prisoner, who would have to be taken good care of: a second Iron Mask who must be provided for in some comfortable place of confinement." (Braddon 1997:296). Reality, however, contradicts Lady Audley's expectations of a safe and comfortable place of confinement. Instead, she is 'sentenced' by Robert Audley's male authority to spend the remaining years of her short but adventurous life in "Villebrumeuse", near Brussels. Under the façade of a very civilised *maison de santé*, Villebrumeuse is but a locus of live burial, strangely reminiscent of the confinement of Lucy Snowe in *Villette*:

My lady stared dismally round at the range of rooms, which looked dreary enough in the wan light of a single wax candle. This solitary flame, pale and ghostlike in itself, was multiplied by paler phantoms of its ghostliness, which glimmered everywhere about the rooms; in the shadowy depths of the polished floors and wainscot, or the window panes, in the looking-glasses or in those great expanses of glimmering something which adorned the rooms, and which my lady mistook for costly mirrors, but which were in reality wretched mockeries of burnished tin. (Braddon 1997:309)

Conclusion

Lady Audley's struggle ends unceremoniously after only one year of incarceration. In this early and rather convenient death, which mercifully protects her from experiencing the moral agonies that the Victorians were so fond of, Braddon clearly states where her sympathies lie. Lady Audley thus remains a heroine who fights and loses chiefly because she is less powerful in what is undoubtedly a sexual battle. Her final cry: "You have brought me to my grave, Mr. Audley [...] You have used your power basely and cruelly, and have brought me to a living grave!" (Braddon 1997:310) implies the fatal recognition of the implacability of gender hierarchies. It is this implacability that justifies, among other things, the Gothic trope of *enclosure* as means and solution for preserving classic power relations in the realm of gender. Nothing short of incarceration can prevent the possible emulation of Lady Audley's behaviour by other female characters in the novel, as becomes clear from Robert Audley's musings: "The more I see of this woman, the more reason I have to dread her influence upon others." (Braddon 1997:177). In other words, for the fabric of Victorian society to preserve its impenetrability and stability in terms of gender and gender-roles, transgressive characters like Lady Audley had to be confined to cultural impotence and political

castration. Hence, the 'true' essence of Lady Audley's *madness* mainly resides in her attempts to be different, by escaping the pre-determined fate of the poor and abandoned woman. These attempts, coupled with an unstoppable energy for plotting and action, can hardly be said to constitute a *feminine* attribute, especially in Victorian times. Ultimately then, it appears that Lady Audley's "gender-inappropriate behaviour was sufficient evidence of a diagnosis of madness." (Anolik 2010:176).

However, redirecting our attention to the initial questions that this study proposed, regarding necessary immersion into *madness*, apparently inescapable when we try to find our way through the interstices of any Gothic text, there seems to be no definite answer regarding the *nature*, the *origins*, and the *possible cure*. Possibly then, all we can achieve is to enjoy and indulge in the "excess or overabundance of interpretation" (Brewster 2001:285) and escape the *madness* of any attempt to construct sterile essentialisms. This is the only way in which the *sphinxian* and the *ineffable* may continue to 'haunt' great literature and lure us into the delirium of reading.

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About the Authors

Michele De Benedictis graduated with a PhD in Comparative Literature from Università degli Studi di Cassino, with a dissertation on the theory of humours in Ben Jonson's comical satires. His research interests focus on Early Modern literature, Renaissance drama, history of science and court studies. His publications include articles and book chapters on ekphrasis in *The Winter Tales*, iconography of suicide in *The Rape of Lucrece* and the concept of authorship in Ben Jonson's 1616 *First Folio*. He has been visiting student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and is a member of the International Shakespeare Association.

Stefania Biscetti is research fellow in English linguistics at the University of L'Aquila (Italy). She graduated in foreign languages in Pisa and earned her PhD in general linguistics from the University of Vienna. Her research interests are in the fields of synchronic and diachronic morphology, lexicology, pragmatics, text linguistics and cognitive linguistics.

Lilijana Burcar is an assistant professor at the English department of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. She specializes in feminist theory and gender studies, post-colonial and neo-colonial studies, and contemporary British and American literatures.

Wai Fong Cheang is Professor of English at Chang Gung University, Taiwan. She received her doctoral degree in English from National Taiwan University. She has published on Shakespeare, Chinese American literature, English teaching and cultural studies.

Rowena Coles is researcher and lecturer in English language and translation at the Education Faculty of the University of Urbino, Italy. She has published as author and co-author various books on English for Special Purposes as well as articles in national and international reviews. Her specific research interests include English syntax in general and in particular linguistic aspects of both scientific texts and narrative texts for children. She has also developed an interest in the translation from English into Italian of stories for children. She has recently published a book dealing with the grammar and information structures in stories for children.

Reghina Dascăl teaches British Studies and Gender Studies at the English Department of the University of Timișoara. She holds a doctorate in cultural anthropology (her thesis is entitled *House and Dwelling in a European Cultural Context*) and she has so far published five books: *Casă/Locuire* (1999); *British Topics* (2000) *Feminist Perspectives* (2001), *British Studies*

Course (2005) and *Christine de Pizan Essays* (2008). She is Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies at Timișoara University. Over the years she has presented and published papers in the country and abroad and has also edited and co-edited several publications. Polirom has published her translation of Andrea Dworkin's *Letters from the War Zone*.

Elena Maria Emandi has a BA in English and French Philology and she holds a doctorate in Applied Stylistics (her thesis is entitled *The Style of the English Gothic Novel*). Her main research interests are: gender studies, stylistics, Gothic studies and cultural geography.

Bianca Foghel is a PhD student at the University of the West, Timișoara, where she has earned her BA with a thesis on *The Poetics of Duality and Freedom in John Fowles's Fiction*, and an MA in American Studies, with a dissertation on Paul Auster. Previously published articles include *Symbolic, Thematic and Stylistic Dichotomies in Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms* and *Homogenising Fiction with Self-Reflection in Daniel Martin*.

Roxana Ghiță has a MA in American Studies, and she is currently enrolled as a PhD student in Philology at the University of the West, Timișoara. Her main fields of interest are Gender Studies, Jewish Studies, American literature and culture. She is a member of the Interdisciplinary Centre of Gender Studies at the University of the West, Timișoara.

Ecaterina Lia Hanțiu, Professor at the University of Oradea, teaches English literature and Canadian studies. Her main research fields are British and American literature, comparative literature, Canadian studies, gender studies, fine arts and literature. She is the author of 12 books and of over 60 articles, most of which presented at various national and international conferences.

Lavinia Hulea is a graduate of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures of Bucharest University. She is currently Lecturer of English and French at the Department of Social and Human Sciences at the University of Petroșani and a 1st year PhD student working under the guidance of Professor Pia Brînzeu. Her interests range from analyses of visual transpositions of literary texts to contemporary art phenomena and communication in business.

Aleksandra Izgarjan is an Assistant Professor, University of Novi Sad. She teaches courses in American Literature and American studies at the English Department as well as at the Center for Gender Studies, Association of Centers for Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies. She has recently participated in the following projects: “Comparative Studies of Serbian and Foreign Literatures and Cultures” and “Serbian and Foreign Literature and Culture in Contact and Discontact”. She has published two books and more than thirty articles in the field of literature and gender studies. She was guest lecturer at Howard University and University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, USA.

Hildegard Klein teaches English Literature in the English, French and German Department at Málaga University, Spain. In 1995 she completed a Ph.D. thesis on the theatre of Edward Bond. She has written a number of articles on this author and on contemporary British theatre, published in several books and periodicals, such as *Atlantis*, *In-between*, *Studii de limbi și literaturi moderne*, *Gender Studies*, etc. She has also researched German theatre on the First World War. She is co-author of a book on feminist theatre *Teorías Feministas y sus Aplicaciones al Teatro Feminista Británico Contemporáneo* (Granada, 2000). She has edited a book on feminist strategies in Contemporary Feminist Theatre: *Estrategias Feministas en el Teatro Británico del siglo XX*. Her current research centres

on British theatre of the 1990s as member of a Research Group from Barcelona University.

Helga Vanda Koczogh is currently employed as a junior lecturer at the Department of English Linguistics of the University of Debrecen. Her academic interests include sociolinguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis in general, primarily gender differences in conversational style with a focus on verbal disagreement and conflict talk.

Csaba Maczelka is a predoctoral fellow at the Institute of English and American Studies at the University of Szeged. Holding an MA in Hungarian and English, he is currently writing his dissertation about early modern English utopias. He is mostly focusing on the different uses of fiction in texts composed in the utopian mode. He is also interested in 16th-17th century English literature in its wider contexts, and involved in projects related to the history of Hungarian-European cultural relations. He also participates in the university's teaching activities.

Ioana-Florina Mitea is a PhD student - under the supervision of Professor Mircea Anghelescu - at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest. Her research interest focuses on the 19th century Romanian comedy and its European context. She earned a BA in Library and Information Science from the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest and she holds an MA in Publishing Theory and Practice. She has been working in the publishing industry for seven years.

Dana Percec is a senior lecturer in the English Department of the Faculty of Letters, History and Theology, the University of the West of Timișoara, Romania. She wrote a doctoral thesis on the experience of embodiment in William Shakespeare's plays. Her published work includes titles like *The Body's Tale. Some Ado about Shakespearean Identities* (2006),

Shakespeare and the Theatre. An Introduction (2008), cultural history guides, literature coursebooks and collections of essays. She is the editor of several collections of literary theory, published in Romanian. Her interests include cultural studies, gender studies and cultural anthropology.

Biljana Radić-Bojanić currently works as a Senior Teaching Assistant at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad. She got her MA degree in linguistics in 2005 with a thesis dealing with the analysis of Internet language in English and Serbian. Her fields of interest include discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics and ELT. She has published a number of papers in Serbian and international journals and participated in various international conferences. She is the author of a monograph on Internet language and a co-author of a monograph on Serbian public discourse.

Adriana Răducanu has a BA in English and Spanish Language and Literature from the University of Bucharest. She holds an MA in English Literature from Yeditepe University in Istanbul and a PhD in English Literature from the University of the West, Timisoara. She has published extensively on Gothic studies, Jungian criticism, post-colonial and gender studies and comparative mythology. Currently she is working on a book entitled: *“Speaking the Language of the Night; Selected Essays on Contemporary Gothic Novels.”*

Nadežda Silaški currently works as an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Economics, University of Belgrade. She got her PhD degree in linguistics in 2005 with a thesis dealing with a genre analysis of advertisements in Serbian and British women’s magazines. Her fields of interest include discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics and ESP. She has published a number of papers in Serbian and international journals and participated in various international

conferences. She is the co-author of a monograph on Serbian public discourse and three ESP economics textbooks.

György E. Szönyi is professor of English (Szeged) and intellectual history (Central European University, Budapest). His interests include cultural theory, the Renaissance, the Western Esoteric traditions, and conventions of symbolisation – early modern and (post)modern. Latest monographs: *Pictura & Scriptura. 20th Century Theories of Cultural Representations* (in Hungarian, Szeged, 2004); *Gli angeli di John Dee* (Roma, 2004); *John Dee's Occultism* (SUNY Press, 2004, pb. 2010). In the making: *The Enoch Readers. A Cultural History of Angels, Magic, and Ascension on High*. He has also edited: *The Iconography of Power* (with Rowland Wymer, Szeged, 2000); *The Iconology of Gender* (with Attila Kiss, Szeged, 2008).

Andreea Şerban has a PhD from the University of the West, Timișoara, Romania, with a thesis on the novels of Canadian writer Margaret Atwood. She teaches English literature at the English Department of the Faculty of Letters, History and Theology within the same university. She is the author of *The Call of the Wild: M/Other Nature in Margaret Atwood's Novels* (2010). She co-authored *Shakespeare's Plays. Seminar Topics* (2008), a cultural history guide on Elizabethan England (published in Romanian in 2010), as well as *Drama and Culture in Shakespeare's Age* (2011). She has published over 25 studies and articles in academic volumes in Romania and abroad, in the fields of comparative literature, postcolonial and gender studies.

Gabriella Tóth is a second year PhD student at the British and American Literature and Culture PhD Program, University of Szeged. She earned her MA degree in English literature in 2009, in Hungarian language and literature in 2010. She specialized in Central-European Studies and Drama

and Theatre studies at the same university and is now a lecturer at the Department of Comparative Literature Studies at the same University.

Her research interests are ranging from African American theatre, post-colonialism to post-modern American theatre and culture.

Oana-Alis Zaharia is lecturer in English at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, “Dimitrie Cantemir University”, Bucharest where she teaches a course on Early Modern Literature and Culture. Her subjects of interest are Shakespeare and Early Modern literature and culture, translation studies and intertextuality. She has published articles on translations and adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays in *ABC- A Journal of American, British and Canadian Studies*, *University of Bucharest Review*, *Fidelities, Betrayals, Rewritings: Translating Canonical Texts*. She has attended prestigious conferences in the field such as *The International Shakespeare Conference*, *The European Shakespeare Conference*, *The ESSE Conferences*, etc.

Elisabeta Zelinka is an assistant lecturer at the *West University Timisoara*, Romania, Department of Sociology and Psychology. She holds a BA in Germanic, British and American Studies, and an MA in Gender Studies. She holds a PhD in Postmodern Anglo-American Comparative Literature. The title of her thesis is: *Rewriting Virginia Woolf: “Feminine and Androgynous Elements in Michael Cunningham’s The Hours”*. She works as a migration expert and media correspondent for the *Netzwerk Migration in Europe e.V.*, Berlin and *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, Bonn --Germany (*German Federal Agency for Civic Education*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs—Germany), after having completed their specialised training seminars.
