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**MALE VS. FEMALE / MIND VS. BODY: A COGNITIVE
DISCOURSE APPROACH TO TWO PLAYS BY SHAKESPEARE**

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***Abstract:** The aim of the present paper is twofold: i) to show that the idea of a “savage mind” does not make sense unless accompanied by that of a wrong restraining body which needs to be broken to let the so-called “savage mind” out, and vice versa and ii) to prove this relieving process to be ultimately affected by gender. While women seem to need to resort to a third party body disguise in order to show their real selves out of their constraining bodies, it is precisely men’s minds which aim to liberate them. Examples to illustrate this idea will be taken from Rosalind and Audrey in Shakespeare’s As You Like It, on the female side, and Caliban and Ferdinand in The Tempest, on the other, male side.*

***Keywords:** cognition, discourse, gender, Shakespeare*

1. Introduction

Our analysis of the female characters Rosalind and Audrey in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* as opposed to the male characters Ferdinand

and Caliban in *The Tempest* is aimed at demonstrating that Shakespeare's women seem to need to resort to a third party body disguise in order to show their real selves out of their constraining bodies, while much more complex mental devices appear to help men trying to dispense with their savage side. With regard to the cognitive complexity achieved by Shakespeare in these two plays, it could be said that men do better while women remain in second place. However, the analysis of these two pairs of characters will reveal female Rosalind's mental power to successfully fight her restraining wrong body. Caliban, meanwhile, can be liberated from a wrong mind thanks to complex cognitive devices, but his body remains savage. The monstrous nature of his mind is not conditioned by his wrong body. Rosalind's supremacy will be achieved by this supremacy of mind over body.

2. *As You Like It*

In order to start speaking about the female characters Rosalind and Audrey in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, we need to go back to the "Eighth Dialogue" of Andreas Capellanus's *Tractatus de amore* (1184-1186), where women of the higher nobility are advised not "[...] to be so quick to assent to their lover's desire, for the quick and hasty granting of love arouses contempt in the lover and makes the love he has long desired seem cheap. Therefore, a woman ought first to find out the man's character by many tests and have clear evidence of his good faith" (1982:132). Shakespeare is perfectly aware of this when he opts for disguise to reconcile these two radically opposed female characters in his pastoral play. Nobly-born Rosalind will need to resort to a male disguise in order to get rid of her own body and thus to feel free to test her beloved's (Orlando's) intention to be finally allowed to enjoy his love through marriage. The plain goatherd

Audrey, by contrast, is totally free right from the beginning to enjoy the pleasures of love, with no need for any testing.

Rosalind has to disguise herself as a man to “serve” Orlando and to become his confidant in matters of love. But in addition to this, she takes the responsibility for Orlando’s love cure, serving him in this way too. So, metaphorically speaking, Rosalind can also be said to “save” her beloved’s life. At least, her “love cure” prevents him from dying from an impossible love. Being the courtly, beautiful lady that she is, Rosalind is not in a position to trust the love Orlando professes for her in his courtly poems. This lack of confidence about Orlando’s true intentions prevents her from showing her own love for him openly. Throughout the play, she can only confess it to her cousin Celia: “O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love! But it can not be sounded” (IV, 1:195-197), or try to explain her situation to Orlando once she is hidden behind her Ganymede disguise: “You may as soon make her that you love believe it, which I warrant she is apter to do than to confess she does. That is one of the points in which women still give the lie to their consciences” (III, 2:377-381).

In her male Ganymede disguise, though, Rosalind does have the chance to test and even to mock Orlando’s love, challenging him to prove that he is a desperate lover and to declare his love for her openly: “Then your hose should be ungartered,... your shoe untied, and everything about you demonstrating a careless desolation. [...] You may as soon make her that you love believe it,...” (III, 2:361-70). Under such guise, she is able to extract from him more declarations of his love for her, and in a shorter time, than if he had known who she was. In this way, Orlando is even forced to consider the possibility of marrying a Rosalind who, as a non-idealized

wife, could turn out to be “more clamorous than a parrot against rain”, or “more new fangled than an ape” (IV, 1:136-9). Only then does Rosalind definitely make up her mind to save Orlando’s life through marriage, the most effective remedy, in terms of the courtly code, for unrequited love.

Also in *As You Like It*, we are presented with the character of Audrey, an illiterate goatherd who does not have to protect her virtue from possible abuse by her lover Touchstone. She is not forced by convention to feel the need to take part in a love debate to prove Touchstone’s real intentions or faith before accepting his love and marrying him. But this is exactly what Rosalind, the main female character in the courtly love story in the play, is both conventionally and socially forced to do in order to guarantee herself the secure marriage she too desires. Although the love story of the courtly clown Touchstone and the young goatherd Audrey takes place in the same pastoral setting, the Forest of Arden, they do not play the traditional roles of the courtly love poet and the beautiful shepherdess. In fact, it is not hard for the fool Touchstone to win Audrey’s amorous favour. Rather to the contrary, he shows from the very beginning his intention of winning Audrey’s love in a natural way, even if this implies marriage.

Both Rosalind and Audrey succeed in marrying their respective suitors at the end of the play, despite their different origins and the different conditions under which their love stories take place. Being women of the early modern period, they can really only be examined in terms of their relationship to the marriage paradigm (Jankowsky 1992:24). In this context, it is not surprising that they both prefer a secure marriage that will ensure them a safe place in society in the future. Both of them do finally make up their mind to agree to the marriage ritual. Audrey ends up by meeting all the requirements to achieve the secure position of a chaste wife, giving her the

opportunity to become a respected widow in the future, despite her lack of idealization and the fact that it is highly probable that she would have accepted as natural the clandestine union Touchstone confesses (in an aside) to preferring: “[...] to be married of him than of another, for he is not like to marry me well; and not being well married, it will be a good excuse for me hereafter to leave my wife” (III, 3:81-85). Not in vain, playing the role of the plain goatherd, that is to say; enjoying a savage mind in an equally savage body, she is not forced to feel the need to take part in any love debate to prove Touchstone’s faith before revealing her own desire to become a married woman. Courtly Rosalind, meanwhile, has to overcome more obstacles than rustic Audrey to become free, finally, and safely married to Orlando, whom she loves.

Her courtly origin, which leads her body to restrain the free expression of her so-considered “savage mind”, deprives Rosalind of the freedom she would need in order to express the emotions that Touchstone and Audrey enjoy. Forced to profess an idealized love to Rosalind, Orlando is unable as yet in his poems to show his open intention of marrying her. Expected to keep up courtly manners, Rosalind is not allowed to admit her love for Orlando either. In order to avoid revealing her desire to marry him, she is conventionally supposed to miss the chance to discover her beloved’s real intentions, or to opt for disguising tricks, thus breaking her restraining courtly body to allow her mind to emerge.

3. *The Tempest*

In the case of *The Tempest*, we also find two characters, Caliban and Ferdinand, who both end up playing the role of the slave-in-exchange-for-joy despite their apparently different motivations and backgrounds.

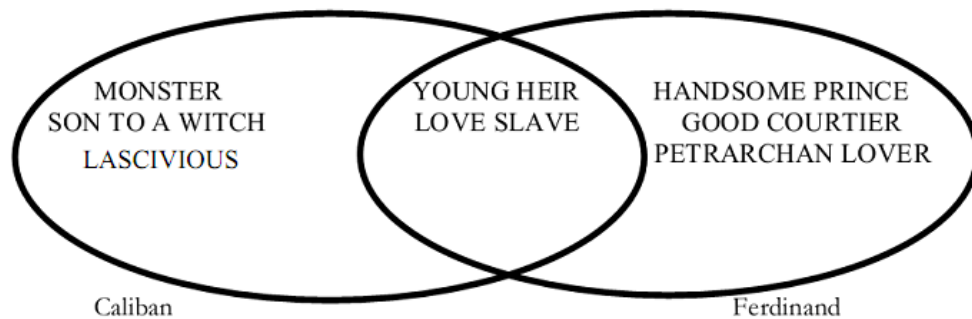
Nevertheless, it is of extreme importance to notice at this point that these two characters are male ones, this being the reason why, rather than involving the use of disguise, their common achievements are to take place through the use of a much more cognitive, complex device on Shakespeare's part. It is not surprising, then, that they both follow the speech model established by Virgil's second Eclogue in order to try to obtain relief and joy through service, their common use of this Virgilian source also being a good authorial hint to intended readers and audience that they should blur the possible differences which seem to separate the two characters throughout the story. Mey makes the general point that the act of reading implies an open-ended invitation to the reader to join the author in the co-creation of the story by filling in the gaps that the text leaves open. But the reader's act of understanding is not always dependent on what is found in the actual text—or co-text—in so many words, but rather on the total context in which these words are found—and are found to make sense, through an active, pragmatic collaboration between author and reader (Mey & Ringler 1998:255). However, it is important to remember at this point that this is not found in the previous case, that of the female characters in *As You Like It*.

Ferdinand is son to King Alonso. He arrives in Prospero and his daughter Miranda's island after being shipwrecked and remains there on his own, convinced that his father has died along with the rest of the crew and so imagining himself to be the new King of Naples following his father's death: "He does hear me,/ And that he does, I weep: myself am Naples,/ Who with mine eyes, never since at ebb, beheld/ The King my father wrecked". But shortly after his arrival in the island he falls in love with Miranda, and this soon leads him to be pleased with the idea of serving her

and her father Prospero, despite his noble condition: "Might I but through my prison once a day/ Behold this maid. All corners else o'th'earth/ Let liberty make use of space enough/ Have I in such a prison" (I, 2: 491-494).

Caliban, by contrast, is son to the witch of the island, Sycorax, who was "banished for one thing she did" (I, 2:267), and claims to be the owner of the island. He is a "freckled whelp, hag-born, not honoured with/ A human shape" (I, 2:283-284) who has been obliged to serve Prospero and his daughter Miranda ever since he was accused of trying to force the lady's virtue. Miranda takes her father's part and tries to justify him by saying that Caliban is actually a savage who never took into consideration the fact that she had always pitied him, so that he deserves his present condition in life: "I endowed thy purposes/ With words that made them known. But thy vile race-/ Though thou didst learn-had that in't which good natures/ Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou/ Deservedly confined into this rock,/ Who hadst deserved more than a prison" (I, 2:356b-361).

Despite the obvious differences, though, the audience can now perceive Caliban and Ferdinand as two young heirs forced into slavery for love-related reasons. Courtly Ferdinand is so in love with Miranda that he is happy to serve her and her father in exchange for the lady's favour. Savage Caliban has been turned into a slave after trying to force Miranda in order to win her love favour too.



Both of them are thus young heirs who have been turned into love slaves. If we follow Fauconnier and Turner’s model when trying to depict the cognitive scenario in the audience’s mind, we can say that at any moment in the construction of the conceptual network, the structure that inputs seem to share is captured in a generic space, which, in turn, maps onto each of the inputs (2002:47). This means Caliban, and Ferdinand, and their love for Miranda. A given element in the generic space maps onto paired counterparts in the two input spaces. That is to say: Caliban and his most defining characteristics on the one hand, and Ferdinand on the other, the former being a lascivious monster, son to a witch, and the latter a handsome prince who, at the same time, is also a good courtier and a Petrarchan lover. In Blending Theory, structure from two inputs—mental spaces—is projected onto a new space; the blend here consists of coincidental features which characterize both Caliban and Ferdinand. They are both young heirs who have been turned into love slaves.

Because of his noble status, Ferdinand woos and worships Miranda as if he was at court, despite the wilderness and isolation of the island. His courtly love speech makes sense in this context thanks only to Miranda’s education. She too comes from court, despite having been brought up by Prospero on the island. As the latter tells his daughter: “Have I, thy

schoolmaster, made thee more profit/ Than other princes can that have more time/ For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful” (I, 2:171-174). Thus Ferdinand can sing Miranda’s superlative beauty according to the courtly conventions: “But you, O you, / So perfect and so peerless, are created / Of every creature’s best” (III, 1:37-48). He even demonstrates his willingness to serve her in exchange for her favour according to the *Servitium amoris*—servitude of love—convention:

FERDINAND

There be some sports are painful, and their labour
Delight in set off; some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters
Point to rich ends. This my mean task
Would be as heavy to me, as odious, but
The mistress which I serve quickens what’s dead,
And makes my labours pleasures. O she is
Ten times more gentle than her father’s crabbed,
And he is composed of harshness. I must remove
Some thousands of these logs and pile them up,
Upon a sore injunction. My sweet mistress
Weeps when she sees me work, and says such baseness
Had never like executor. I forget.
But these sweet thoughts do even refresh my labours,
Most busil’est when I do it. (III, 1: 1-15)

Caliban, meanwhile, hates serving Prospero and his daughter Miranda to the extent that he does not hesitate to try to persuade another character in the play, Trinculo, to take him as his servant. In exchange, he only expects him to kill Prospero and gain him relief from his oppression. In

fact, he feels such a need for freedom that his speech resembles that of an insistent lover trying to convince his beloved to go with him and be his love:

CALIBAN

I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;
I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough.
A plague upon the tyrant that I serve!
I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee,
Thou wondrous man. (II, 2: 154-158)

I prithee let me bring thee where crabs grow,
And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts,
Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
To snare the nimble marmoset. I'll bring thee
To clust'ring filberts, and sometimes I'll get thee
Young scamels from the rock. Wilt thou go with me? (II, 2: 161-166)

Caliban's invitation is very much in the style of the *Munera amoris*—catalogue of gifts—as used by Corydon in Virgil's Second Eclogue, one of the most important sources for catalogues:

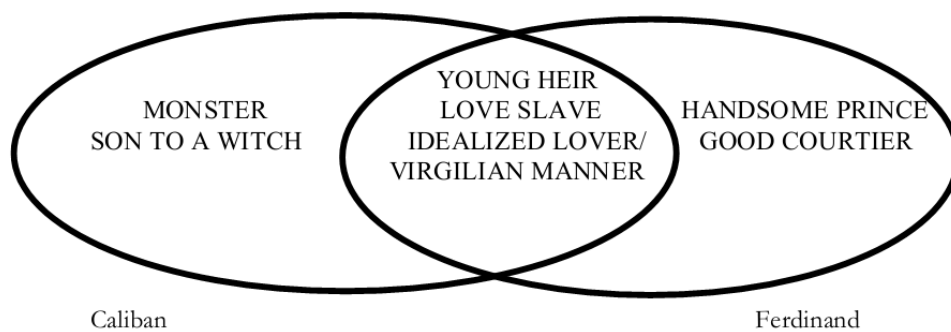
Come hither, lovely boy! See, for you the Nymphs bring lilies in heaped-up baskets; for you the fair Naiad, plucking pale violets and poppy-heads, blends narcissus and sweet scented fennel-flower; then, twining them with cassia and other sweet herbs, sets off the delicate hyacinth with the golden marigold. My own hands will gather quinces, pale with tender down, and chestnuts, which my Amaryllis loved. Waxen plums I will add –this fruit, too, shall have its honour. You too, O laurels, I will pluck, and you, their neighbour myrtle, for so placed you blend sweet fragrance. (II:45-55).

Caliban is “a deeply un-Virgilian creation” (Bate 1993:247); a monster who can scarcely express himself despite Miranda’s efforts to teach him how to speak properly. Despite his desperate invitation and his catalogue of offerings, Trinculo cannot avoid thinking of him in terms of the money that he could make if he took him to England with him:

What have we here—a man or a fish?—dead or alive? A fish, he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-like smell; a kind of not-of-the-newest poor-John. A strange fish! Were I in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday-fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man—any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian. Legged like a man, and his fins like arms! Warm, o’ my troth! I do now let loose my opinion, hold it no longer: this is no fish, but an islander, that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt. (II, 2:24-35)

It is extremely surprising, then, that, despite being a monster, Caliban has enough knowledge of the Classics to follow Virgil’s model in his attempts to convince Trinculo to kill Prospero in exchange for his service and adulation. But the fact that Ferdinand also goes to Virgil’s Eclogue II for the conclusion of his love speech is no doubt even more striking. Corydon concludes Eclogue II with the words: “See, the bullocks return with the ploughs tilted from the yoke, and the sinking sun doubles the lengthening shadows: yet me love burns; for what bound may be set to love?”. In quite a similar way, Ferdinand concludes his speech by pointing out: “O most dear mistress, / The sun will set before I shall discharge / What I must strive to do” (III, 1:22-24). And, in doing so, he is actually rounding off Caliban’s catalogue. The catalogue of offerings in Caliban’s invitation corresponds to lines 45-55 of Eclogue II, while Ferdinand’s words—“The

sun will set before I shall discharge / What I must strive to do” (III, 1:23-24)—match the end of Corydon’s song. Thus, not only do the two characters follow the same classical model, despite their different cultural and social backgrounds: their speeches even complement one another so that Ferdinand’s words are the perfect end to Caliban’s persuasive speech:



Shakespeare consciously makes Caliban and Ferdinand follow the same classical source as well as the same speech model despite the initial differences between them. The former is a man savage in mind and body whose intention is to rid himself of Prospero through murder:

CALIBAN

No more dams I'll make for fish,
 Nor fetch in firing
 At requiring,
 Nor scrape trenchering, nor wash dish:
 'Ban, 'Ban, Ca-Caliban
 Has a new master-get a new man!
 Freedom, high-day! High-day, freedom!
 Freedom, high-day, freedom! (II, 2:175-181)

He asks Trinculo to accept him as his new servant with affectionate words of invitation. Prospero is to be killed so that Caliban can achieve the freedom he craves for. But he only manages to become the butt of Trinculo's jokes. Throughout the play Trinculo always refers to Caliban as: "An abominable monster!" (II, 2:152-153), "A most ridiculous monster, to make a wonder of a poor drunkard!" (II, 2:159-160), or even "A howling monster; a drunken monster!" (II, 2:172).

Ferdinand, on the other hand, is actually a courtly man in love with Miranda. His words can easily adopt the common structure of a love speech because the beloved is sufficiently learned and ready for courtship despite her isolated life on the island. But this speech works only as long as Miranda responds positively to his service and courtship and allows him to obtain her favour:

FERDINAND

I am, in my condition,
A prince, Miranda; I do think a king-
I would not so!-and would no more endure
This wooden slavery than to suffer
The flesh-fly blow my mouth. Hear my soul speak:
The very instant that I saw you did
My heart fly to your service, there resides
To make me slave to it, and for your sake
Am I this patient log-man. (III, 1:59-67)

FERDINAND

O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,
And crown what I profess with kind event
If I speak true; if hollowly, invert

What best is boded me to mischief: I,
Beyond all limit of what else i' th' world,
Do love, prize, honour you. (III, 1:68-73)

MIRANDA

I am your wife if you will marry me;
If not, I'll die your maid. To be your fellow
You may deny me, but I'll be your servant
Whether you will or no. (III, 1: 83-86)

Caliban and Ferdinand end up playing the same role of slave-in-exchange-for-joy despite their supposedly different social conditions. They both follow the same classical model from Eclogue II when they try to gain relief and joy through service. And the fact that they are able to use the same speech model as well as the same Latin source dissipates possible differences. Though this goal is left implicit in the reference to this common classical source, it is Shakespeare's clear intention to achieve it. It is definitely not by chance that the two speeches blend together, and the author's expectations are met once the intended audience is placed in a position to decode this seemingly invisible, implicit direction.

4. Conclusion

It could be preliminarily concluded that men take precedence while women are left in second place when it comes to the cognitive complexity achieved by Shakespeare in these two plays under consideration. Rosalind has the right mind, proved to be savage only when restrained by a wrong courtly body. In the case of this female character, mind and body can be easily reconciled through the use of such a common and simple device as disguise. By contrast, Caliban is portrayed as a savage-minded character

enclosed in a monstrous body. His savage mind can only be broken by means of highly complex cognitive devices to be deciphered with some effort by a limited intended audience, while Rosalind's wrong body was capable of being reversed through disguise thanks to the rightness of her mind. Still, Caliban's body remains savage, and this makes Rosalind both cognitively and physically superior.

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**WHO IS THE REAL EVIL?: THE FEMALE CHALLENGING THE
MALE IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* AND *MEASURE FOR
MEASURE***

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***Abstract:** Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* and Isabella in *Measure for Measure* challenge the savage male mind through disguise and deception. The roles of female and male are subverted in both plays as the female mind becomes stronger while the male body is abused and victimised. Both Portia and Isabella occupy centre stage and stand out through their subtlety.*

***Keywords:** deception, disguise, female intellect, female superiority*

1. Introduction

The concept of the savage male mind and broken female body is reversed in two of Shakespeare's plays, *The Merchant of Venice* (1596) and *Measure for Measure* (1603), as Portia in the former and Isabella in the latter challenge the brute male mind through disguise and deception. These two tools thus turn out to be powerful weapons which the fragile female body uses to gain power over the savage male mind. In this respect, Portia confronts merciless Shylock and spiteful Antonio in *The Merchant of*

Venice while Isabella challenges cruel, lustful Angelo in *Measure for Measure*. Accordingly, at the end of both plays, the roles of female and male are subverted as the female mind becomes stronger; whereas the male body is abused and victimised. In this regard, the major aim of this article is to demonstrate that Portia and Isabella act as rivals to the male characters in terms of evil as they manipulate the course of events through disguise and deception, and in both plays the female characters stand out by their subtlety. In other words, these two female characters do not remain on the margin of the action; on the contrary, they place themselves in the limelight through their artful schemes. Accordingly, although Shylock and Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* and Angelo in *Measure for Measure* are presented as villainous from the very beginning, Portia and Isabella both maintain control over events and characters as they slyly subvert the savage male mind and abandon the fragile female body. We will also be commenting on each female character's use of stratagems, as Portia cross-dresses as a means of disguise while Isabella uses Mariana's sexuality to conceal her own identity.

2. Portia

In *The Merchant of Venice* the conflict between Shylock and Antonio, stemming from a mutual hatred due to racial and economic considerations, turns out into a feud which targets Shylock as the evildoer and positions Antonio as the victim. Shylock manifests his grudge, which eventually exhausts his wealth and honour, against Antonio when he says, "You call me disbeliever, cut-throat dog,/ And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine" (I,iii,106-7). Yet Antonio responds to Shylock's accusations more harshly and remorselessly as follows: "I am as like to call thee so

again,/ To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too” (I,iii,125-26). Then the relentless animosity between the Jew and the Christian which is implied at the beginning of the play hardens when Shylock takes the opportunity of achieving financial superiority over Antonio and seeking revenge by agreeing to grant Bassanio a loan whose guarantor is Antonio himself. From this point of view, the play seems to be about the relations between two vengeful male characters until Portia’s artful intervention in the course of events. What Portia does is to become involved in the blood feud between the Jew and the Christian, both of whom are yearning for revenge and the destruction of the other party. However, she relinquishes her female body by disguising herself as a man in the trial scene. In addition, she engages in various deceptions, starting from the casket scene and developing through her manipulation of the laws of Venice in the trial scene, as will be explained in detail below.

Though Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* is presented as a rich heiress waiting to see which of her suitors will choose the correct casket in order to be able to marry her, she in fact functions as a fundamental character who shapes not only the course of the play but also the fates of other characters, notably those of the males. As Karen Newman (1987:29) has stated, “she becomes an unruly woman”, and her non-conformist character is presented even at the very beginning of the play as she vigorously objects to having to marry according to the principles her father had settled before he died when she says, “I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father: is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?” (I,ii,22-26). Thus Portia shows her emancipatory spirit through her rebellious attitude to her deceased father’s wishes. In Alice N.

Benston's (1979:371) words, "[c]learly Portia is feeling discontent; with youthful passion she would like to abrogate the contract as written by her father. But she cannot, as she says, reason her way to freedom of choice; she would have to rebel." Therefore, taking into consideration Portia's statements in the casket scene, it may be argued that she uncovers her rebellious nature and savage mind even before she encounters Shylock and Antonio in the trial scene and the ring trick episode.

However, Portia first acts in accordance with her unsubmitive spirit by assuming a disguise when she decides to take action to help Bassanio, her new husband, and his beloved Antonio, who is about to be pitilessly punished by Shylock. Though Portia does not personally know Shylock or Antonio, the comments of particularly Salerio and Jessica on Shylock's evilness and Antonio's plight persuade Portia of the necessity of saving Antonio and punishing Shylock. Salerio defines Shylock as a beast when he says, "[...] never did I know/ A creature that did bear the shape of man/ So keen and greedy to confound a man" (III,ii,273-75), while Jessica emphasises Antonio's desperate situation (if the laws do not save him) as follows: "[...] and I know my lord,/ If law, authority, and power deny not,/ It will go hard with poor Antonio" (III,ii,287-89). Thus, it may be argued that Portia's opinion in regard to identifying the savage male mind is influenced by the prejudiced impressions of people who either hate Shylock for being Jewish, like Salerio, or have escaped from him due to his repressive attitudes, as has Jessica. In A.D. Moody's (1991:79) words, "[s]ince the moment in Act III when Antonio was known to be forfeit to Shylock, everything has been shaping towards the trial. Antonio's friends, under Portia, have been rallying to him, while Shylock has been shown hardening his heart." Accordingly, Portia poses as a doctor of law with

Nerissa accompanying her in the scheme disguised as her assistant, since she has decided to take action to shape the world of the male characters. When Nerissa asks, "Shall they see us?" (III,iv,59), Portia's response obviously expresses her desire to avoid the image of broken female body, and to overcome the savage male mind that she sees as represented by Shylock: "They shall, Nerissa: but in such a habit,/ That they shall think we are accomplished/ With that we lack" (III,iv,60-62). Therefore, as indicated in these lines, Portia finds strength in male disguise and is certain of victory as she uses her intellect against the savage male mind. What is ironical in Portia's disguise as a man is that she leaves the female broken body behind and finds the means of salvation through mind in a male body. In other words, she cannot act subtly by depending on her mind in her female aspect, yet she succeeds in defeating both Shylock, who is striving to injure Antonio and cause his death, and also Antonio, who is competing with Portia for Bassanio's love.

Portia's disguise, though different in nature, functions like that of Isabella to punish a male who is labelled as unjust and cruel (here Shylock) in his behaviour towards a defenceless and victimised character (here Antonio). Portia, in the garb of a young male clerk, asks such cunning questions in court and steers the conversation with Shylock so successfully that she easily manages to achieve an outcome which punishes Shylock and saves Antonio's life. As Thomas C. Bilello (2004:23) has pointed out, "[b]y obscuring her gender, Portia perpetrates the first lie, an ironic and necessary step to her entry into the exclusively male court. Of course, her disguise remains in place throughout the trial, which provides her the credibility with the litigants and the Duke required to defeat Shylock." It may therefore be argued that Portia uses both the male body and the male savage mind to

build up trust in herself not only in Shylock but also in the authorities charged with applying the laws of Venice. In court, Portia first asks Shylock clever questions and maintains a stance that appears to side with Shylock, thus gaining his trust in her as a man of law. She supports the inviolability of the bond between Shylock and Antonio when she says, “[...] there is no power in Venice/ Can alter a decree established” (IV,i,214-15). Next, she declares the possibility of the execution of the punishment of Antonio if Shylock will not accept the money instead of flesh: “And lawfully by this the Jew may claim/ A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off/ Nearest the merchant’s heart” (IV,i,227-29). Accordingly, she wins Shylock’s respect and admiration, and he praises this young lawyer who defends the rights of the Jew against the Christian when he says, “O wise young judge” (IV,i,220), and “O noble judge! O excellent young man!” (IV,i,242). All these positive developments for Shylock in the course of the trial make the reader curious about Portia’s next move. Yet Shylock’s admiration of Portia and her support of Shylock do not last long, for Portia soon executes the final step in her scheme. After giving Shylock permission to cut the flesh from Antonio’s breast, she reminds him not to shed any blood in making the cut, as the law does not allow this. She says: “Tarry a little; there is something else,-/ This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood” (IV,i,301-02). Shylock is thus rendered helpless before the laws of Venice by Portia’s savage female mind. Though he now declares himself ready to accept compensation for his debt, Portia, as the lawyer, shows no leniency towards Shylock but takes revenge on behalf of her husband and his beloved friend as she directs the state of Venice to confiscate Shylock’s property. Portia not only prevents Shylock from exacting the punishment but also exerts psychological pressure on him as she continues, “Why doth the Jew pause?”

take thy forfeiture” (IV,i,331), and “He hath refus’d it in the open court,/ He shall have merely justice and his bond” (IV,i,334-35). However, with the final move Portia makes in court, Shylock falls into disgrace and is condemned to live in penury for the rest of his life, a true life sentence for the Jew. She suggests:

The law hath yet another hold on you.
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,-
If it be proved against an alien,
That by direct, or indirect attempts
He seeks the life of any citizen,
The party ’gainst the which he doth contrive,
Shall seize one half of his goods, the other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state, (IV,i,343-50)

As indicated in these lines, Portia dispossesses Shylock, which means total destruction for the Jewish moneylender. She uses the laws of Venice as her weapon to defeat Shylock as she succeeds in interpreting them in a cunning and intellectual way. In Bilello’s words (2004:12-13), “[t]o that extent, Portia succeeds brilliantly: she obtains Antonio’s release from the bond, thereby relieving Bassanio from his moral debt and, by requiring Shylock’s conversion to Christianity, ensures his elimination from the usury market.” Thus Portia is the character who determines the future of each of the male characters at the end of the play. In line with her actions in the casket scene, she first displays her determination to shape her own life by disguising herself as a man and entering the male world, and then she shapes the lives of male characters with a clever and highly artful approach to the laws of Venice.

However, Portia's savage mind scheme is not only directed at Shylock. She also deceives Bassanio and Gratiano by cooperating with Nerissa in the ring trick in male disguise, eliminating the broken female body. Portia and Nerissa both give rings to their husbands and exhort them to keep close watch over them, as Portia says: "I give them with this ring,/ Which when you part from, lose, or give away,/ Let it presage the ruin of your love" (III,ii,171-73). Thus the ring Portia consigns to Bassanio becomes the token of their love and commitment to each other. Yet Bassanio's deep affection for Antonio exceeds his love for Portia, which constitutes a threat to Portia that she must overcome with her savage female mind. Bassanio openly expresses the magnitude of his devotion to Antonio in the presence of Portia during the trial scene as follows: "Antonio, I am married to a wife/ Which is as dear to me as life itself,/ But life itself, my wife, and all the world,/ Are not with me esteem'd above thy life" (IV,i,278-81). In these lines Bassanio publicly makes a choice between Antonio, his dearest friend, and Portia, his beloved wife, and gives priority to his love for Antonio. Portia therefore makes up her mind to test Bassanio's love for her and to teach her husband an unforgettable lesson, and she manages to deceive Bassanio by her male disguise. When Bassanio wants to offer a gift to the young lawyer as a sign of his gratitude, Portia particularly asks for his ring: "[...] I'll take this ring from you,-/ Do not draw back your hand, I'll take no more" (IV,i,423-24). Though Bassanio fiercely refuses to give up his ring, which has been given to him by his beloved wife and is linked to a promise, Antonio insists that he give the ring to the man who has saved his life: "My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring,/ Let his deservings, and my love withal/ Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment" (IV,i,445-47), and the upshot is Bassanio's surrender of the ring to Portia in male disguise. Thus, in the ring

trick, the struggle between Portia and Antonio for both the love and the spiritual and sensual possession of Bassanio is revealed; yet Portia comes out victorious, which reveals how closely Bassanio is attached to her. In other words, Portia not only saves the beloved Antonio's body and ends up being a heroine in the eyes of Bassanio, but she also proves Bassanio's devotion to herself, as Bassanio confesses how deeply he regrets his actions: "Portia, forgive me this enforced wrong" (V,i,240). Thus, it may be argued that Antonio is reduced to holding a secondary position in Bassanio's life through Portia's intervention in a male body, yet by the use of a savage female mind.

3. Isabella

In *Measure for Measure*, Isabella presents a similar struggle with the savage male mind to Portia's, yet the way she uses the means of disguise is different from hers. Just like Portia, she uses both her mind and her body in her disguise, yet she does not abandon her broken female body and take to male disguise. Rather, she not only uses her own femininity but also uses the female body of another woman, Mariana. However, both her position as a woman and Mariana's body once rejected by Angelo gain strength through her deception, which she plans with the Duke, who is disguised as a member of the clergy. Kiernan Ryan (2002:134) explains the theme of the plays as follows: "The play's plot contrives a situation of corruption, confusion and crisis, which can only be resolved by the omniscient intervention of the patriarchal principle incarnate, who reclaims mastery over the instruments of state by regulating the sexual behaviour of his subjects through marriage." However, the controlling force in *Measure for Measure* turns out

to be a savage female mind rather than a savage male mind, and hence a woman who assumes the role of a man prevails over the course of events.

The brutality of the male mind is presented at the very beginning of the play before it is replaced by a savage female mind and a stronger body. When the Duke describes Angelo to Escalus he emphasises his propensity towards a cruel and strict kind of rule, necessary if social order, which has deteriorated, is to be restored: "What figure of us, think you, he will bear?/ For, you must know, we have with special soul/Elected him our absence to supply;/ Lent him our terror, drest him with our love" (Shakespeare, I,i,16-19). Thus the Duke asserts that he has deliberately chosen Angelo as his evilness of character suits his purpose of upholding the order of the community, something that he himself has not been able to achieve. Furthermore, Angelo describes his own depravity and how hard it is for an evil person to change into a moral being as follows: "Blood, thou art blood./ Let's write good angel on the devil's horn-/ 'Tis not the devil's crest" (II,iv,15-17). In this sense, it may be argued that it is hinted at the beginning of the play that what will be presented in the course of the action is the savage male mind - in other words, Angelo's baleful and domineering administration, which will victimise primarily Claudio, who is accused of fornication, and then any subjects who violate the laws. However, Isabella, as the savage female mind of the play, subverts the implied objective, as she plays the role of savage male mind while retaining and reinforcing her female body. Claudio gives clues to Isabella's character when he describes her appearance and personality to Lucio, and even here at the very beginning of the play he foreshadows her future cunning attitude:

I have great hope in that. For in her youth
There is a prone and speechless dialect

Such as move men; beside, she hath prosperous art
When she will play with reason and discourse,
And well she can persuade. (I,ii,172-76)

Thus, as indicated in the above lines, Isabella's femininity is praised, as her beauty and reason can influence people, especially men, and make them do whatever she wants. In other words, the qualities of beauty and reason, the body and the mind, are combined in the image of Isabella, and it is clearly stated that those features, as well as her morals, will be highlighted throughout the play. In addition, Isabella's power as an attractive and intellectual woman is expressed by Lucio, and it is indicated that she has sufficient ability to dominate not only the course of events but also the fates of other characters in the play. Though Isabella acts as if she is unaware of the power of her beauty and reason, as she says, "My power? Alas, I doubt" (I,iv,76) in response to Lucio's demand that she use her power, Lucio emphasises the possibility of change if Isabella fearlessly takes action:

[...] Go to Lord Angelo,
And let him learn to know, when maidens sue,
Men give like gods; but when they weep and kneel,
All their petitions are as freely theirs
As they themselves would owe them. (I,iv,79-83)

Thus male characters such as Claudio and Lucio realise Isabella's potential to influence people and manipulate events even before Isabella herself does, and they both want her to use her ascendancy to save the life of Claudio, who is being victimised at the hands of Angelo just as Antonio was persecuted by Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. Likewise, the scene in which Isabella appeals to Angelo to save Claudio's life is of significance in

displaying Isabella's competence as a woman, as Angelo falls in love with her elegance and virtues: "If he had been as you, and you as he,/ You would have slipp'd like him, but he like you/ Would not have been so stern" (II,ii,64-66). In these lines Isabella courageously and openly challenges Angelo's decision to execute Claudio and explicitly expresses her conviction that Claudio would not punish him if it were Angelo who had committed such a crime. By so doing, she proves that she is not a passive character who will resign herself to her brother's death; instead, she tries to change Angelo's decision through effective and persistent rhetoric before she puts her scheme into effect. Isabella's attractiveness, which originates not only from her beauty but also from her wisdom, influences Angelo, who expresses the power of Isabella's femininity combined with reason: "From thee: even from thy virtue!/ What's this? What's this? Is that her fault, or mine?/ The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most, ha?" (II,ii,162-65). In this regard, it may be argued that Angelo cannot differentiate between his own evilness and that of Isabella, as she seems through her appearance and mind to be as sinful as he is.

Isabella's real intentions are revealed in her speech to the Duke, who is disguised as a cleric; and her immediate acceptance of what the Duke suggests demonstrates her readiness to assume the role of savage male mind despite her female body. The Duke counsels Isabella:

Go you to Angelo; answer his requiring with a plausible obedience; agree with his demands to the point. Only refer yourself to this advantage, [...] We shall advise this wronged maid to stand up your appointment, go in your place. If the encounter acknowledge itself hereafter, it may compel him to her recompense; and hear, by this is your brother saved, your honour untainted, the poor Mariana advantaged, and the corrupt deputy scaled. (III,i,243-56)

Thus, the idea of using Mariana's body as a tool to punish Angelo is first suggested by the Duke, yet Isabella submits to the proposal without questioning. Accordingly, Isabella's response, "[t]he image of it gives me content already, and I trust it will grow to a most prosperous perfection" (III,i,260-61), vividly displays the ironical fact that a woman who has strictly followed various moral codes is accepting the exploitation of the body of another woman and of her being used to fulfil her own desire for revenge. Anna Brownell Jameson (2001:78) highlights Isabella's power as a female character and her use of deception to achieve her goal when she says, "[...] though [Isabella] triumphs in the conclusion, her triumph is not produced in a pleasing manner. There are too many disguises and tricks [...]." In other words, like Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, Isabella resorts to fraudulent means to maintain control over the other characters and direct the course of events as she pleases. Moreover, Isabella's evil mind is revealed in another situation too, as she follows up the Duke's plan to display Angelo's crimes at the end of the play. When the Duke wants Isabella to accuse Angelo of proposing an act of fornication as the price for the saving of her brother's life, yet eventually killing him even though she had accepted his offer, Isabella's answer is of importance, as her cunning side is revealed once again in her words: "To speak so indirectly I am loth;/ I would say the truth, but to accuse him so/ That is your part; yet I am advis'd to do it,/ He says, to veil full purpose" (IV,vi,1-4). Though she claims that she is not doing this willingly, her expressions clearly reveal that her savage mind urges her to avenge herself on Angelo for her brother's death, and if her revenge necessitates lying, she can leave her morals aside without hesitation. She continues to lie as part of the plan, and tells the story in accordance with her plot with the Duke:

In brief, to set the needless process by-
 How I persuaded, how I pray'd and kneel'd,
 How he refell'd me, and how I replied
 (For this was of much length)-the vile conclusion
 I now begin with grief and shame to utter.
 He would not, but by gift of my chaste body
 To his concupiscible intemperate lust,
 Release my brother; and after much debatement,
 My sisterly remorse confutes mine honour
 And I did yield to him. But the next morn betimes,
 His purpose surfeiting, he sends a warrant
 For my poor brother's head. (V,i,95-106)

As indicated in the above lines, Angelo's malignity is laid bare in public, in the presence of all the characters of the play. Thus, on the basis of Isabella's confession, Angelo has no means of concealment, and his evilness is revealed in all its nakedness, just as Isabella has been plotting right from the beginning of the play. In other words, Isabella punishes Angelo for his cruel attitude towards Claudio and his licentious proposal to herself even though she was begging for mercy. Consequently, the ending of *Measure for Measure* does not bring happiness and reconciliation to Angelo even though it ends with his marriage to Mariana. In John Klause's words (2012:42), "[t]he conclusion of *Measure for Measure* brings with it no strong perfume of romance." The scene where the Duke reveals his true identity and Angelo's crimes are unraveled is of significance in that it displays Angelo's acceptance of defeat at the hands of Isabella. He remorsefully consents to suffer the death penalty as he pleads with the Duke to be released from his sins: "But let my trial be mine own confession./ Immediate sentence, then, and sequent death/ Is all the grace I beg" (V,i,370-72). Therefore, just like

Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, Angelo, as a man who has lost influence and been dishonoured, has nothing left to do but to beg for his death, which will be an ultimate salvation for him. While Angelo feels ashamed, Isabella emerges as the saviour of the people who have been wronged. The Duke's proposal to Isabella at the end of the play very clearly demonstrates that Isabella is to be rewarded with a life of prosperity, as the Duke says: "I have a motion much imports your good;/ Where to if you'll a willing ear incline,/ What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine" (V,i,532-34). In other words, Angelo is finally presented as the evil character of the play while Isabella is cleared of all the intrigues she has planned throughout the action.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, Portia and Isabella challenge the savage male mind, and rather than being victims of the evil male they victimize the male body. In both plays, they assume control of events and other characters and determine how the play progresses and the characters evolve through various schemes and means such as disguise and deception. They not only subvert the roles of male characters but also maintain a savage male mind to either punish the merciless or take revenge on the evil male character. Both Portia and Isabella use deception to entrap the savage male mind, yet while Portia uses cross-dressing as a means of disguise, Isabella uses another woman's body to mask her identity. Accordingly, while the female characters become strong in terms of both body and mind, the male characters are weakened, as they turn into victims whose bodies are exploited.

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**THE UNFOLDING OF TRUTH AND SELF-REPRESENTATION
WITHIN THE CRACKED MIRROR IN SHAKESPEARE'S
*RICHARD II***

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***Abstract:** Shakespeare's Richard II deals with the controversy between the divine and the mortal aspects of the King. According to Kantorowicz's The King's Two Bodies, the King had two bodies: a Body Natural and a Body Politic. In the deposition scene of the play, Richard exploits the divine authority by undoing himself as if in a sacramental ceremony and asks for a mirror in order to see whether the change in his kingly nature has affected his face. My paper will deal with the unfolding of unendurable truth and the self-representation of Richard II in the duality of his image within the cracked mirror.*

***Keywords:** appearance versus reality, cracked mirror, duality.*

Introduction

In Shakespeare's time, the divine right of kings was a dogma based upon the notion that the monarch received his authority from God and a king was regarded as having been anointed with sacred balm. In *Richard II*

Shakespeare deals with the conflict between the divine and the mortal aspects of the King.

Kantorowicz (1981:7) states in *The King's Two Bodies* that the King is regarded as having two bodies: in Kantorowicz's terms, 'the one whereof is a Body Natural, consisting of natural Members and is subject to Passions and Death, whereas the other is a Body Politic and the Members are his Subjects and the Body of the King never dies'. In the deposition scene, King Richard exploits the divine authority by undoing himself as if he were in a sacramental ceremony. First he asks for a mirror in order to see whether the change in his kingly nature has affected his face, and then he dashes the mirror into pieces in a sudden fury. This scene appears to be the climax of the tragedy of the dual personality of the King. The physical face reflected in the mirror is no longer the one that shows Richard's inner experience. Richard sees himself as a suffering figure of Christ betrayed by his subjects as well as by himself. The double image of Richard as Richard *microchristus* and Richard *microcosmos* is reflected as Richard the Lord's Anointed and Richard Everyman.

According to Kantorowicz (1981:7), the notion of the King's two bodies consolidates a polymorphic being which includes both the mortal and the divine, setting a pattern for a fluid self which is completely elusive, unstable and self-fashioning. In an essay, Greenblatt (1992:98) states that 'theatricality is power's essential mode' and that 'the modern state is based on deceit, calculation and hypocrisy'. The notion of political power and kingship is based upon a play between displaying and hiding.

Thomas Hobbes (1985[1651]:217) in *Leviathan* defines *Person* as Face, but *Persona* as Disguise or outward appearance of a man,

counterfeited on stage, disguising the Face as a Mask. Questions emerging from this duality come to mind: Where is the monarch's inward sphere? Is it after all possible to conceive an inner self for the Renaissance monarch? Is the essence of the monarch's political power an illusion? Or is it a game of mirrors? Where does the truth lie concerning the human psyche?

The monarch usually shapes himself through a play of multifaceted personae. Thus, Shakespeare's Richard II is torn between such self figures as these: the anointed monarch, the deposed King, the poet, the beggar and the fool. The self-division he portrays is quite curious because Richard 'looks like a King' but has not the spirit of one. Richard II can stand as the opposite of Queen Elizabeth I, who claimed to have a man's spirit in the body of a woman. Elizabeth claimed: 'I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and the stomach of a King' (quoted in Levin 1996:1). But in the affair of the execution of Lord Essex in 1601, the Queen displayed the masculine and cruel side of her royal being instead of the feminine and fragile side of her nature in her political decision of the execution.

According to Greenblatt, theatricality, in the sense of both disguise and histrionic self-presentation, arose from conditions common to almost all Renaissance courts. The manuals of court behaviour offered an integrated rhetoric of the self, a model for the formation of an artificial identity. Dissimulation and feigning became a very important part of the instruction of the courtier, who needed such means of pretence to achieve an agreeable social presence and political virtue. The celebration of the Protean man with a facility to change and to transform himself according to the pleasure of others at court also found expression in Elizabeth's exercise of power, not only in Petrarchan politics but also in her Machiavellian strategies

(Greenblatt 2005:166). As Michel Foucault has indicated, the power of the monarch shares its forms with modes of theatricality: sovereignty is a kind of display of power, in other words, ‘ a political ritual and a manifestation of the power of the sovereign’ (quoted in Barker 1998:53). In the Tudor age, the monarch’s sceptre as the symbol of political power reflects the relationship between state and stage, between the monarch and the performance, between authority and representation.

Foucault’s approach to power and authority as a theatrical display is akin to Queen Elizabeth’s words, since she said: “We princes are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world. The eyes of many behold our actions: a spot is soon spied in our garments, a blemish quickly noted in our doings” (quoted in Montini 1999:219). Thus her royal power is manifested to her subjects as if in a theatre. The theory of power and kingship is based upon a play between showing and hiding. The play of authority and stately power is dependent upon visibility. Thus, in this way, it plays with illusion and reality and indeed is very close to the art of histrionics.

Kantorowicz has stated that:

for the King has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body. (1981:7)

The concept of the body politic as superior to and somehow beyond the natural laws of the body natural is indeed an attempt to create what is “the Immutable within Time”. (Kantorowicz 1981:8). Not only is the body politic “more ample and large” than the body natural, but there dwell in the former certain truly mysterious forces which reduce, or even remove, the imperfections of fragile human nature. (Kantorowicz 1981:9) Thus, kingship transcends the laws both of Time and of Nature. As Kantorowicz states in *The King’s Two Bodies*, “the mortal king was God-made, but the immortal king man-made.” (1981:318) This kind of creature sets a pattern for the modern self, a fluid self, unstable, self-fashioning, sharing the social environment moulded by the king himself. The king will undoubtedly remain a *persona ficta*, like an abstract emblem of perfection in the eyes of the public. He shapes himself through a play of *multifaceted personae*; the characters and roles he takes on amount to ontological modes of being. Thus, the political theory of power and kingship is chiefly based upon a play of showing the mask and hiding the true face. The epiphany of kingship operates very like a theatrical illusion on stage, allowing a fusion between the audience and the image of the monarch.

By contrast with Elizabeth I’s self-fashioning representation in armour at Tilbury, encouraging her warriors by her speech and reflecting this monarch’s masculine aspect which is indeed ‘the presence of an absence’ in Holderness’s terms (2000:13), Richard II in Shakespeare’s play throws his warder down to stop the chivalric combat, thus disappointing the combatants, Hereford and Mowbray, who were expecting to show the power of their masculinity and defend the honour of their names in chivalric fashion. In his presentation of the monarch’s power Richard II prefers a softer way rather than combat, thus manifesting a feminized form of

authority. In the foreground lies the unfinished business of the murder of the Duke of Gloucester, Thomas of Woodstock, who cannot be avenged because nobody, not even John of Gaunt, could dare to raise his hand against the anointed King, the minister of God on earth. In his speech to the combatants Richard II describes his kingship in maternal terms, with the earth of the kingdom being seen as a mother who fosters and nurses the sweet infant of peace.

On his return from his Irish expedition Richard uses the same kind of feminine imagery for his royal kingdom as he kneels down to kiss its mother earth as if in a ritual of devotion. What Richard displays in his speech is the expression of an excessively feminine emotion rather than the masculine strength of a sovereign. In his sensitive speech which starts ‘I weep for joy’ (III, ii, 4) Richard expresses his feelings about his return to England in maternal metaphors in which the comparison rests upon the meeting of a mother with her child after a long absence. As Graham Holderness states:

Richard, by contrast, claims a maternal relation to the kingdom, thus confessing to a relationship of emotional intimacy and weakness. As a mother, playing with her child, he occupies a ludic world of infancy, and his imagination populates itself with childlike fantasies of omnipotence. This ‘fond’ play is therefore both affectionate and foolish; the ‘favours’ he offers to his beloved earth link royal patronage to a childish megalomania. In this fantasy the creatures of the earth - toads, adders, stinging nettles - can be relied upon to guarantee the loyalty so manifestly refused by Richard’s human subjects. (2000:193)

Coppélia Kahn (1992:75) in “The Shadow of the Male” states that Richard’s tragedy is that he fails to comprehend the meaning for his kingship of his identity as a man. She asserts that *Richard II* can be seen as an *agon* between maternal and paternal images of kingship, with Richard identifying

himself with England as an all-providing mother and Henry Bolingbroke with the patriarchal principle of succession and chivalry.

Throughout the play England is imaged in the traditional topos as a maternal presence, nurturing her people as her babes. When Richard cannot call upon his identification with mother England, he becomes a hollow King. For him there is no mean between fullness and emptiness, omnipotence and total dejection, because he is emotionally dependent on a boundless supply of reassurance, maternal in origin and nature. For Coppélia Kahn (1992:77), *Richard II* portrays a loss of identity through a loss of kingship. The feminine in Richard II's nature appears as extreme sensibility and a great inclination towards art and poetry.

Most critics have observed that Richard is in love with the sound of his own speech: he is a Poet King as well as a Player King. This astonishing eloquence in speech and artistic imagination seems to be Shakespeare's invention. In Holinshed's Chronicle Richard's beautiful physical appearance is mentioned, but none of the sources credits the King with fine speech. Holinshed represents Richard II as the victim of his own folly and oscillates back and forth between sympathizing with or apologizing for him and lambasting his insolent kingly misgovernance and loose living under the influence of evil counsellors and the frailty of wanton youth.

Regarding the actual historical character of Richard II Christopher Fletcher (2008:7) states that 'the significance of manhood, boyhood, and youth at Richard's deposition arose from the objective reality of the effeminate character of the King'. Fletcher (2008:8-9) asserts that 'by inclination [Richard] was an artist rather than a Warrior', and that 'with highly developed aesthetic sense and love of refinement' he could not share his interests with his subjects. Fletcher (2008:11) concludes that Richard II's

failure is explained by a 'narcissistic personality' which craved praise and attention and ended in his becoming totally detached from reality. Goddard (1951:157) calls him a 'Narcissus-King'.

Concerning the King's downfall, Fletcher (2008:19) puts the blame upon 'the vices of Richard's youthful counsellors' whose actions and flattery were mostly focused upon the vanity and susceptibility of the King who was deliberately misled towards self-pride, tyranny and hence self-destruction.

When Shakespeare's Richard learns the bad news that his 'loyal' subjects are all gone, the blood leaves his face and he turns pale at the terrible loss. The spectators watch him lamenting the dire situation in which he is left and listen to his sad tale about the graves and the murder of kings. The previous imagery about the earth which implies the tenderness of the mother, the care of the womb, now veers toward the image of the earth as the place of the dead, the tomb.

What is striking in the climactic scene in the third act is Richard's separation of the King's two bodies; the immortal one and the mortal one. Regardless of the dogmatic unity of the two bodies, a separation of one from the other was nevertheless possible, namely, that separation which, with regard to common man, is usually called Death. (Kantorowicz 1981:12-13) The divine body of the King is reduced to the mortal body of the King. Richard speaks of the figure of Death, sitting like an antic within the crown of the King and mocking the King's 'seeming' sovereignty and power.

RICHARD II: for within the hollow crown

That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,

Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be feared, and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if the flesh which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable: and humoured thus,
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!
(III, ii, 160- 170)

The human and mortal being of the King is felt bitterly by Richard as he utters the next lines:

RICHARD II: Cover your heads, mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence; throw away respect,
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty;
For you have but mistook me all this while.
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends – subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king?
(III, ii, 171- 177)

As Kantorowicz (1981:31) points out, the fiction of the oneness of the double body breaks apart, and the Godhead and manhood of the King's Two Bodies, both clearly outlined with a few strokes, stand in contrast to each other. Richard II is now no longer performing the role of the monarch, which is to rule as effectively as possible; instead, he appears to be playing the role of the most sensitive poet and the most talented actor, lamenting his calamity as if he were on stage. Richard's belief in the Divine Right of Kings had been expressed in his previous speeches as follows:

RICHARD II: Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king.
(III, ii, 54- 55)

This belief is turned totally upside down and shaken by Bolingbroke's supporters. Thus, Bolingbroke's pragmatic and military authority replaces the Divine Right of Kings. As an anointed King, Richard II had never dreamt of such a deposition because he was so sure of his place on earth as the minister of God and believed that no force could take his kingdom from his hands, as seen in his words during the tournament, when he remarks that 'Lions make leopards tame' (I, i, 174).

In the historical portrait of Richard II known as the Wilton Diptych, the young king is depicted as having a womanly, graceful beauty and is accompanied by the figure of the Virgin surrounded by angels. In the Wilton Diptych, the young King Richard is depicted wearing a dress of golden tissue decorated with medallions showing a white hart and kneeling in an attitude of reverence before the Virgin, attended by two Kings, Edmund the Martyr and Edward the Confessor, while his patron saint, John the Baptist, lays a protective hand on Richard's shoulder (Bevan 1990:99).

According to Gervase Mathew, the Wilton Diptych represents Richard's coronation in his eleventh year, since there are eleven angels in blue dresses around the Virgin with the emblem of the white hart on their costumes (quoted in Bevan 1990:99). The femininity of the monarch is made obvious by the link with the divine glory of the cult of the Virgin. Richard II is often referred as the '*fair rose*' of the York family whose tender and graceful whiteness was reddened by the Lancastrians. All through Shakespeare's play it is implied that Richard's personal appearance is attractive but somewhat effeminate.

(IV, i, 167-171)

In *The Meaning of Shakespeare* Goddard (1951:154) states that ‘drowning himself in an agony of self-pity Richard proceeds to uncrown himself.’ Goddard (1951:155) assumes that ‘the more Richard cowers, the more Henry tightens the screws’ and concludes that fear and force become poles of a single entity. Fear becomes as creative as faith and brings into being what it imagines. In Flint Castle Richard accepts his defeat without even defending himself as the King of England and starts talking of worms, epitaphs and wills. He imagines his deposition and the loss of his kingdom in bitter terms. Richard philosophizes his present state as follows:

RICHARD II: Our lands, our lives, and all, are Bolingbroke’s,
And nothing can we call our own but death;
.....
For God’s sake let us sit down upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:
How some have been depos’d, some slain in war,
All murdered

(III, ii, 151- 162)

Before his deposition, in his creative, imaginative mind, Richard sees his downfall and turns to his subjects, calling himself a human being, a common person like them. Holinshed’s *Chronicle* associates Richard’s downfall and misgovernance with luxurious self-indulgence, whereas Shakespeare’s play associates them with luxurious self-representation. Shakespeare replaces Holinshed’s royal victim with a more complicated figure who seems to go out of his way to have himself victimized and then

blames his victimization on others. Before his deposition, Richard seems to be entertaining the idea of being deposed in a somewhat masochistic way. According to Bryant, these allusions point to ‘a double image of Richard as Richard *microchristus* and Richard *microcosmos*, Richard the Lord’s Anointed and Richard Everyman. (quoted in Brooke 1973:189-190)

In his analysis of the relationship between power and theatricality in Renaissance England, Christopher Pye (1990:153) states that:

Richard II bears quite directly on this smaller drama of power. It too is preoccupied with treason, with transgressed boundaries, with mirrors that both conceal and betray too much.

Stephen Greenblatt (quoted in Orgel & Keilen 1999:154) argues that in the Renaissance “power...not only produces its own subversion but is actively built upon it”. In the scene of Richard’s deposition the monarch takes on a different role in which sovereignty proves itself absolute in mastering its own subversion. Thus Richard’s rule assumes its most irrefutable form through negation. Richard explains in bitter terms how he will undo himself, as follows:

RICHARD II: With my own hands I give away my crown,
With my own tongue deny my sacred state,
With my own breath release all duteous oaths;
All pomp and majesty I do forswear;
(IV, i, 207- 210)

Before the eyes of his former supporters at Court Richard II unking himself so that the power of the monarchy is transferred in a ‘seeming’ legitimate way. Richard deprives his body politic of the symbols of its dignity and

exposes his poor body natural to the eyes of the spectators (Kantorowicz 1981:36). Self-deprived of all his former glories, Richard goes back to the role of the Fool (Kantorowicz 1981:37). The theatricality in Richard's conduct, with regard to his deposition as seen in the "mirror" game, comprises within it the drama of the betraying gaze in terms of an optical trope – anamorphosis – that bears on the politics of theatre itself. The double edge of betrayal reflects both Richard's betrayal by his subjects and his self-betrayal at the same time. Richard's gaze turned upon his inner psyche displays a guilty conscience resulting from his self-evaluation, as he says:

RICHARD II: Mine eyes are full of tears, I can not see.
And yet salt water blinds them not so much
But they can see a sort of traitors here.
Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,
I find myself a traitor with the rest.
For I have given here my soul's consent
T'undock the pompous body of a king.
(IV, i, 244- 50)

Richard feels himself to be a traitor to his own immortal body politic and to kingship. In other words, the king's body natural becomes a traitor to the king's body politic. The inverted rite of decoronation seen in Richard's words: "Here, cousin, seize the crown" (IV, i, 190) shows Richard having the coronation both ways: Richard forces Bolingbroke to re-enact the usurpation, publicly dramatizing the act of illegal seizure, while presenting himself as the usurper's Christ-like victim. But later he shifts from the victim's pose to the sinner's and starts to perform an act of degradation. What he proposes to remove from his person and offer to Bolingbroke is a

debased crown, a gift that has poison in it. In perversely staging the pathos of victimization and the power of a self-deposing sinner, Richard stigmatizes Bolingbroke as a usurper.

Schwartz (1982:120) argues that Richard's act of violence in the "mirror" scene entails a fragmentation that leads both to purely theatrical assertions of regal identity and to a first recognition of the individual behind such theatricalizing. The mirror scene is the climax of that tragedy of dual personality. The physical face which the mirror reflects is no longer one with Richard's inner experience; his outer appearance is no longer identical with the inner man. (Kantorowicz 1981:39) In the mirror, the duplications which are present in the roles of the King, the Fool, and the God in Richard's being, all dissolve into pieces (Kantorowicz 1981:27). Goddard (1951:157) in *The Meaning of Shakespeare* calls Richard the Narcissus-King in the deposition scene when Richard smashes the mirror into pieces. Richard displays narcissistic tendencies, as seen in his choice of costume, in his conduct at the tournament and in his use of eloquent language. The mirror, which was the emblem of self-conceit and vanity during the medieval period, can here be identified with the lake in Greek mythology into which Narcissus falls and drowns after gazing too long upon his own beauty. He thus dies because of his infatuation with his own image. As the image in the mirror displeases Richard, it evokes a desire for self-annihilation. Like the mythical Narcissus, Richard brings about his own destruction. The cracking of the mirror stands for bad luck, which becomes quite significant as Richard directs the deposition scene and desires that the cracked mirror may bring bad luck to Bolingbroke during his reign.

The mirror cracked into many pieces stands for reality in pieces, as in a Cubist painting. The mirror no longer shows the face of King Richard but

fragmented images of himself in which he is no longer the King but an ordinary man, a prisoner doomed to be murdered in his cell since his continued existence will soon be found dangerous for the realm. The mirror cracked into pieces is good for nothing, just as the presence of Richard will come to Nothing. Richard has no heir of his own body, no continuation of his line. At the end of the ceremonial rite of decoronation Richard is denuded of royalty, stripped of his defining character, his very being, and reduced to an alienated anonymity:

RICHARD II: I have no name, no title –
No, not that name was given me at the font –
But ‘tis usurp’d.

(IV, i, 255- 257)

Nameless, powerless, Richard represents himself as an existential zero, an elimination of all that he has been. Richard now assumes the Divine Power of a very different type of king: he becomes a man of sorrows, a king of ‘griefs’, a sacrificial victim whose power is paradoxically established through the subjugation involved in martyrdom. The mirror which shows his own face ‘bankrupt of majesty’ also has some philosophical and metaphorical dimensions. The mirror is also identified as one of the key images for history, as Beard (quoted in Holderness 2000:204) remarks:

In recalling to mind the truth of things past, which otherwise would be buried in silence, *Historie* setteth before us such effects [...] and layeth vertue and vice so naked before our eyes [...] that it may rightly be called an easie and profitable apprenticeship or schoole for everie man to learn to get wisdom [...] Hence it is that *Historie* is termed of the auncient Philosophers, the [...] looking glasse of mans life. (Beard 1597)

The metaphor of the 'looking glasse' mostly establishes a continuity between appearance and wisdom: on the one hand, it offers an accurate reflection of human reality, on the other hand, it offers a kind of wisdom and an understanding which could be acquired via the process of reflection. When Richard asks for a looking glass to reflect back to himself the climactic moment of his life, what he sees is not an accurate reflection, but a distortion or an inversion of the truth. He expects the mirror to show not only reflective wisdom, but a tragic record of his own troubled psyche. The looking glass is assumed to be capable of not merely reflecting a surface reality, but of disclosing a hidden truth, depicting an underlying reality. What Richard sees in the mirror is the very opposite of what he feels himself to be. What the mirror shows is the image of the beautiful youth and kingly power of Richard as Royal Majesty.

Bolingbroke insists that what Richard saw in the mirror was the shadow of his face. There is no sign of the 'unseen' reality of Richard's tragedy in the reflection of the mirror.

As Kantorowicz states (1981:29), the universal body politic of kingship begins to disintegrate; its transcendental "Reality", its objective truth and god-like existence, so brilliant before, pales into *a nomen*. In his soliloquy in the prison cell in Act V, Richard recognizes the bitterness of his very existence on earth, lamenting that without his crown he is nothing and without his title and kingly status he has no meaning on earth. In his soliloquy, the inner psyche of the King is revealed behind the mask of majesty. In *Richard II* Shakespeare's depiction of the tragedy of the king is mainly focused upon Richard's metamorphosis from the spoilt, irresponsible and capricious king to a meditative, sensitive and self-accusing human being. Richard is not capable of playing with appearance and reality like a

skillful chess player, he is more feminine and weak in his conduct when compared with Queen Elizabeth I. Richard is indeed the 'poet' King.

Conclusion

Shakespeare's Richard II lives within the illusion of his majestic authority which his earlier speeches indicate. Richard repeatedly takes refuge from reality into verbal fantasy and he deploys his verbal power to produce impressions of reality. He is strong enough to overpower his perception of material actuality and his 'hamartia' is that he alone is deluded by these shadows of reality. The fantasy of himself as *le roi soleil* reflects his belief that as an anointed king he is the Deputy of God on earth and that he possesses the divine right of the powers of the King. He cannot divorce himself from the idea of kingly magnificence and royal sanctity. As he becomes absorbed in the pathos of his situation, Richard has no energy left to resist the outside world because his narcissism starves him of substance.

As James Winny in *The Player King* states, "Richard lives on the surface of experience, denied contact with the inward reality of the self by his complete absorption in the identity of the king, which he mistakes for it." (Winny 1968:48). His asking for a mirror in the deposition scene reveals the closed circuit and void of Richard's consciousness. Richard is willingly imprisoned within himself, absorbed by a relationship with his own reflection, which flatters him with his own self-admiring gaze. On this occasion the cracked mirror fails him. He becomes poetically a completely anonymous being, without name, without title and with the shattered images of his broken identity.

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IMAGINED REBELLION: WHAT DOESN'T HAPPEN IN *THE
WINTER'S TALE*

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***Abstract:** Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale features a pattern of violent rebellion that only just fails to happen. Such moments of near-rebellion, best interpreted through the play's master trope of the moving statue, constitute an exploration of the causes of political rebellion and how best to avert it. Thanks to the close integration of its romance aesthetics and political realism, The Winter's Tale can be read as a "Mirror for Kings".*

***Keywords:** counsel, ekphrasis, rebellion, statue, tyranny*

Introduction

Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* is full of threats that fail to materialize. Hermione, falsely accused of adultery by her husband Leontes, king of Sicily, is not executed for high treason. Their infant daughter Perdita is not thrown into a furnace. Nor is Paulina, the lady-in-waiting, burned at the stake. Nor is the old Shepherd, Perdita's foster-father, hanged. Nor is his son, the clown, flayed alive, covered with honey, and exposed to the sun and

bees, as threatened by the rogue Autolycus in courtier's garb. These averted threats are all consistent with the romance genre, with its defining economy of close shaves, reverses of fortune, and ultimate happy endings. In this paper, I propose to discuss a threat that never speaks its name: political rebellion. I hope to show that the play presents several incidents in which rebellion, and possibly even deposition and regicide, are narrowly averted. I will then suggest that these moments are part of a coherent political discourse, thanks in part to Shakespeare's use of the moving statue as a master trope.

Supporting the Royal Prerogative

The Winter's Tale is a play about a king, Leontes of Sicily, who becomes a tyrant when he suddenly becomes convinced – wrongly – that his wife is having an affair and that her unborn child is not his. Jealousy leads to tyranny when the king refuses to hear counsel, attempts to poison his rival, imprisons his wife, casts away his child, rigs his wife's trial, and flouts religion, but he is eventually restored to his senses by the death of his son and the apparent death of his wife.

Critics have shown interest in the political topicality of the play. In the high-handed Leontes they see a reflection of King James I, who though not known for domestic jealousy was certainly known for promoting an absolutist view of kingship and for insisting that Parliament should leave the running of the country to him (see for instance Orgel 2008:12-16). Leontes' rejection of his councillors' advice does indeed seem to echo some of James' speeches and writings. Leontes' statement that "[He] need[s] no more of [their] advice" (2.1.368) appears to reflect James' view that the Commons should have virtually no say in the running of the kingdom. In 1609, James

startled Parliament by stating that the Commons should not interfere with government, which was the king's prerogative:

First, that you does not meddle with the maine points of Giuernment; that is my craft: tractent fabrilia fabri; to meddle with that, were to lessen me: I am now an old King; (...) I must not be taught my office. (James I 1609:315)

This came after his statement that “[k]ings are iustly called Gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of Diuine power vpon earth” (*ibid.* 307). These statements flew in the face of a long-standing constitutional tradition. In the Elizabethan period, the main voice of this tradition was John Hooker's. In his *The order and usage how to keepe a parliament in England in these daies* (1587) Hooker emphasized the role of the Commons in the process of making the law, and the principle of the king being under the law. In James' own time, Sir Edward Coke, following the 13th century jurist Henry Bracton, firmly stated the king's subordination to the common law.

The apparent similarity between Leontes' and James' positions on the royal prerogative raises the question of whether the play should be read as a critique of James' absolutist position. The problem with this theory, as Stephen Orgel points out, is that King James saw and apparently liked the play:

What, then, would King James have thought of *The Winter's Tale*, a play about a monarch whose dogged adherence to James' deepest convictions about the independence, indeed the sanctity, of royal judgement brings him to the edge of tragedy? It could not have offended him; he paid his players to perform it repeatedly at court for his entertainment. Perhaps he allowed the title to guide his response, and considered it no more than a tragicomic fable. But perhaps too he

saw in it a confirmation of an equally basic tenet of his political philosophy, most forcefully argued in *The True Law of Free Monarchies*: that however bad a king may be, he is still the King (Orgel 2008:15).

Orgel is here referring to James' insistence that rebellion is never permissible, since he stated, in the tradition of the Elizabethan *Homily against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion*, that a subject's only resort, when plagued with an evil tyrant as a ruler, is to "obey [him]" and "heartily pray for his welfare". (James VI 1598:67)

Yan Brailowsky concurs with Orgel's analysis, adducing as "proof of the play's defence of royal prerogative" the fact that "[d]espite Leontes' tyranny, no character calls to arms to remove the king or ruler from the throne, as in *Richard II* or *Julius Caesar*" (Brailowsky 2010:59).

The Winter's Tale is indeed a play in which rebellion, resistance, disobedience, deposition and regicide simply do not happen. From near the beginning, when Leontes orders his councillor, Camillo, to kill his fellow king Polixenes, regicide is established as the province of the madman. As for the Sicilian king's suspicions that there is a plot against his life, it is relegated to the realm of mad fantasy by association with his equally fantastical delusions about his wife's infidelity. The point is driven home when Camillo reminds himself, and possibly the off-stage audience, that nothing good ever came of killing a king. Later on, when Leontes finally acknowledges the harm he has done his wife, and by extension his state, he humbly accepts rebuke from Paulina:

Go on, go on
Thou canst not speak to much; I have deserved
All tongues to talk their bitterest. (3.2.212-214)

Clearly, verbal chastisement is the only kind that can be admitted, or even envisaged. Rebellion is established as more or less unthinkable. And yet, in this play, the unthinkable has a way of becoming possible.

The Possibility of Rebellion

Further exploration of James' writings on rebellion and tyrannicide reveals a more nuanced attitude than that expounded in his speeches to Parliament and the *True Law*. In the *Basilikon Doron*, his open letter to his son Henry, James' disapproval of rebellion is qualified by an awareness that a tyrant naturally arouses rebellious impulses in his subjects:

[A] Tyrannes miserable and infamous life, armeth in end his owne Subjects to become his burreaux [executioners] and although that rebellion be euer vnlawfull on their part, yet is the world so wearied of him, that his fall is little meaned by the rest of his Subjects, and but smiled at by his neighbours. And besides the infamous memorie he leaueth behind him here, and the endlesse paine hee sustaineth hereafter, it oft falleth out, that the committers not onely escape vnpunished, but farther, the fact will remaine as allowed by the Law in diuers ages thereafter (James VI 1599:19)

Similarly, the play offsets its supposed endorsement of absolutism by raising the spectre of disobedience, rebellion, and even regicide. There are several occasions in the plot on which violence against a king, or at least some form of rebellion, seems to have been closely averted. One rather benign instance involves not Leontes himself but Polixenes, king of Bohemia, who starts behaving like a tyrant after he finds out that his son has been courting a low-born shepherdess, who will later turn out to be the lost princess Perdita. After violently upbraiding and threatening the young girl,

Polixenes stalks off in a rage. Though she endures his onslaught with an appearance of stoic forbearance, Perdita's words to Florizel after the king has left show that she was in fact quite close to exploding:

I was not much afeared, for once or twice
I was about to speak and tell him plainly
The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
Looks on alike. (4.4.439-443)

Constance Jordan discusses Perdita's metaphor, identifying its probable source in the scriptures (Matthew 5) and its history as popular metaphor. She also identifies a possible political source for Perdita's sun imagery in John Hayward's *Treatise*, where, speaking in favour of the Union of England and Scotland under a common law, he writes: "the Sunne riseth and shineth to all alike so the law should comprehend all in one equal and impartial equitie" (quoted in Jordan 1997:139) Although Hayward is not arguing for social equality between king and subject, Perdita's unspoken protest has a strong levelling ring to it. Even so, the contemplated rebellion remains relatively benign, being placed in the mouth of a sixteen-year-old girl, and operating on a purely verbal and theoretical plane.

Another example, however, involves a more serious threat of violence. It occurs in the first half of the play, when Perdita is still a baby. Before an assembly of Lords and Councillors, an irate Leontes has given orders for the child, whom he believes to be a bastard, to be thrown into the fire. The Lords are aghast, and plead with him to spare the child. Here are their words:

Beseech you highness, give us better credit.
We have always truly served you, and beseech
So to esteem of us. And on our knees we beg,
As recompense of our dear services
Past and to come, that you do change this purpose,
Which being so horrible, so bloody, must
Lead on to some foul issue. We all kneel. (2.3.152).

The rhetoric is a milder version of the source material, Greene's *Pandosto*, in which nobles remind an infanticidal king that "causeless cruelty nor innocent blood never scapes without revenge" (Orgel 2008:243). In Shakespeare's version, "revenge" has been toned down to "some foul issue". And yet the threat is no less present for being stated in vaguer terms. The phrase "past and to come", which Stuart Kurland reminds us was standard formulation in letters of patent (Kurland 1991:374), here implies that future loyalty on their part is dependent on whether the "recompense", meaning sparing the child, is forthcoming. As far as the off-stage audience is concerned, another intertextual connection emphasizes the threat implied in the Lords' behaviour. The scene may recall to the Jacobean playgoer another play in which a group of noblemen kneel around a powerful but increasingly erratic leader, pleading with him to show mercy to a condemned man.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* had been performed at the Globe in September 1599, not quite twelve years before *The Winter's Tale* opened at the same venue. According to John Ripley, there is no record of the Roman play being revived before the winter of 1612-1613, when, along with *The Winter's Tale*, it formed part of the marriage festivities held on the occasion of Princess Elizabeth's wedding. However, Paulina Kewes believes, based on contemporary references, that the Roman play was performed on occasions throughout the early years of James' reign (Kewes 2002:155).

However this may be, comparisons between James and Julius Caesar were commonplace and formed part of James' own self-representation (see Kewes 2002:160-169). The audience of *The Winter's Tale*, then, would have been very much aware of what follows the moment in the Senate when the conspirators plead for the cancelling of Metellus Cimber's banishment: Caesar refuses, and is promptly and bloodily murdered by the spurned suitors (though not as a direct consequence of his refusal). In *The Winter's Tale*, the possibility of such an outcome hovers in the background, and Leontes seems to acknowledge this, since he backs off from the envisaged killing of the child and reduces the penalty to exposure, which at least leaves the baby a fighting chance.

What is Shakespeare's purpose in staging these (and other) moments of near-rebellion? I believe, along with Stewart Kurland and Constance Jordan, that the play derives much of its political meaning from its status as romance. In particular, the element of the marvellous present in the final figure of the moving statue proves a valuable hermeneutic tool for the episodes I have been discussing. Thanks to the trope of the moving statue, Shakespeare turns these episodes into an exploration of the dynamics of rebellion and control.

The Moving Statue and the Mechanics of Rebellion

The most dramatic moment in the play involves a statue coming to life, or rather a woman, Hermione, pretending to be the statue of her own long-dead self, starting to move, and then speaking. That such a thing should happen has been established as "unthinkable" earlier in the play, when the opinionated lady-in-waiting, Paulina, claimed that it would be "monstrous to our human reason" (5.1.41) for her bear-devoured husband to

return from the dead. The passages of near-rebellion discussed above similarly involve a contemplated shift from statuesque immobility to monstrous action. The potential for violence in the inanimate is in fact hinted at in one of the very first scenes of the play by the image of Leontes as a child, whose dagger is “muzzled/ Lest it should bite its master” (1.2.155-156). Thanks to the aesthetics of the moving statue, Shakespeare expresses political rebellion as a sudden change of state, as an ontological shift from mineral quiescence to organic action. Interest is focused on the tipping-point, the moment when the boundary of the unthinkable is crossed. Because in this play the boundary is not, in fact, crossed, the moment is frozen in time and held up to contemplation, encouraging an exploration of causes, both political and psychological.

An exploration of the causes of rebellion in *The Winter's Tale* yields ambiguous results. If we consider the scene of the kneeling lords, for example, it may seem that what pushes them to the brink is the prospect of the baby's gruesome murder. Yet there is also room for another interpretation. Most sixteenth and seventeenth-century political theorists defined a tyrant first and foremost as one who unlawfully seized his subjects' property. Machiavelli wrote in *The Prince* that:

The cheefe thinges as I sayde that ingender the peoples hatred, is the losse of their wealth, and the ravishinge of their woemen, for they accompte themselves verie well dealt with all soe longe as their goodes be spared, and their credittes not impayred [...] (Machiavelli 1944 [1532]:78).

It is perhaps significant that the threat of violence against Leontes comes into play immediately after he has threatened to seize Antigonus' property, as well as his life: “I'll seize thy life / with what thou else call'st

thine” (2.3.136-7). This threat may have revived memories of the Tudors’ reviled policy of Forfeiture and Attainder, by which a man guilty of treason forfeited his right to pass on property and titles, as well as his life. In 1611, the tension between King and Commons was likewise related to property, as James attempted to secure a permanent income which would effectively have allowed him to circumvent Parliament.

The scene of the kneeling lords involves not just a near-crossing of boundaries, but a *drawing* of boundaries akin to the writing of a law. In signalling to Leontes just how far he can go without incurring rebellion, yet without the open threat that would in itself constitute rebellion, the nobles are engaged in a law-making process, of the kind constitutionalist writers thought essential to keeping a fallible king in check. By acknowledging and bowing to this process, the king keeps himself safe from rebellion. The half-acknowledged negotiation that takes place between the Lords and Leontes in the scene can be seen as a dramatic enactment of the kind of balance constitutionalist thinkers believed needed to prevail in the commonwealth.

This reading of the play dovetails with that of Constance Jordan, who, referring explicitly to the episode I have been discussing, considers Leontes’ major failing to be a flouting of all forms of law: “Nothing speaks more directly to Leontes’ madness and its expression in tyranny”, she writes, “than his impious rejection of all forms of law - positive law which requires an examination of evidence; natural law which prohibits abuse of dependants, especially children (...) and divine law” (Jordan 1997:117). The importance of the law is stated clearly in the play, in particular through the authoritative voice of the obviously innocent Hermione, who makes the constitutionalist point that condemnation without proof is “rigour and not law” (3.2.112). The possible consequences of flouting the law are hinted at a

few lines later when the queen evokes the memory of her father:

The Emperor of Russia was my father.
O that he were alive, and here beholding
His daughter's trial! That he did but see
The flatness of my misery, yet with eyes
Of pity, not revenge! (3.2.121)

Once again, the spectre of violent redress, this time in the shape of foreign intervention, hovers behind the façade of subservient or compassionate quiescence. Hermione's remarks are a reminder of another source of danger to the tyrant: that rebels may enlist help from abroad. This is a danger Machiavelli believed a prince should be aware of:

The prince that hath once woon to himself reputacion and accompte emonge his subjectes, neede not feare neither the conspiracies or coniurations of his subiectes att home nor thee assaultes or invasions of his Enemyes abroad; (Machiavelli 1944[1532]:79).

Rebellion, then, may come from both inside and outside the realm. The problem, the play suggests, is how to make the king aware of the threat of rebellion, without using the language of rebellion.

Speaking to a King

The problem that appears in these episodes is how to make an impression on a king, how to warn him of the danger he is in, without committing treason. Rebecca Lemon and Karen Cunningham have shown that in England in the second half of the sixteenth century, treason increasingly came to be associated with words, rather than actions, and even

with thoughts. The 1352 statute making it a treasonable offence to “encompass or imagine the death of kings” was revived and extended in the sixteenth century. The issue of how to send the king a vigorous, yet respectful message is explored heuristically in these scenes, thanks in part to the trope of the moving statue.

Another way in which the statue scene helps to interpret these episodes of near-rebellion is its foregrounding of silent or indirect communication. As many critics have noted (see for example Enterline 1997:18), Hermione does not speak to the king in the statue scene. Her eloquence is what caused trouble for her in the first place, and now, it seems, she is cautious about using words. As a living statue, Hermione presents herself as a sign to be deciphered, a process here enacted through the device of ekphrasis.

Ekphrasis is the description of a work of art in a work of fiction. Often, ekphrasis also involves the viewer putting words into the mouth of a painted or sculpted figure, as when, in the *Rape of Lucrece*, the ravished heroine lends her voice to an embroidered Hecuba (l. 1443-1582) as an outlet for her own grief. In the statue scene, Leontes describes what he thinks is the statue of his wife and reads a rebuke on her still features: “does not the stone rebuke me/ For being more stone than it?” (5.3.47-48). A metaphorical form of ekphrasis can also be read in Perdita’s speech quoted above, in the sense that she is putting words in the mouth of the silent statue-like figure she had been a few seconds before. Thanks to ekphrasis, images are presented as requiring interpretation, as meaningful signs, and spectacle becomes language.

It is a commonplace of Tudor and Stuart scholarship that much of the communication that took place between subject and monarch involved

spectacle. The common people honoured their monarchs with pageants to promote their glory, and poets paid homage to their royal patrons by writing and directing masques celebrating their persons and accomplishments. Recent studies have discussed the Jacobean court masque as an eminently political genre, whose main practitioner, Ben Jonson, saw himself as something of a counsellor, if not a court jester. Hugh Craig sees a “lèse-majesté” dimension to Jonson’s anti-masques, calling them “reminders of the unruly forces even the King had to acknowledge” (Craig 1998:186). Craig reads in Jonson’s development of the form of the masque a struggle with the question of how to speak unpalatable truths to a king: “How was Jonson, as a court poet, to flatter the monarch and at the same time offer him counsel [...]?” (*ibid.*)

Finding a form of eloquence suited to addressing the king was a fraught question in Renaissance Europe. Machiavelli suggested pessimistically that there was no way to counsel a king who was not ready to be counselled: “a prince that is not wise of him self, cann never take good counsell of any other (...)” (Machiavelli 1944[1532]:107). Castiglione, however, encouraged the courtier to find ways

“to drive into his Princes head what honour and profit shall ensue to him and to his by his justice, liberallitie, valiantness of courage, meeknesse and by the other virtues that belong to a good Prince and contrairiewise what slander, and damage, cometh of the vices contrairie to them” (Castiglione 1944[1528]:.265) .

Castiglione’s phrase “to drive into his Princes head” implies that stating the facts is not enough, and that a special kind of speech must be found. This special speech, it turns out, is based on images and statues. Castiglione advises the courtier to teach the prince virtue by the use of

anecdotes featuring brave captains and leaders, a strategy he likens to that of showing people statues of great men in order to encourage emulation:

“enflame [the prince] to [virtues] with examples of manye famous captaines, and of other notable personages, unto whome they of olde time used to make images of mettall and marble, and sometimes of golde, and to set them up in common haunted places, as well for the honour of them, as for an encouraging of others, that with honest envie they might also endeavour themselves to reach unto that glorie (*ibid.*).

The play similarly, and meta-dramatically, makes the case for a language of images as the most effective form of communication between subject and monarch. In the contrast between the kneeling, “beseeching” lords and the Roman butchery hovering in the background, there is something of the contrast between the masque and anti-masque of Jonsonian entertainment. Even Perdita, who is tempted to speak “plainly (4.4.440)” to the king of Bohemia, segues into a statement involving the kind of allegorical sun-imagery used in pageants and courtly masques. On the farcical and parodic level, which is also the level of anti-masque, the clown tells Autolycus how to deal with a bully of the kind that has just attacked him: “Not more a cowardly rogue in all Bohemia – if you had but looked big and spit at him, he’d have run.” (4.3.103-104). Whether or not this is the play’s stance on how to deal with a *royal* bully, the episode is another example of the effectiveness of non-verbal communication in deflecting violence.

This emphasis on persuading through images is consistent with developments in theories of the mind that were appearing at the time. Most famously, Francis Bacon, in both *The Advancement of Learning* and its

Latin adaptation *De Augmentis*, argued for a new rhetoric, one that would give the ideas wrought by reason the immediacy needed to appeal to the imagination. “[T]he duty and office of Rhetoric [...]”, he wrote, “is no other than to apply and recommend the dictates of reason to the imagination” (quoted in Cogan 1981:218).

Conclusion

Several critics, among them Stuart Kurland and Constance Jordan, have seen in *The Winter's Tale* a play stressing the need for counsel and the rule of law to keep the king's power in check and protect his subjects against the abuse of power that is so often an adjunct of absolute power, as James himself acknowledged. More than that, though, the moments of near-rebellion I have been discussing stress that the law protects not just his subjects, but the King himself. In making this point, Shakespeare drew upon the aesthetics of the moving statue to image political rebellion as the actualization of the unthinkable, to draw attention to counsel and the law as safeguards against such rebellion, and to explore the importance of image and symbol in the language of counsel. In so doing, he is of course meta-dramatically identifying his own play as a kind of “Mirror for Kings”, in the spirit of the *Mirror for Magistrates*. The need for such voices of caution was to be demonstrated thirty-eight years later, when what does not happen in *The Winter's Tale* did in fact happen in England, for reasons that are beyond the scope of this paper.

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**THE SEA AND WOMEN IN
SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST TETRALOGY**

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***Abstract:** The garden is a powerful imagery in Shakespeare history plays, yet the sea also plays an important role. By discussing episodes and metaphors related to the sea in Shakespeare's first tetralogy, this paper aims to demonstrate Shakespeare's macro-spatial perspective of England as an island, whose history is influenced by elements on and across the sea. The paper also examines Shakespeare's dramatization of women's interconnections with the sea. It attempts to contextualize Shakespeare's dramatic representation of the sea and of women within English Renaissance maritime culture.*

***Keywords:** history plays, maritime culture, sea, Shakespeare, women*

The Wars of the Roses, a series of civil wars in English history, is the subject of four of Shakespeare's history plays, the first tetralogy. Shakespeare gives us a scene in which supporters of Richard Plantagenet and of Somerset pluck white and red roses as their respective emblems in the Temple Garden (Act 2 Scene 4 of *1 Henry VI*) after Richard Plantagenet has plucked a white

rose and asked those who stand by him to follow suit, while Somerset has done the same with a red rose. This Temple Garden scene, as scholars generally agree, is Shakespeare's own contribution and an addition to his reference material (Baker 1997: 626, Dillon 2012:33). Because of the powerful dramatic appeal of this fictitious scene, when most people who know Shakespeare think of the Wars of the Roses, they relate to it as the origin of the name of the civil war and even as the origin of the war itself. The garden hence becomes a significant piece of imagery, and as Janette Dillon writes, it "functions emblematically, as an image of the commonwealth, as well as literally (since the opponents will pluck two roses)" (2012:33). There are, in fact, numerous metaphorical references to England as a garden in Shakespeare's history plays, such as the "garden of Eden" in *2 Henry VI*, a symbolic parallel of the state, which would not tolerate the rebel Jack Cade; John of Gaunt's reference to England as "This other Eden, demi-paradise" in *Richard II* (2.2.43); and Queen Margaret's comparison of the country to a garden in her advice to Henry VI, "Now 'tis the spring, and weeds are shallow-rooted; / Suffer them now, and they'll o'ergrow the garden" (*2H6* 3.1.31-32). In contrast to the *garden*, the theme of the *sea* in Shakespeare's history plays is often overlooked, even though references to it abound. John of Gaunt, for instance, also refers to England as "This precious stone set in the silver sea / which serves it in the office of a wall" (*R2* 2.1.46-47), and Warwick says, "[the] island was girt in with the ocean" (*3H6* 4.8.20). "We don't ordinarily place the ocean at the heart of Shakespeare's plays," as Steve Mentz comments, "[b]ut the dramatist's engagement with the sea was neither casual nor metaphoric" (2009:x).

We have not paid much attention to the sea in the history plays for the reason that in contrast to such plays as *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, and

Pericles, Prince of Tyre, which all have plots that are directly related to seafaring, the history plays are usually seen as being focused on power struggles at Court and wars on battlefields. In fact, however, the sea is an important element in Shakespeare's history plays, as many incidents that are of great consequence for the course of English history happen on the sea or are related to the sea. There is not one of Shakespeare's ten history plays that does not contain the word "sea." The sea is "a principal ingredient," as Sebastian I. Sobecki correctly observes, "in a culture's macrospatial imagination, which in turn, forms that inventive reservoir from which myths spring" (2008: 6). The sea is, I argue, a crucial ingredient in Shakespeare's dramatization of English history.

This paper will take the exacerbation *on the sea* of the conflict that starts in Temple Garden as a point of departure to discuss the significance with which Shakespeare endows the sea in his dramatization of the War of the Roses. A further point is that since the sea is traditionally a male domain, women's involvement with the sea is usually conceptualized as very limited. But a close reading of the history plays suggests that Shakespeare in fact presents women and the sea as interconnected. Hence, the paper will also attempt to probe into Shakespeare's presentation of women's relation to the sea in the first tetralogy. By placing two usually marginalized constituents of the history plays together - the sea and women - the paper aims to draw attention to the larger picture Shakespeare presents of England as a garden whose history is interrelated with the sea and with women.

The opening of *1 Henry VI* - the entry of three messengers in a row during Henry V's funeral, each with reports about more and more grievous situations in France - develops the notion that England is influenced by incidents across the sea. These messengers interrupt the king's funeral. What

had been expected to be a solemn ceremony with the king's body returning to the soil of the island is disturbed by the news from overseas. England has not been a self-contained island, as she has extended her power across the sea and has involved herself in a long-running political and military conflict with France. After hearing the first messenger's report about the loss of several major towns in France, Bedford replies, "What say'st thou, man! Before dead Henry's corse / Speak softly, or the loss of those great towns / Will make him burst his lead and rise from death" (*IH6* 1.1. 62-64). This image of Henry V bursting from his coffin, an enclosed space, metaphorically manifests the English involvement with matters beyond her sea-bounded territory.

Sea-crossing becomes necessary with this involvement in a power struggle across the English Channel. Gloucester, the Lord Protector, offers his counsel that Henry VI should be crowned in France: "Now will it best avail your majesty / To cross the seas and to be crown'd in France" (*IH6* 3.1.179-80). Gloucester's reason sounds overtly optimistic: "The presence of a king engenders love / Amongst his subjects and his loyal friends, / As it disanimates his enemies" (*IH6* 3.1.181-83). Clearly, the Lord Protector is unable to foresee the dangers and complications of a sea-crossing which in the event becomes fateful. Moreover, it is noteworthy that immediately after Henry has responded to his advice, "When Gloucester says the word, King Henry goes; / For friendly counsel cuts off many foes," Gloucester says: "Your ships already are in readiness" (*IH6* 3.1.184-186). Gloucester's prompt reply reveals the readiness of the English at that time to cross the sea. This may also be interpreted as reflective of the situation in Shakespeare's own time, when sea-crossing was quite an everyday matter for the English and fantasies of sea-crossing were common even among those who did not actually engage in it.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in this very scene, the one in which Henry VI agrees to be crowned in France, he also makes another mistake - he recreates Richard Plantagenet Duke of York. It is this York who soon afterwards threatens his throne. Since Richard is already in conflict with Somerset, as revealed earlier in the Temple Garden scene, by taking along the two conflicting factions with him on the sea to Paris, Henry VI creates trouble for himself.

Despite the readiness of the ships, sea-crossing was no easy task, given the lack of modern equipment that we have today to help reduce risk and increase comfort. The bad conditions on ships and the lack of personal space could easily engender conflicts, especially when men of different factions were crowded together in the same ship. This is supposedly what happens in *1 Henry VI*. Even though the sea-crossing is not presented on stage, what happens during the trip is revealed in a quarrel between Vernon of the white rose faction and Basset of the red rose faction. The quarrel is placed immediately after Henry VI has greeted and rewarded Talbot in the palace in Paris in Act 3 Scene 4. After everyone else exits the stage, Vernon and Basset stay behind. Vernon says:

Now, sir, to you, that were so hot at sea,
Disgracing of these colours that I wear
In honour of my noble Lord of York:
Dar'st thou maintain the former words thou spak'st? (*IH6* 3.4.28-31)

To this challenge Basset replies: "Yes, sir; as well as you dare patronage / The envious barking of your saucy tongue / Against my lord the Duke of Somerset" (*IH6* 3.4.32-34). Their words reveal that during the sea-crossing these two characters belonging to different factions had been

brewing new conflicts out of the old dispute between York and Somerset. Vernon's description of Basset as having been "so hot at sea" indicates Basset's uncontrolled temper but can also be related to the conditions of their journey, which have worsened their tempers. Had the two men not been forced into the limited space of a ship, their confrontation would not have become so hot.

In addition, had Richard not been recreated Duke of York, Vernon, who is of his faction, might not have continued his conflict with Basset in support of his "Lord of York" after the arrival in Paris. Back in England in the abovementioned Temple Garden scene, when Richard Plantagenet had not yet been recreated Duke of York, the quarrel was hot but there were still some concerns and constraints, as Suffolk's words reveal: "Within the Temple Hall we were too loud; / The garden here is more convenient" (*IH6* 2.4.3-4). Moreover, there is a lawyer in the scene, who also expresses his desire to wear a white rose. The presence of the lawyer seemingly suggests Richard's rightful claim, but it also creates an impression of law and order, especially as it resonates with Suffolk's concern that they were too loud. The symbolic meaning of the lawyer figure in the scene can be inferred when it is placed alongside the rebel Jack Cade's orders (in *2 Henry VI*) for all the lawyers to be killed when he invaded London.

The general conceptualization of the sea as a space free from constraints or outside order and rule explains why a new conflict arises there. The Englishmen's journey to France puts a greater distance between these quarrelsome men and the king's rule, even though the English king is with them. By leaving England for France, where English soldiers are losing their power as the French strike back, the king's subjects are made to witness the dwindling power of the English king.

It is interesting to note that in between the scene in which the king agrees to be crowned in Paris (Act 3 Scene 1) and the one in which he appears in Paris (Act 3 Scene 4) there are two other scenes, both set in France (Act 3 Scene 2 and Scene 3). It would have been possible to place the departure and arrival scenes one after the other, considering how theatrical presentations generally stretch or condense time and space. Yet the decision to insert these two scenes set in France creates an interesting effect - it seemingly implies that the sea-crossing takes quite a long time. Thus, in the interval between the English king's departure and his arrival, the French make further moves aimed at striking back. Notably, a woman leads the mission. Joan La Pucelle, disguised along with four soldiers as market traders selling corn, deceives a guard of Rouen into opening the gates, after which the Dauphin's force seizes its chance to attack. This disguise of La Pucelle's creates a Trojan horse image. Even though Talbot subsequently retakes Rouen, La Pucelle eventually (in the next scene) persuades the Duke of Burgundy, who is known from history to have alternated his support between England and France, to forsake the English for the French with her moving words:

Look on thy country, look on fertile France,
And see the cities and the towns defac'd
By wasting ruin of the cruel foe;
As looks the mother on her lowly babe
When death doth close his tender dying eyes. (*IH6* 3.3.44-48)

This feminine appeal to Burgundy to assume the perspective of a mother creates an image of women's connection with land. Janet Adelman suggests that Joan gives France the image of a "maternal body" when she says that Burgundy has given France wounds on "her woeful breast" (*IH6*

3.3.51) (1992:8). Thus the land becomes feminine, while the sea, bringing forth invaders, appears as masculine. At this point, sea-crossing may appear to be men's exclusive activity, yet in the larger picture, women are also involved in this activity indirectly as they have to confront sea-crossers who have impacted their lives on land. As a result, the land, as a garden, is not disconnected from the vast expanse of water surrounding it, for what happens on the water can have consequences for those on the land.

The conflict between Vernon and Basset on the sea is indeed of great consequence for those on the land. They quarrelled, as mentioned above, in Act 3 Scene 3 (1H6) after the king had greeted Talbot in Paris, and do so again in Act 4 Scene 5, after the king has been crowned. Gloucester had advised a coronation in France for the purpose of "engender[ing] love amongst [the king's] subjects and his royal friends" (1H6 3.1.181-82), but what actually happens is the exact opposite. Immediately after the king is crowned, bad things start to happen. First, Sir John Falstaff enters, and the King has to banish him because, according to Talbot, he had run away from a battle at Patay. Second, Henry VI learns from a letter produced by Falstaff that Burgundy, his uncle, has forsaken the English to join the French. After this, Vernon and Basset enter to ask the king to grant them the right to a duel, as both feel that they have been wronged. Upon hearing their requests, York says to the king, referring to Vernon: "This is my servant: hear him, noble Prince," after which Somerset also makes a parallel plea for Basset: "And this is mine: sweet Henry, favour him" (1H6 4.1.80-81). To Henry VI's demand to know the cause, Basset replies first:

Crossing the sea from England into France,
This fellow here, with envious carping tongue,
Upbraided me about the rose I wear,

...

When stubbornly he did repugn the truth
About a certain question in the law,
Argu'd betwixt the Duke of York and him. (*IH6* 4.1.89-96)

Vernon follows suit with his complaint: "For though he seem with forged quaint conceit / To set a gloss upon his bold intent, / Yet know, my lord, I was provok'd by him" (*IH6* 4.1.102-104). It is important to note that "a certain question in the law" is a continuation of the disagreement in the Temple Garden scene, and what it really is is still obscure at this point. Yet it has brewed resentment while they were crossing the sea.

After hearing these two men's dispute, York involves himself by saying to Somerset: "Will not this malice, Somerset, be left?" (*IH6* 4.1.107). Somerset replies: "Your private grudge, my Lord of York, will out, / Though ne'er so cunningly you smother it" (*IH6* 4.1.109-110). Even though Henry says, "Good cousins both, of York and Somerset / Quiet yourselves, I pray, and be at peace" (*IH6* 4.1.115), the two dukes continue to quarrel, and both Vernon and Basset join in. Henry VI, as the newly crowned king, proves himself completely powerless to command his subjects, and this powerlessness is manifested by his words. Instead of giving them strict orders, he uses, as above quoted, the term "I pray." Eventually, it is Gloucester who uses harsh words:

Confirm it so! Confounded be your strife!
And perish ye, with your audacious prate!
Presumptuous vassals, are you not ashamed
With this immodest clamorous outrage
To trouble and disturb the King and us? (*IH6* 4.1.123-27)

Exeter also tries to stop the two factions from continuing their strife, commenting that “It grieves his highness” (*IH6* 4.1.133). This comment forcefully demonstrates Henry VI’s incapacity to deal with his own subjects, especially when we compare this image of the newly crowned Henry VI, who is grieved by a petty quarrel the cause of which is obscure, to the image of a strong king embodied in Henry V, who, immediately after being crowned, denounces Falstaff when he approaches him in spite of whatever friendship they have previously shared.

While dealing with the Basset and Vernon quarrel, Henry VI makes his most serious mistake, which involves him in the conflict of the roses - he puts on a red rose without thinking twice about it, saying:

I see no reason if I wear this rose,
That any one should therefore be suspicious
I more incline to Somerset than York:
Both are my kinsmen, and I love them both. (*IH6* 4.1.152-55)

This naivete of wearing a red rose without a second thought renders Henry VI personally involved in the conflict between York and Somerset, because it provokes discontent in York which eventually leads to his rebellion against the King. As soon as the King and the others exit, York remarks to Warwick that “I like it not, / In that he wears the badge of Somerset” (*IH6* 4.1.176-77). From this point of view, even though the Temple Garden is where the factions of Somerset and York pick red and white roses, it is the subsequent quarrel *on the sea* between Vernon and Basset that has led to Henry VI’s picking a red rose. Gloucester’s counsel to the young king to cross the English Channel to be crowned in France is therefore not good advice at all, because he is insufficiently aware of what may brew up among the

different English factions when they are forced to spend time together in close proximity aboard a vessel on the sea. Thus seen, the sea plays a critical role in the exacerbation of England's internal conflict.

The schism in the English army between Somerset and York reaches France with the arrival of Henry VI and works its detrimental effect on Talbot, the most important figure in the English forces already stationed in France. In an expedition with York during which Somerset refuses to send in his reinforcements, Talbot and his son both die in action. Shakespeare shows us the refusal of the young Talbot to flee from his father's side, and the sorrow of the dying Talbot when he says: "in the sea of blood my boy did drench / His over-mourning spirit; and there died / My Icarus, my blossom, in his pride" (*IH6* 4.7. 16-18). Talbot's allusion to Icarus is even more sensationally appealing than the original myth because of the powerful imagery of "the sea of blood." The allusion to the Greek myth is further strengthened when Talbot sees the body of his son being borne to him by soldiers:

Thou antic Death, which laugh'st us here to scorn,
Anon, from thy insulting tyranny,
Coupled in bonds of perpetuity,
Two Talbots winged through the lither sky,
In thy despite shall scape mortality. (*IH6* 4.7.17-22)

The appealing Daedalus-Icarus allusion creates a metaphorical parallel between Crete, a island from which the two original Greek mythological figures attempt to escape, and England, which is surrounded by the sea. "The sea of blood" in Talbot's mouth can be related to the sea that the English cross in their ambition to conquer France. Had the English stayed on their island, the Talbots would not be like Daedalus and Icarus - aspiring

beyond their limits - and the sea-crossing to France would hence be unnecessary. It is, after all, the crossing of the sea that has led to this eventual “sea of blood,” which, metaphorically speaking, drowns the Talbots.

Talbot’s powerful Daedalus-Icarus allusion reminds one of the absence of a mother. Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* series begins with the funeral of Henry V, yet it does not include Katharine of Valois, widow to Henry V and mother to Henry VI. Historically, Henry V died in 1422 and his queen dowager, Katharine, lived until 1437 (Saccio 1977: 87, 180). It is said that she remarried Owen Tudor secretly and that the marriage was revealed only at her death (Saccio 1977:180). Her grandson from this second marriage became Henry VII, who founded the Tudor dynasty. Henry VII’s claim to the throne could also be traced via his mother, Margaret Beaufort. According to Saccio, Katharine’s son Edmund by her second marriage married Margaret Beaufort, daughter of John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, “who was in turn son to the eldest of John of Gaunt’s bastard offspring (later legitimated)” (1977:180). Even though Henry VII was generally called, as Jo McMurtry writes, “a great-great-grandson of the duke of Lancaster [John of Gaunt]” (1989:25), his lineage followed the female line. This means that women were not absent from this power struggle in English history. In fact, Katharine of Valois has an important part in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, where she orders a laughter-provoking English-learning scene. Furthermore, in the final wooing scene, this French princess shares the spotlight with the English king as we watch their comical interactions. Her role as an agent through whom Henry V makes himself heir to the French throne is apparent when the English king says: “Kate, when France is mine and I am yours, then yours is France and you are mine” (*H5* 5.2.180-82). But then this woman disappears from the stage in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* plays.

In the original Greek Daedalus-Icarus myth, even though the stress is usually placed on the father and son, women are not absent from the story. The wife and daughter of King Minos of Crete are both crucial to the final tragedy, for Daedalus is asked to build a labyrinth to imprison the Minotaur, a monster born of Minos's wife, and he is imprisoned because he gives Minos's daughter a clue with which to solve the mystery of the labyrinth (Powell 2009: 426-29). Just like this Greek myth that Talbot refers to, the larger picture of English history that incorporates the part of "Two Talbots winged through the lither sky" (*IH6* 4.7.21) involves women, too. Shakespeare dramatizes this involvement in *Henry V* when he makes the English king ask whether the Salic Law in France can prevent the English from claiming the French throne, after which Canterbury gives a long explanation of sixty-three lines to argue that the Law cannot be used to bar the English. This explanation brings women's inheritance rights into the centre of attention. According to Canterbury, the Salic Law does bar women when it states that "No woman shall succeed in Salique land" (*H5* 1.2.39), but he explains that Salic land is not France but Germany. Furthermore, he gives examples of kings who claimed their right through women, including, first, King Pepin, who was descended from Blithild, daughter to King Clothair, second, Hugh Capet, who presented himself as heir to the lady Lingare, daughter to Charlemagne, and finally, King Lewis the Tenth, who claimed his right through his grandmother, Queen Isabel, who was lineal of the Lady Ermengare, daughter to Charles, Duke of Lorraine (*H5* 1.2.65-85). Canterbury concludes after all these examples: "So that, as clear as is the summer's sun [. . .] / Howbeit they would hold up this Salic law / To bar your highness claiming from the female." (*H5* 1.2.86-92)

Canterbury's historical explanation involving French kings and their

foremothers may or may not appear obscure to Shakespeare's audience, but the main point he makes about women's involvement in the right to inherit is, to appropriate his own words, "as clear as is the summer's sun." Canterbury explains further that "in the book of Numbers is it writ: / "When the man dies, let the inheritance / Descend unto the daughter" (*H5* 1.2.98-100). This point must have been highly topical in Shakespeare's time as a woman, Queen Elizabeth, was on the throne, and it was generally known that her grandfather, Henry VII, had claimed his right to rule through the female line.

Despite the absence of Queen Katharine from the *Henry VI* plays, Shakespeare includes two female figures, Joan La Pucelle, who asks Burgundy to look at France through the eyes of a mother looking at a babe, and Margaret of Anjou, who can be considered Joan's successor. As soon as Joan is captured by York and exits the stage, Margaret enters. Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin point out that there is an immediate link between these two French women in the audience's eyes, because at the same time as Joan is led off the stage, Margaret is introduced (1997:62). Charney also discerns that this non-historical scene sets Margaret up as a "successor to Joan" (1993: 122). The link between the two French women is strengthened by their shared Trojan horse image - Joan, by disguising herself as a corn merchant, gains access to Rouen; Margaret, by her charming looks, gains access to England.

Charmed by Margaret's beauty, Suffolk craves her for himself but quickly comes up with an alternative plan: he proposes to marry Margaret to Henry VI and negotiates this with Reignier, Margaret's father. In a soliloquy following the marriage negotiations, Suffolk reflects on his own desire: "O, wert thou for myself! But Suffolk, stay; / Thou may'st not wander in that labyrinth: There Minotaurs and ugly treasons lurk" (*IH6* 5.3.187-89). This allusion to the labyrinth of King Minos sounds a resonance with Talbot's

Daedalus-Icarus imagery. Interestingly, whereas the Talbots metaphorically drown in “the sea of blood,” Suffolk is eventually killed on the sea. Just as in the original Daedalus-Icarus myth, women play critical roles in these misfortunes. Had Daedalus not given Minos’s daughter the clue to solve the mystery of the labyrinth, he would not have been imprisoned or have made wings for his son and himself to fly away with. By the same token, had the Talbots not been too ambitious in a mission inspired by women’s inheritance rights, they would not have died on the battlefield. Similarly, had Suffolk not craved Margaret, he would not have been banished in the first place and then killed on the sea by pirates who hated him for his licentious relationship with the English queen.

Yet long before Suffolk meets his death on the sea, he makes good use of the sea as a space where he can practise his skills to charm his king. In the abovementioned soliloquy after the marriage negotiations with Reignier, Suffolk says that he will “solicit Henry with her [Margaret’s] wondrous praise [...] Repeat their semblance often on the seas,” so that when he sees the English king, he may “bereave him of his wits with wonder” (*IH6* 5.3.190-198). The fact that the sea is a space usually conceptualized as free from constraints allows Suffolk to make use of the time that he is going to spend on the sea to practise his evil skills, and to make preparations for his evil plan. As mentioned, the sea is the site where the conflict that began in the Temple Garden is exacerbated, causing Henry VI to be implicated in it. Viewed in this way, for Henry VI, the sea is not a lucky place. Neither is the sea lucky for Suffolk, for he finally dies on it.

In *2 Henry VI*, spirits conjured up by the Duchess of Gloucester predict that “By water shall he [Suffolk] die, and take his end” (*2H6* 1.4.33). This prediction by spirits conjured up by a woman eventually proves to be

true. Shakespeare makes an interesting play on words when he names one of the pirates that capture Suffolk Walter Whitmore. After hearing the name Walter, Suffolk says, “Thy name affrights me, in whose sound is death” (2*H6* 4.1.33). This imagery of water is further stressed when the lieutenant who is Walter’s commander puns on Suffolk’s name, William de la Pole [pool] - “Ay, kennel, puddle, sink; whose filth / Troubles the silver spring where England drinks” (2*H6* 4.1.70-71). With all these puns and plays on words, water is undoubtedly a source of powerful imagery in the play. When Walter Whitmore has finally killed Suffolk, he says “There let his head and lifeless body lie, / Until the queen his mistress bury it” (2*H6* 4.1.142-43). These words show that it is not just the sea or water that has caused Suffolk’s death, but also his suspect liaison with a woman.

Even though women do not seem to have a place on the sea, the death of Suffolk proves that women can have an impact on happenings at sea. The pirates would rather kill Suffolk than extract a large ransom from him because they hate him for his liaison with the English queen. In fact, the Salic Law that Henry V inquires about, which deprives women of their inheritance rights, can be considered the main cause of the conflict between England and France. Therefore, even though the sea does not seem to be a place frequently visited by women, the “wafting” of soldiers overseas to conquer France, and the voyage Henry VI takes to be crowned in France, all have causes that are linked to women.

When Margaret marries Henry VI, she crosses the sea to England. The outbreak of England’s civil war forces Queen Margaret to cross the sea once again to France, seeking French aid to support her son’s right to the English throne. At first it seems quite unlikely that she will secure French support because Warwick has gone there too, in his case to negotiate a

marriage between the newly crowned English King Edward and Lady Bona, the French king's sister. When news of King Edward's marriage to Lady Grey arrives, Warwick angrily renounces his support for Edward, while Lady Bona says to King Lewis: "Dear brother, how shall Bona be reveng'd / But by thy help to this distressed queen?" (*3H6* 3.3.212-13). Once again, women are the determining factors affecting the relationship between England and France. Had King Edward married Lady Bona, the French would not have helped Queen Margaret, and the civil war in England might have ended at this point, for Margaret would not have been able to strike back without French aid. Since King Edward has Warwick propose in his place to Lady Bona but then hastily marries an Englishwoman, the French are humiliated. Craving revenge, Lady Bona asks France to help Margaret. The French king agrees to send "five thousand men" to "cross the sea and bid false Edward battle" (*3H6* 3.3. 234-35). But he asks Warwick for a pledge of his loyalty, at which point Warwick suggests marrying his eldest daughter to Margaret's son, Prince Edward. Though Warwick's daughter is absent from the play, she is critical to the newly formed political alliance, which will bring five thousand French soldiers across the sea to England.

When Margaret next appears in England, she makes an extremely heroic speech to boost the morale of her followers. Even though the scene is not set on the sea but on a plain near Tewkesbury, as the stage direction informs us, Margaret's speech is filled with metaphors of sea and sailing:

What though the mast be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding anchor lost,
And half our sailors swallow'd in the flood;
Yet lives our pilot still: is't meet that he
Should leave the helm and, like a fearful lad,

With tearful eyes add water to the sea
And give more strength to that which hath too much;
Whiles, in his moan, the ship splits on the rock,
Which industry and courage might have sav'd? (*3H6* 5.4.3-11)

Interestingly, in between the above-mentioned scene set in France, in which Queen Margaret finally secures French aid (Act 3 Scene 3), and her reappearance in England (Act 5 Scene 4), we have Act 4 with its eight scenes, and three other scenes in Act 5 preceding this one. This long interval creates the impression that the sea-crossing takes up a long time, during which the situation changes and worsens in England.

Moreover, near the end of Act 3 Scene 3, by saying, "Why stay we now? These soldiers shall be levied, / And thou, Lord Bourbon, our High Admiral, / Shalt waft them over with our royal fleet" (*3H6* 3.3.251-53), King Lewis leads us to think that the "wafting" of five thousand soldiers is an easy matter. However, with Margaret's words about the mast being blown overboard, the loss or destruction of the cable and anchor, and sailors swallowed, which are usually taken as a "storm-ship simile" according to Cairncross's annotation, but which can also be considered as related to her recent sea-crossing experience, we are reminded of the dangers of sea-crossing. Margaret develops the metaphor fully when she compares the newly crowned Edward to "a ruthless sea," Clarence to "a quicksand," and Richard to "a ragged fatal rock" and comments that they are all enemies to "our poor bark" (*3H6* 5.4.25-28). She concludes her speech by saying that the three York brothers offer less hope for mercy than the waves, sands and rocks, hence, "Why, courage then! What cannot be avoided / 'Twere childish weakness to lament or fear" (*3H6* 5.4.35-38). This long ship-storm metaphor

of over thirty lines stimulates our imagination about the journey across the sea that she has just undertaken.

In fact, in *2 Henry VI*, Margaret has already referred figuratively to her sea voyage to England when complaining about her ill fate in being badly treated by Henry VI, who is angry and upset over Gloucester's death:

Was I for this nigh wreck'd upon the sea
And twice by awkward wind from England's bank
Drove back again unto my native clime?
...
The pretty-vaulting sea refused to drown me,
Knowing that thou wouldst have me drown'd on shore,
With tears as salt as sea, through thy unkindness:
The splitting rocks cower'd in the sinking sands
And would not dash me with their ragged sides,
Because thy flinty heart, more hard than they,
Might in thy palace perish Margaret. (*2H6* 3.2.81-99)

This figurative twist probably comes from her experience of sea travel, which is not without peril. Thus seen, Margaret can be considered an exceptional female character in the history plays for her understanding of the dangers of the sea and her powerful verbal mastery of sea-crossing images.

In Renaissance England, it was common to regard the sea as a male space because those who involved themselves in sea-crossing were usually male. Even though many people were thrilled by the idea of sea-crossing, as there was constant news of the discovery of new lands and new trade routes, and there were taverns in London where seamen talked about their adventures, not everyone could or would travel across the sea. It is generally believed that Shakespeare did not. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, for example, writes that "my

own impression, after carefully studying all his [Shakespeare's] sea images, is that he had little, if any, direct experience of being on the sea, and that his knowledge of the sea and ships might well have been gained from books . . . from talks and from living in a great seaport" (1935:48). During Shakespeare's time, women in general were excluded from sea adventures, but they must have been just as fascinated by the sea as men were. One of the reasons why women were excluded from sea adventures was the superstitious belief that women's presence on board a vessel was unlucky or would lead to disaster (Bicknell 2004: viii; Chambers, Murray and Wheelwright 1995:11). A superstition held by seafarers could have a great impact, as Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* demonstrates. In this drama, which is said to deal with "the sea more than any other Shakespearean play" (White 1970:97), the Prince is forced to comply with the sailors' demand: "Sir, your queen must overboard; the sea works high, the wind is loud, and will not lie till the ship be clear'd of the dead" (*Pericles* 3.1.47-49). Even though Pericles chides them: "That's your superstition" (*Pericles* 3.1.50), he eventually has his queen put overboard. Although it is the presence of the corpse, not of a woman's corpse in particular, that the sailors refuse to tolerate, the scene shows how, on the sea, the sailors' superstition can overrule a prince's opinion.

Marcus Rediker, who studies Anglo-American maritime culture in the eighteenth century, writes that "seafaring was an occupation sharply segregated by sex" and that women did not ordinarily go seafaring (1987: 155). In her study of naval wives and mistresses in eighteenth-century England, Margaret Lincoln also argues that "seafaring is a predominantly male profession" (2007:16). Dorothy Snow Bicknell wrote in her foreword to *Women of the Sea*, a work on maritime women, that in 1962, when the book was published, "women still were very limited in many of their roles on the

sea and opportunities were few” (2004:viii). If this was so in the eighteenth century and even in the twentieth, women must have been even more excluded from roles on the sea back in Renaissance times, when there was an even stronger expectation that they would be stay-at-homes. Nevertheless, England’s queens of foreign origin, just like Queen Margaret, must all have crossed the sea to be married in England. So this group of highly-born women forms an exception to the norm.

In the imaginative space Shakespeare creates on his stage, he dramatizes the fascination with sea-crossing that prevailed in his time. Even though women were not allowed to be stage players then, they were allowed into theatres as part of the audience. To appeal to them, Shakespeare dramatizes heroines’ sea-crossings and women’s involvement with the sea in one way or another. Famously, he creates in *Twelfth Night* an appealing heroine, Viola, who has a stirring adventure after a shipwreck. In Shakespeare’s imagining of the sea for the stage, he invites women, who constitute a large portion of his audience, to join him. Even the history plays, which until recent decades have usually been regarded as plays focusing on male heroic endeavors, dramatize women’s interconnections with the sea. Though these plays do not create figures such as Viola in *Twelfth Night*, whose shipwreck gives her the liberty to assume a new identity, when we examine many episodes that appear to be exclusively male endeavours, such as the war in France commanded by Talbot, which results in Talbot’s alluding to the Daedalus-Icarus endeavour, we find that women are there with their influence in one way or another. Joan La Pucelle may serve as an example. While Henry VI is supposedly crossing the sea from England to France, La Pucelle leads the French in their fight against Talbot. Even though she does not fight wars on the sea, she fends off invaders from across the sea. In fact,

the Wars of the Roses, as is generally understood, resulted from a long-running conflict between England and France, which weakened English power and created many internal problems. Yet at the bottom of the Anglo-French conflict lies a dispute over women's right to inherit, as Henry V's concern about the Salic Law reveals.

Shakespeare's dramatization of Queen Margaret, who masters the ship-storm metaphor, links women with the sea on his stage. When we consider the general exclusion of women from seafaring in Renaissance England, we might find that this link resonates with 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). One of Queen Elizabeth's most famous achievements was her triumph over the Spanish Armada. This achievement on the sea, regardless of the fact that it was the result of a tempest (Kay 1992:104), demonstrates that the sea was not altogether alien to this female monarch. As Queen of England, Elizabeth is renowned for having commanded not only the Navy but also privateers, her sea dogs, who helped her weaken the threatening Spanish power on the sea. The image of a courageous Margaret commanding the appealing ship-storm metaphor sounds a resonance with that of Queen Elizabeth, who was also involved with the sea. After all, the sea that surrounds the island or the garden of England is fundamentally connected to men just as it is to women.

In Margaret's appealing ship-storm metaphor, England is a "poor bark" endangered by the three York brothers (*3H6* 5.4.28). Earlier, in *2 Henry VI*, as mentioned, Margaret has used the image of a garden to refer to England. By shifting from her earlier garden metaphor to the bark metaphor, Margaret reveals not only her great sensitivity to the dangers threatening the country,

but also her widened perspective of England as a ship under the influence of elements on the sea and beyond the sea. Hence, even though most women did not engage in seafaring during Shakespeare's time, this vivid metaphor Shakespeare puts into Margaret's mouth suggests women's ability to imagine their connection with the sea. This metaphor, to our amazement, finds a parallel in the stage, a "wooden O" that has to survive the rough waters of censorship and closedown. In a certain sense, the world of sea travellers is rather similar to the world of players, as the sea travellers make expeditions via the ship's "wooden world" (as Isaac Land calls it, 2009: 16), while the players stage imaginative expeditions in their "wooden O." On the stage of the "wooden O," Shakespeare invites women to participate in imaginary adventures on the sea with his female characters and dramatizes women's interconnections with the sea.

In conclusion, Shakespeare endows the sea with emblematic significance and literal functions in his dramatization of English history. The Wars of the Roses, as we have discussed, are interconnected with the sea and with women. There is no doubt that the Temple Garden conflict is dramatically fascinating, but the subsequent exacerbation of the conflict on the sea during Henry VI's voyage to France also plays a critical role in the play. Moreover, the military forces crossing the sea are interconnected with women. Though, on the surface, women seem to have little to do with the sea, they are seen fending off invaders from across the sea, and they are the causes, both direct and indirect, of soldiers being "wafted" across the sea. Shakespeare's overall picture of England is not one in which "the silver sea" around the country, as John of Gaunt idealistically puts it, "serves it in the office of a wall" (*R2* 2.1.46-47). Neither is Shakespeare's portrayal of the sea an exclusive domain for men, as maritime tradition might have it, for the

character who masters the most appealing ship-storm metaphor is a woman.

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**“A THING LIKE DEATH”: MEDICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF
FEMALE BODIES IN SHAKESPEARE’S PLAYS**

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***Abstract:** While the hysterical ailments of women in Shakespeare’s works have often been read from psychoanalytical standpoints, early modern medicine may provide new insights into the ‘frozen’, seemingly dead bodies of some of his heroines, such as Desdemona, Thaisa, and Hermione. In the wake of recent critical work (Peterson, Slights, Pettigrew), this paper will shed fresh light on the ‘excess’ of female physiology and on Shakespeare’s creative redeployment of some medical concepts and narratives.*

***Keywords:** early modern literature and medicine hysteria, interdisciplinary approach, representation*

1. Introduction

In the last scene of *King Lear*, the king famously enters the scene carrying the corpse of Cordelia in his arms. A distracted man and a bereaved father, Lear stages for the audience a strange and heartbreaking test of the reality of his daughter’s death.

[...] Lend me a looking glass.
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives. (*King Lear*, v, iii, 275-77)

Kent and Edgar are witnesses to Lear's delusion, and the tragedy of the king unfolds before the audience's eyes as he entertains the hope that Cordelia might come back to life, and that his fate might accordingly be less cruel and maddening. As we know, there is no redemption for Lear's tragic mistake, or for his tragic fate; and yet, this is a moment when the spectators sit there suspended between tragic pity and some tiny, underlying hope that the wronged daughter might only appear to be dead; that she might move again, speak, and ultimately forgive her father:

This feather stirs. She lives. If it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt. (*King Lear*, v, iii, 278-80)

While we, as contemporary spectators, may regard the temptation represented by an alternative, happy ending as an irrational concession to our emotional wish to set things right, and as an incident that would fail to comply with the moral and generic requirements of tragedy, to early modern audiences the idea that Cordelia might simply appear to be dead, and that the actor playing Lear's daughter might suddenly move and reveal that the character was in fact still alive, must have seemed something not so very unlikely to happen. This is the point that Carol Rutter makes when she argues that Cordelia "isn't meant to die. It wasn't what audiences were expecting" (Rutter 2001:1), reminding us that both the sources that

Shakespeare used (the old play *King Leir* and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England*) had a happy ending (though this involved no revivification scene). To readers familiar with Shakespeare's corpus, moreover, Lear's impression that Cordelia may still be faintly breathing might call to mind a number of other heroines who are revealed to be still alive after being deemed dead, from Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing* to Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well*, from Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* to Imogen in *Cymbeline*, and from Thaisa in *Pericles* to Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*.

If the presence of female characters whose death is shown to be questionable seems to represent an intriguing motif in Shakespeare's work, this article is intended to address the question of gender in his plays by first reflecting on early modern beliefs about the physiology of women's bodies and then focusing on the fascination with *hysterica passio*, a disease that intrigued early modern medicine and culture because of its strange principal symptom: the appearance of death in the body. In other words, what this article would like to illustrate is that with the frozen, seemingly dead bodies of some of his heroines Shakespeare seems to re-deploy in an inventive way certain medical narratives which were circulating extensively in his time, and which played a pivotal role in the cultural representation – as well as regulation – of women's bodies in early modern culture.

In recent years, literary scholars have been increasingly intrigued by the study of the relations between Shakespeare's plays and early modern medicine. While interest in the investigation of medical knowledge in Shakespeare's work can be traced back to the 19th century, with J. C. Bucknill's detailed monograph on the medical occurrences to be found in his plays (1860), it is especially since the 1990s that critics have turned their

attention to the aesthetic and ideological implications that underlie Shakespeare's complex and multifaceted engagement with the medical discourse of his time. This article follows the critical approach of these recent works, ranging from David Hoeniger's now classic *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (1992) to more recent studies, such as Gail Kern Paster's *Humoring the Body* (2004), Todd Pettigrew's *Shakespeare and the Practice of Physics* (2007), William Slights' *The Heart in the Age of Shakespeare* (2008) and, above all, Kaara Peterson's *Popular Medicine, Hysterical Disease and Social Controversy in Shakespeare's England* (2010). In these works, medicine is important insofar as it can be revealed as providing a cultural narrative or set of narratives that allow for the articulation and negotiation of important values about identity, normativity and deviance; this is especially pertinent from the perspective of gender, as medical discourse tends to construct the female body in a way that strengthens its difference from the normative model provided by the masculine body.

In line with a broader critical interest in the possible creative interactions between literature and science in early modern culture (Cummins and Burchell 2007; Marchitello 2011), this perspective on Shakespeare's texts is designed to suggest that, rather than simply receiving and adopting the medical and scientific concepts of his time, Shakespeare's plays were engaged in a process of cultural negotiation and in an active redefinition of the values at stake in medical discourse dealing with women's bodies. For this reason, as a preliminary move, our article will first concentrate on early modern medical conceptions of female physiology and then focus on one specific version of the disease that we would today recognize as hysteria. While hysteria has proved to be a crucial theoretical

tool in many sophisticated psychoanalytical readings of Shakespeare's text in the past decades, in its exploration of the representations and meanings of the frozen female body this article will aim to uncover the particular medical concepts, values and narratives that would have been available to Shakespeare and his audiences.

2.1. Early Modern Medicine and Female Physiology: the Cold, Moist Body and Mind

Renaissance medicine inherits from Aristotle and classical *auctoritates* the belief that the female body is an imperfect and inferior organism compared to the male body, which provides the normative model for health and well-being. The female body was commonly connoted by its passivity, its frailty (which operates both on the physical and on the moral level) and its coldness. As is well known, in the classic theory of the four humours as proposed by Hippocrates and later by Galen, which was still very influential in the early 17th century (Paster 2004), human temperaments may be divided into four main types: the sanguine (hot and moist), the phlegmatic (cold and moist), the choleric (hot and dry) and the melancholic (cold and dry).

Women are consistently associated with the phlegmatic type, a mixture of coldness and moisture, and a type that is unhealthy in that it lacks the fundamental and vital warmth that is instead the prerogative of the masculine body; according to Paster (1998:417), in early modern culture what mainly accounts for the differentness of the female body is women's "unbearable coldness" The absence of warmth attributed to women's bodies seems in some cases to be responsible also for the troublesome relationship between female physiology and the circulation of the animal spirits that are

necessary to thinking and abstraction: as late as the end of the 17th century, William Congreve was still associating women's lack of a sense of humour – and, ultimately, their lacking the distinctive traits or “humours” that allow for the expression of individuality itself – to their “Natural Coldness” (Paster 2004:79-80).

In the description of the female temperament, coldness is often conjoined with moisture, as women's bodies are defined by their inescapable proximity to fluids such as blood and milk. In a medical system dominated by the importance of keeping the correct balance of humours, the regular discharge of female fluids is viewed both as a salutary operation for the preservation of health and, on the other hand, as an unstable – and not easily controllable – process. This is the ambivalence that, according to Ian Maclean (1980:39), still dominates early modern medical discourse dealing with menses, which retains some of the “malignity” attributed to them in ancient medical texts while also accepting the Galenic belief in their beneficial function. In early modern culture, the ambivalence of female bodily fluids was replicated in the ambivalence of the water imagery deployed to represent these bodies: fluidity overlaps with mutability and instability, and the fruitfulness of women's bodies slips into excess and lack of restraint.

In *Othello*, for example, the Moor's jealousy exploits water metaphors to evoke the fertility as well as the sexual voraciousness of Desdemona's body. Othello initially loathes his wife's “moist” hand because it reminds him of her body's disturbing “fruitfulness”, which calls for the restraints of discipline and self-regulation: “This hand of yours requires/ A sequester from liberty, fasting, and prayer,/ Much castigation, exercise devout” (*Othello*, iii, iv, 36, 38, 39-41). When his rage explodes,

however, control seems no longer possible, and the fluidity of Desdemona's body proliferates into a disturbing image of sexual corruption:

But there where I have garnered up my heart,
Where either I must live, or bear no life;
The fountain from which my current runs
Or else dries up – to be discarded thence!
Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
To knot and gender in! (*Othello*, iv, ii, 57-62)

What drives Othello mad is the uncontrollable liquidity of his wife's body, which threatens to contaminate his progeny and therefore his own future existence. As the "fountain" turns into the filthy "cistern", the text registers man's horror at the boundless and unregulated fertility of the fluids of the female body. A similar process occurs in *The Winter's Tale*, where Leontes's jealousy turns the female body into the image of the "sluiced... pond" (I, ii, 285-86): Hermione appears to him as a "slippery" being (I, ii, 375), a leaking vessel unable to control the emission of its fluids.

As Lina Perkins Wilder (2010) shows in her interesting study of Shakespeare and the Renaissance conception of memory, however, female fluidity seems troublesome when it threatens to corrupt not just male progeny, as these examples of sexual jealousy seem to imply, but more generally the male organism, especially when this occurs in the exercise of the higher functions of the mind. This contamination affects especially the process of remembering, in which the emphasis laid on mental discipline – via the training provided by the so-called "memory arts", a system based on mental images or *loci* and on the strict rules to be followed when visiting

these mental places again – fails to keep at bay the watery proliferation that is typical of female physiology:

The need for order sits uneasily with the physical makeup of the memory, located in the rearmost of approximately three “ventricles” or “cavities” that held the “faculties” of the rational soul: imagination or common sense, understanding or invention, and memory. The liquidity of the animal spirits that fill these ventricles, as well as the physical nature of memory itself, worries many early modern physiologists. (Wilder 2010:7)

In a tragedy of problematic memory such as *Hamlet*, where, as Wilder reminds us, “memory is threatening in its fertility” (2010:139), the protagonist is torn between the revengeful action required of him by the Ghost’s imperative to remember and, on the other hand, the mental liquidity associated with memory, which makes the exercise of masculine discipline difficult and brings about inaction. When Hamlet asserts his decision to avenge his father, the Ghost’s reply appears to be fully in line with this paradigm:

I find thee apt.
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe’s wharf
Wouldst not stir in this. (*Hamlet*, I, v, 31-34)

The Ghost’s speech feeds on the contrast between the “dullness” of oblivion and the “stirring” influence of memory by implicitly assimilating Hamlet’s failure to remember and thus to take revenge to the phlegmatic quality of the female body. A lack of well-regulated recollection exposes the male organism to the threat of female physiology, as demonstrated not just

by the watery image provided by the reference to the river Lethe, but also, more subtly, by the association of Hamlet's mind with the "fat weed" that recalls Gertrude's "unweeded garden" (*Hamlet*, I, ii, 135). Hamlet's lethargy may therefore be regarded as an example of that "slyperness" of mind that, according to John Willis's *Mnemonic*, mars the possibility of retention "by reason of its *Fluxibility* [*sic*]" (quoted in Wilder 2010:51). Disordered recollection thus paves the way for the polluting influence of women's moist bodies on the masculine mind. As we shall see, *The Winter's Tale* performs a paradoxical overturning of this paradigm by showing that female excessive physiology can be exploited for a complete purification of the female body that allows for the perfect exercise of the traditionally masculine discipline required of the recollective arts.

2.2 *Hysterica Passio* and the Unruly Body

This same tendency to conflate the humoral and the passionate disposition of the organism can also be found in medical descriptions of the womb, which in early modern culture was still universally regarded as the organ that was mainly responsible for the health or disorders of women's bodies. Hysteria, as is well known, refers etymologically to the womb (*hyster*) and therefore identifies the diseases that are related specifically to the female body. In her exploration of early modern hysterical disease, Kaara Peterson reassesses Foucault's famous claim, in his *History of Sexuality*, that the formation of specific mechanisms of power centring on sex began in the 18th century. Investigating one of those mechanisms, namely the hystericization of women's body, which Foucault describes as "a threefold process whereby the feminine body was analysed – qualified and disqualified – as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality; whereby it

was integrated into the sphere of medical practice, by reason of a pathology intrinsic to it; whereby finally it was placed in communication with the social body” (1978:104), Peterson shows that this process was already in operation in the early 17th century, when the “‘fluid ecology’ of the womb” (Peterson 2010:34) appears to have been the main concern of medical texts dealing with women’s ailments.

For the explanation of the pathology of women’s bodies, early modern medicine combined the Hippocratic and the Galenic approaches to female ailments, focusing respectively on the belief in the wandering nature of the womb and on its propensity to be encumbered with noxious humours and vapours. Despite the differences between them, both medical approaches shared a strong emphasis on the womb as a site for disruption and upheaval: as a result, what 16th and 17th century medical texts consistently emphasise is the fact that the peculiar conformation of women’s body itself is what predisposes women to disorders - thereby actually conflating female physiology and pathology. Lying at the core of women’s excess-ridden organism, the womb inescapably ties female corporeality to sexuality, constructing the body as a site that is normatively unruly and prone to pathology.

Early modern concern with the coldness and the uterine dysfunctions of the female body explains the fascination with one specific kind of hysterical ailment, known as *hysterica passio* or *Suffocation of the Mother*. Edward Jorden’s *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*, published in 1603, provides the first extensive medical description of this disease, and contributed to the dissemination of knowledge about it in early modern culture. The name of the disease encapsulates its most striking symptoms: “respiratory distress and the

feeling of strangling or pressure (*pnix*), sometimes leading to a complete cessation of apparent breathing (*apnoia*)” (Peterson 2010:40). While hysteria usually possesses protean qualities in its ability to mimic the symptoms of other diseases, thus demanding special diagnostic skills in any physician who sets out to treat it, *Hysterica passio* questions the definition of death itself. As the physician John Sadler put it in 1636:

This affect [...] is called in English the Suffocation of the Mother, not because the wombe is strangled, but for that it causes the woman to bee choked. It is a retraction of the wombe towards the Diaphragme and stomake, [...] which consenting with the braine causeth the Animall facultie the efficient cause of respiration also to bee intercepted; whereby the body being refrigerated, and the actions depraved, she falls to the ground, as one being dead. (Quoted in Peterson 2010:43)

The action of the womb is subtle and multifaceted, for not only does this organ *consent* (i.e. *sympathize*) with the brain to achieve interruption in breathing, but the effect is a perfect reproduction of apparent death. Practitioners are asked to employ all their skills in order to detect the real nature of the disease, which so perfectly imitates the absence of life that Sadler seems convinced that this disease is responsible for many instances of the premature burial of young women who were simply and inaccurately believed to be dead. Texts like Jorden’s and Sadler’s, which were extremely influential in the popularization of this disease, provide a medical narrative that focuses on the ability of *hysterica passio* to unsettle safe categorization: besides undermining the distinction between life and death, these cases also replaced the miraculous resurrection narrative emphasised in religious tales

of possession with a new spectacular narrative based on the skilful dramatic “performance” of the medical doctor (Peterson 2004:9-10).

Similarly, the boundaries that distinguish the human from the animal are blurred in these accounts of the disease, as the frozen bodies of these women are explicitly compared by Jorden to hibernating wild animals, “as we see Snakes and other creatures to lie all the winter, as if they were dead, under the earth” (quoted in Paster 1998:421). While the womb itself was a source of debate because of its possibly animal nature (due to its motion and *animation*), women in syncope display a disturbing overlapping of nature and art, with, on the one hand, their characterization as wild creatures, less-than-human, and, on the other, the emphasis on the theatrical performance implied in their coming back to life. As we shall see in the next section, Shakespeare exploits both aspects of the representation of *hysterica passio*, turning it into an instrument that can either bind women to their physiology or, conversely, sublimate their bodies through the help of the performing doctor.

2.3 Punish or Purify: Frozen Bodies Come to Life

Although we occasionally meet with male Shakespearean characters speaking of their wombs, such as Holofernes in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (IV, ii) or Falstaff in *Henry IV Part 2* (IV, iii), the fact that actual hysterical disease pertains exclusively to female bodies must have been well known to Shakespeare and his audience. Peterson (2004; 2010) has amply demonstrated that Shakespeare’s alertness to the medical issues of his time also extended to the subject of hysteria, and to early physiologists there seemed to be no doubt that hysteria was an affliction that arose from uterine

problems and was therefore exclusively connected to the physiology of the female body.

While scholars have hotly debated Lear's famous diagnosis of his distress as "Hysterica passio, [...] thou climbing sorrow" (*Lear*, II, iv, 50), Peterson shows that reading this as supposed evidence of Shakespeare's inspired pre-science of the Freudian explanation of male hysteria seems an anachronistic perspective (2010:37). When the organ that presides over female physiology is associated with a male organism, this may occur for the purpose of comedy (as is probably the case in Falstaff's complaint about his womb) or in order to assimilate the masculine body to some physiological processes that pertain more specifically to the female body (which, as Wilder argues, seems to be the case for Holofernes [2010:3]). In *Lear* too the misdiagnosis may be intended to stress the emasculating action performed by mental derangement on the protagonist's body, in line with the Fool's famous assertion of the king's increasing nothingness, which resonates with the reference to the female genitals: "Thou art an O without a figure" (I, iv, 184).

Although *King Lear* contains Shakespeare's only explicit mention of *hysterica passio*, references to this disease may be found in other plays too. For example, medical narratives describing cases suffering from the suffocation of the mother may provide a model for the audience's expectations that Cordelia may not really be dead, thus giving plausibility to Lear's decision to perform a *diagnostic* test of her death. Moreover, passing references to *hysterica passio* may be found not only in the Friar's idea of the "cold and drowsy humor" (*Romeo and Juliet* IV, I, 98-99) that will arrest breathing and give Juliet's body the appearance of a lifeless corpse,

“[a] thing like death” (IV, i, 76), but also, briefly, in Othello’s murder of Desdemona.

Othello’s decision to smother Desdemona relies ostensibly on his reluctance to “shed her blood/ Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow” (*Othello* V, ii, 3-4); however, what is significant is that after he thinks he has killed her, she “stirs again” (V, ii, 108). While this incident is certainly functional in that it makes possible the sensational re-assertion of Desdemona’s purity (as we know, she revives only to absolve her husband), Othello chooses for his wife a punishment that actually re-enacts the uterine ailment of *hysterica passio*, which strangles the woman and arrests her body in the frozen appearance of death. The foregrounding of female pathology implicitly evokes the humoral and moral *excess* that lies at the core of the disordered womb: besides being imagined, as we have seen, as a disturbingly fluid body, at the beginning of the play Desdemona is also depicted as a choleric kind of woman, thus defying the phlegmatic type. In addition to her transgression of her father’s commandment, Desdemona initially appears to Othello as his “fair warrior” (II, i, 182), voraciously absorbing his stories: “She’d come again, and with a greedy ear/ Devour up my discourse” (I, iii, 151-52), thereby overstepping the normative boundaries of female inaction and passivity. From this perspective, Othello’s murder of her, by performing for the audience the symptomatic structure of *hysterica passio*, becomes an exemplary way to tie Desdemona back to the biological sign of her pathological excess. At the same time, however, the audience’s and readers’ dismay at Desdemona’s innocent death implicitly questions the hermeneutic power of female physiology: while it is proposed as a way to turn Desdemona’s body into a palimpsest that bespeaks her humoral and/or moral transgression, the spectacular

performance of her disordered womb is denounced as a tragic lie. Shakespeare's tragedies, moreover, never allow the coming back to life of the heroine, and *hysterica passio* is also evoked in order to forcibly frustrate any potential for hope: Cordelia will not move; Juliet comes back to life only to witness the full tragedy of her fate; Desdemona revives for a moment but then slips into actual death.

A somewhat different attitude to the frozen body of *hysterica passio* can be found in Shakespeare's late romances, *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*. The heroines of these plays, Thaisa and Hermione, are wrongly believed to be dead until a spectacular (and markedly secular) revivification scene occurs, in which the special skills of a healer – the Aesculapius-like doctor Cerimon and “the aristocratic female healer” (Pettigrew 2007:170) Paulina respectively – bring about the return of the frozen, arrested body to life. In both cases, the narrative structure of *hysterica passio* exploits the expedient of apparent death as a means to allow for the reintegration of the heroine into society after a period of seclusion. As Janet Adelman argues, although Thaisa's purity is never questioned – unlike Hermione, she has not been accused of infidelity by a jealous husband – childbirth has the effect of disturbingly foregrounding female corporeality, thereby making Thaisa's body “tabooed or tainted” and requiring the “penitential cleansing” (Adelman 1992:199) that, after her successful restoration to life, will culminate in her transformation into the priestess of Diana, the virgin goddess. *Hysterica passio* is therefore deployed not only as a way of punishing female bodily excess, but also as an instrument of purification: woman is both tied to and liberated by her uterine physiology.

This process operates in a more sophisticated way in *The Winter's Tale*, where *hysterica passio* functions as a means of purification that not

only restores the female body, but transforms that body into the aptest instrument of the memory arts, turning it into a symbol for integrity and discipline, usually associated with masculine identity only. The use of music in the resurrection scenes, which Peterson (2010:91) reads as a reference to one of the traditional methods used in the treatment of hysteria, in *The Winter's Tale* seems to be in line with the role it had in the Neo-Platonic memory arts (Yates 1984), where music was used to assist and strengthen the visitation of the mental *loci*.

As is well known, Hermione's body, frozen from her husband's point of view for 16 years, comes back to life after Leontes has been cured of his jealousy and cruelty. This has been possible because Paulina has throughout kept his memory of the supposedly dead queen alive, until the king is ready to witness Paulina's staging of Hermione's return to life. That Paulina's faithfulness to the cause of Hermione's innocence has manifested itself under the form of a specific *training* of Leontes's memory is recognized by the king himself, who places his vision of the extraordinary statue of Hermione within the paradigm of the art of memory: "O royal piece!/ There's magic in thy majesty, which has/ My evils conjured to remembrance" (*The Winter's Tale*, V, iii, 38-40). Moreover, Hermione's coming back to life takes place through the coming-to-animation of her statue, turning her body into an *imago agens* (moving image), one of the most powerful instruments at the service of the memory arts, considered by many authors the best means to assist ordered and regulated recollection (Yates 1984).

Instead of spoiling the process of recollection by its watery quality, the female body is here deployed as the perfect instrument at the service of the traditionally masculine art of memory. In this *wintry* play, the

hibernation of *hysterica passio* is exploited to turn the less-than-human physiology of the female body into the pure performance of ordered and well-regulated recollection. Although this cleansing may be viewed as an actual cancellation of the female body, I would argue that the apparent death of *hysterica passio* simultaneously foregrounds and oversteps the impediment of female physiology. Rather than considering women's uterine dysfunction as a purely limiting disposition, tying women to their physiology, *The Winter's Tale* seems to offer a more positive attitude, one that sublimates physiology itself and transforms the female body into an artefact that is related to both nature and art.

3. Conclusion

While the death of such heroines as Cordelia and Desdemona has been amply analysed from the perspective of gender studies, close attention to the medical context of women's diseases can shed fresh light upon the interpretation of Shakespearean scenes featuring mock deaths or cases of revivification. In the light of recent developments in the study of literature and medicine in the early modern period, this article has shown how Shakespeare's works engages with the medical narratives of his time. While the late romances demonstrate a more optimistic reading of women's physiological excess, both the tragedies and the romances show that Shakespeare's redeployment of the medical concepts and narratives was less a faithful mirroring of the facts of medicine than a process of active reimagining and negotiation.

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**TORTURE ON STAGE: PETER ZADEK'S STAGING OF
*MEASURE FOR MEASURE***

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***Abstract:** In his 1991 French production of Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, the fourth of his career, German director Peter Zadek amplified the low-life scenes, first in the streets of Vienna and also in the prison, where he presented Pompey, the tapster-pimp turned apprentice executioner, as being as fully involved in his new job as he had been previously in the streets of Vienna under Mistress Overdone's orders: now he is chopping up and sawing up naked females on stage. This paper will present some of the aspects of this expressionist sado-masochist version of the play, and discuss its legitimacy.*

***Keywords:** expressionism, low-life scenes, Measure for Measure, Shakespeare, staging*

1. Introduction

Like many theatre directors, the German director Peter Zadek has a favourite play within the Shakespearean canon, and indeed he has come back to this, the “problematic” *Measure for Measure*, several times during his prolific career. A dark comedy written during the Jacobean period and the first new play to be performed in front of James I and his Court at

Whitehall Palace on December 26th 1604, this piece was performed very frequently on the German stage in the 1960s and '70s, with Zadek himself contributing to the scandalous representation of the Dukedom of Vienna in two memorable versions in Germany, namely in Ulm in 1960 and in Bremen in 1967. However, his interest in the play might tentatively be traced to a much earlier period, that of the beginning of his career as an actor in Oxford, with the Oxford University Dramatic Society's (Davy 1944) 1944 performance, directed by Nevill Coghill and with Richard Burton in the role of Angelo.

When Zadek came back to the play in 1991, the circumstances were very different from those surrounding his two previous German productions. Firstly, the text was delivered in French, and the premiere took place in Paris. Zadek had been invited to France many times to present his German productions; however, on this occasion he was directing a number of famous French actors in a faithful translation by the leading French translator Jean-Michel Déprats. The production was commissioned by the Théâtre National de l'Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe in Paris, and then toured in France and Switzerland, with performances over a period of five months, from February 7th to June 1st 1991.

In 1967 Zadek had substantially rewritten the text in line with his usual practice, altering the plot and the denouement. In 1991, however, he preferred to follow Shakespeare's text in the full complexity of his late style, based as it is on religious argumentation combined with bawdy innuendo, although many cuts were made to the longer speeches. He even stuck to the traditional reading of the play at the point of the denouement. Although Shakespeare does not provide Isabella with a spoken answer to the Duke's two proposals, Zadek's Isabella did not hesitate to walk towards the

Duke, with a smile on her face and an extended hand, as a sign of agreement to his proposal of marriage. However, as might have been expected of him, Zadek added a hint of provocation, as the Duke and Isabella then turned towards each other and burst out laughing, as if to indicate that this marriage was just a social pretence and a good old joke.

Before dealing with the theme of torture on stage, I would like to give a very brief outline of two general theatrical principles upon which this particular production was based.

2.1 Some of the Theatrical Principles of this Production

The stage was left fairly bare, leaving ample space for the actors to move around, and also for various areas to be defined with moveable props (as we will see later) or special lighting effects (for example Claudio's prison cell in Act 1).

The back wall was covered in succession with two painted "winter" and "summer" cloths reminiscent of the neo-Fauvist movement of the 1980s in Berlin. These had been painted by Johannes Grützke, an artist with whom Zadek had been working since the start of his Berlin years, i.e. since 1981. The "winter" cloth represented a mountainous landscape of high snow-covered peaks and frightening narrow valleys. Of course, this dramatic backcloth had nothing to do with Renaissance Vienna or with the "houses of resort" (1.2.93) located in the suburbs in Shakespeare's play, but it could very well suit the sense of complete isolation of Mariana's "moated grange" (4.1). In order to further develop this winter of moral discontent under the rule of Angelo, the Duke's "precise" Deputy, white flakes fell on Claudio as he made his way to the prison, a rope round his neck (1.2).

In the centre of the other cloth, “summer”, four female silhouettes painted in orange and green, with their grimacing faces roughly outlined in black recalling the style of Kokoschka or even of Goya, gave an impression of being caught against their will in the inescapable spiral of fate.

At the denouement, the two cloths were superimposed: the female silhouettes in their loose robes appeared to whirl against the cold, static, imposing mountains, showing that summer could come back at last, with the return of the Duke. But this produced the effect of summer being a somewhat unsettling season, with extremely passive females with sad expressions on their faces and closed eyes, showing the terrible anxiety experienced by women in this man’s world.

A sliding partition suggesting a high red brick wall roughly cemented in places made it possible to subdivide this space at the back, thus producing two areas, one front stage facing the audience, and the other further back, hidden behind the wall, outside the bounds of the city now governed by the Duke’s Deputy. Thus from the sides of this partition Mistress Overdone or Pompey her Tapster were able to enter the main acting space without being noticed or invited. This proved that this wall, despite being high and well-guarded, was unable to keep out all the creatures who transgressed the “biting laws” that had lain dormant and that severe Angelo wanted to impose once again on the citizens of Vienna. And all the skeletons that some would have preferred to keep double-locked in a dark corner were free to creep back. Indeed, Zadek even had a skeleton displaying his skull, who frightened the characters behind their backs and stole Angelo’s cigarette without him noticing it.

In order to avoid the magical atmosphere of the traditional stage, Zadek asked his lighting designer (André Diot) to keep the lights on in the

auditorium for the whole three and a half hour duration of the performance, with the result that stage and auditorium became one space with the same rules. However in this particular case, it seems that this Brechtian convention unsettled the audience, who had expected that they would be sitting in the dark and focusing their full attention on the stage in front of them in accordance with the conventions of the classical Italian playhouse. A few reviewers mentioned their unease in this brightly-lit space, where the audience were conscious of their neighbours' movements and of any noise they made. So instead of creating a distance between plot and reality, between actor and character, this device amplified the reactions of the audience, thus creating a barrier between the different members of the audience, who were seated next to each other but did not form a harmonious group.

Zadek usually works with the same group of actors who have been trained according to the same acting principles and who form a coherent ensemble, stressing the collective rather than the individual rendering. However, for this production he chose his actors individually, some of them being very famous performers, for example the film star Isabelle Huppert in the role of Isabella. Thus, instead of favouring a coherence of acting style, this selection prompted the audience to consider the actors individually rather than together as a group, and so to keep their attention focused on some particular actor's physical movements on stage, rather than concentrate on the character's development in the course of the plot. Some of the reviews focused on Huppert, comparing her performance with previous parts she had played in films or plays. In this way the attention which should have been paid to the plot and to the acting of the entire cast singled out one performer, leaving out the interaction between Huppert and

the other characters and thus losing much of the general meaning of the play. Instead of favouring the creation of an ensemble, the production ended up favouring the star system. And as a result, Isabelle Huppert was caught between her rendering of the character in the play and her reputation as a film star, with her presence being in a way treated as an independent entity to be judged by the audience and commentators.

In Shakespeare's comedy, Isabella deliberately chooses to keep a low profile. She applies to become a postulant in the Order of Saint Clare, an order very well known for the excessive severity of its rules, which are mentioned by Shakespeare in an ironical way in Act 1 scene 4:

[...] I speak not as desiring more,
But rather wishing a more strict restraint
Upon the sisters stood, the votarists of Saint Clare. (1.4.3-5)

She wants to keep away from men and worldly affairs. However, the first encounter that imposes itself on her is a visit from the "Fantastic" Lucio, a self-proclaimed libertine, who has just boasted of being a regular visitor to Mistress Overdone's pleasure house. And in her second plea to Angelo, in Act 2 scene 4, in spite of herself, it is in overloaded images of seduction that she evokes the physical torture she would be ready to suffer rather than yield to the Deputy's sudden sexual urge:

[...] were I under the terms of death,
Th'impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,
And strip myself to death as to a bed
That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield
My body up to shame. (2.4.100-4)

So the play's most puritan female character, the one who aspires to purity and prayer, is the very person who comes out with the most overtly sexual sado-masochistic allusions. It was easy, then, for Peter Zadek to amplify this tendency in his production by applying the topos to different passages.

Keeping these few points in mind, let us now approach the subject of torture on stage. I will consider two sections of the production which involve the "low-life" characters of Vienna, in particular Pompey, Mistress Overdone's Tapster, and Mistress Overdone herself, both specialists in the sex industry.

2.2 The Stage Plays within the Play

Mistress Overdone is a character familiar to the crowd gathered in the street in the play's explanatory scene, and she contributes to the plot by breaking the news of Claudio's arrest, cutting short Lucio's banter with the two gentlemen:

Well, well, There's one yonder arrested and carried to prison, was worth five thousand of you all (1.2.56-7)

She obviously knows the young man and gives a brief but complimentary account of his character, which can be trusted as it is later corroborated by Escalus (2.1.5-6). She also knows Lucio and his partners, all frequent clients of her business. The fact that they can meet openly in "a public space", according to the stage direction, and joke about prostitution (and its risks for health), proves that the morals of the Duchy of Vienna are somewhat loose and the laws lenient. Although she has been in the trade for a long time and has used her two eyes and had a few husbands, Mistress

Overdone nevertheless needs her Tapster to inform her about the new laws concerning the demolition of the suburbs in order to eradicate such houses of pleasure as hers (1.2).

In Zadek's production, this was the winter season of Angelo's rule, with the white mountainous landscape and the snow falling, but Mistress Overdone's trade still seemed to be thriving. What was noticeable here was that prostitution was not confined to "the Bunch of Grapes" (2.1.128) or to any other rooms in her house, but could be carried out openly and even take over the whole space of the stage. Mistress Overdone and Pompey carried on their trade right out in the streets, without needing to hide their purposes indoors under some false pretence. In this sequence, Pompey was wearing the same kind of long thick black fur-trimmed velvet coat that Angelo and Escalus were wearing, as if he was also a kind of moral judge in his own district, lording it over the girls employed by his Mistress. The cigar he was smoking proved the importance of his social position, but unlike Angelo who had a matching medieval hat, Pompey wore a modern cap which clashed with his rich outfit, proving that the vulgarity of the Tapster showed through the "borrowed" robes of the official character.

Both he and Mistress Overdone (with her black jacket and gloves) were comfortably clothed to endure the winter season, unlike the girls, who were either naked or wore very low-cut evening dresses. In fact in this production the girls were full-sized silhouettes painted on plywood, with grotesque shapes and lascivious gestures, representing prostitutes plying their trade. The fixed expressions on their faces and the sadness in their eyes suggested that they were sex slaves whose sole function was to be a source of income for their madam and her business partner by providing pleasure to their male clients.

Peter Zadek amplified this passage with some stage business which formed a full sequence of its own. Pompey could be seen grabbing the money the prostitutes earned, which would be stuck on one of their buttocks, and then counting the wads of bank notes with an expression of utter satisfaction, under the greedy stare of Mistress Overdone.

This episode, which is to be found nowhere in Shakespeare's text but could be defined as a stage sub-plot, made a deep impression on the audience. Many reviewers described at length the actions and doings of Pompey and gave full vent to their own imaginations, adding their metaphorical images to the already striking visual tableau.

In his review René Solis (2009:18) compared the silhouettes to "cowgirls on a shooting-stand" at a funfair. Further on, he spoke of Pompey "emptying the girls' meters", an ambiguous polysemic metaphor which could equate the girls with mere slot/sex-machines or to painted female substitutes only designed to be shot at. In both cases, the reviewer's underlying bawdy innuendoes were certainly not fortuitous, and they encouraged audience and readers to develop their own subsequent images along the same lines.

Thus the inhumanity of the situation the girls had to endure was clearly identified and amplified: they were shown as naked in the cold, lacking the minimal clothing needed to preserve their health and dignity, having the implement used for piling up the money (that they had earned but that was swiftly taken away from them) inserted into their own bodies. Unable to protest or rebel, these silhouettes seemed to be mere toys at the mercy of Mistress Overdone and her Tapster, experiencing psychological and physical torture in sad, silent submissiveness.

The other passage I would like to discuss concerns a very enclosed space, the prison, not Claudio's cell circumscribed only by the light coming from the spotlights above, but the space in which Pompey has been asked by the Provost to be the executioner's helper in his "mystery":

Provost. Come hither, sirrah. Can you cut off a man's head?

Pompey. If the man be a bachelor, sir, I can; but if he be a married man, he's his wife's head; and I can never cut off a woman's head (4.2.1-4).

When Pompey is charged with this responsibility, and before he is asked to participate in the task, he delivers a soliloquy in which he compares the prison to Mistress Overdone's establishment because so many of her regular customers have been caught:

I am as well acquainted here as I was in our house of profession: one would think it were Mistress Overdone's house, for here be many of her old customers (4.3.1-4).

Shakespeare does not people the prison with all these wrongdoers ; it is sufficient for Pompey to list them all and briefly state their offences.

Peter Zadek took yet another stand. The whole space of the stage was the prison, so instead of being an enclosed space, it spread all over. Pompey was not "at the wheel of Caesar" (3.2.42-3) as Lucio jokingly puts it, but very much at ease in any circumstances and able to get by, with the boundaries seeming to expand around him. However, in this space there were once again many tortured females.

While Pompey was trying to heal a minor wound by blowing on a man's index finger, the silhouette of a heavily chained woman stood behind

him, but no one paid any attention to her. With an unhappy expression on her face and her dishevelled hair she offered the forlorn image of a prostitute now become a prisoner, without any hope of a generous friend to bail her out or a word of attention from the former pimp turned apprentice executioner.

Another female figure stood there at the back of the prison when the Duke, using a gratuitous sadistic stratagem, chose to keep Isabella ignorant of her brother's reprieve (4.3.110-148a). Again it was one of the many plywood silhouettes, painted as naked, but with a heavy chain round her neck and hanging upside down, which is an even worse torture and a further degradation of the female body.

So in this section there was a doubling of torture: the moral and emotional pressure that the Duke exerts on Isabella, which is in the text, and at the back, the physical torture of an anonymous woman being punished for the sin of the flesh, a sin that the Duke suggests that Isabella should commit to save her brother's life.

Just in front of the oblivious pair, the inert body of a woman was shown, lying on her back. She was wearing only a black top and a kind of chastity belt or instrument of sexual torture, with obvious bruises on her upper legs, which she held apart, as if she had been tortured in the position of sexual intercourse, or rape, or even both. Her right arm was set at an uncomfortable right angle, her hand still showing signs of resistance before the final state of deathly immobility.

Before this particular moment, Peter Zadek had added a subplot of a special kind. From a wicker trunk which stood on stage, Pompey had fished out all kinds of objects: a pair of blacksmith's tongs, a fire-poker, and some arms, legs, and other body parts, which he threw out across the space with a

very concentrated expression. He was now fully engaged in the activity of deputy executioner, still dealing with the body, but also with dismemberment and torture. Having found the tool he was looking for, Pompey carried the inert body to the bench and started to saw off the right leg of what could have been taken for a plastic shape. But to the great surprise of the audience, the actress started to scream, spat out a greenish liquid substance, and promptly disappeared into the wings. So in fact this was not a dummy at all but a real human being on stage.

3. Conclusion

Back in 1967 Peter Zadek had asked his scenographer, Wilfried Minks, to keep the props to a bare minimum: two ordinary chairs borrowed from the modern world and used in a very inventive polysemy.

In his 1991 production Zadek took a completely opposite approach, filling the empty stage with a heterogeneous collection of *bric-à-brac* that lent itself to extensive stage business involving large numbers of female silhouettes and real actresses that Shakespeare did not make part of his drama but which made an impression on the audience. These subplots were duly recorded in the press; in fact, in some cases they were almost the only details to feature in the reviews, sometimes provoking all manner of exaggeration on their part, thus proving that the visual effects produced were extremely impressive and lodged in people's minds. In fact the images created such a degree of shock that the stage business at times took over as the message of the play: it was not Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* which was being performed on stage and under discussion in the reviews, but actually all the subplots added by Zadek, which stood for the real play. Were these pieces necessary, or were they simply designed to contribute to

the general effect of provocation that Zadek enjoyed creating? Zadek has indeed proved to be a proponent of provocation at all costs, and has even stated that “the real provocation in the theatre is not of an ideological or political type, but of an aesthetic one” as Didier Méreuze reports (1991:12).

And this is also why he returned to Shakespeare and in particular to *Measure for Measure*, because, as he stated in the Programme for this production: “What I appreciate in Shakespeare is the savageness”. Indeed Zadek used it to explore the dark side of human nature, the violent passions of males and the utter despair of women. But we may wonder why he showed so many tortured female bodies at the mercy of males’ extremely savage lust.

All the same, we would do well to remember the anonymous character of the prostitute who unexpectedly escapes from torture by managing to flee at the very last moment before she is dismembered, just as Claudio escapes death and Isabella escapes the strict rules of the convent. As if Peter Zadek meant that some characters, especially those who are really pure at heart even against all appearances, can find a way to escape their terrible fate and find life.

We must admit that this unsettling vision was a source of dark fascination, just as some of Zadek’s previous productions had been. However, this provocative sado-masochistic version of the play was not quite to the taste of its French audiences, who considered it to belong to the tradition of the German stage and to be in line with the director’s style rather than their own.

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**“SYCORAX ON STAGE”:
THE UNVOICED SHAKESPEAREAN FEMALE OTHER
FINALLY SPEAKS IN SUNITI NAMJOSHI’S *POETRY***

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***Abstract:** The witch has always been the representation of an unspeakable absence. Sycorax embodies all silenced African women, experiencing double patriarchy (a term used by Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka). Associated with the margins, she represented the barbarian Other to European culture. Sycorax de-colonizes the male-dominated world of Prospero: from absence, she is turned into presence, as she constructs her subjective narrative.*

***Keywords:** adaptation, authorship, dialogism, feminism, post-colonialism.*

1. Introduction

Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, and the character of Sycorax, have been considered the prototypes of post-colonial literature and have been examined in a quite wide-ranging way. In the discipline of post-colonial studies, a number of critics highlight the Caliban – Prospero relationship as the model of the colonizer vs. colonized subject relation. Sycorax is either

taken for the evil Algerian witch, the counter character to Prospero, the ‘white magician’, or, according to feminist and post-colonial criticism, she is seen as the embodiment of the silenced indigenous woman. In this essay, after a contextualization of the figure of Sycorax throughout literary history, I approach Sycorax from a new perspective. Namjoshi’s Sycorax is neither absent nor silenced. Voice has been given to her, along with subjectivity, and thus she is able to narrate her life story. She is no longer evil. The narrator stays with her as with a dying person in his or her last hours. I examine Namjoshi’s Sycorax cycle from both a feminist and a post-colonial point of view and reach the conclusion that Sycorax, the blue-eyed hag, is in fact a colonizer.

This essay discusses the path which Sycorax has followed as a literary character, from being the representation of absence, through her occasional appearance in modern works, to the point at which she is given the agency and authority of narrating her own story. The section focusing on literary history suggests a link between the typically absent figure of the witch in ancient and Renaissance works and the process of othering and misogyny to which the witch often fell victim. In the twentieth century Sycorax has appeared in a number of literary works by post-colonial authors, as well as in films and theatrical productions. Although she is physically present in these works, as in Peter Brook’s *The Tempest*, her figure is still marginal on stage. By contrast, instead of being presented by male characters (Prospero and Ariel) talking about her, the Sycorax character in Namjoshi’s poetry creates her own narration; she becomes the main character in her drama as she delivers her soliloquy, nicely framed in a Shakespearean manner by starting with a prologue and ending with an epilogue.

Born in India in 1941, Namjoshi is an important contemporary post-colonial author who deals with the issue of identity in terms of gender and ethnicity. In her collection of poems and fables, *Because of India* (1989), she defines her identity as “diasporic, Indian lesbian feminist” (quoted in Mann 1997:97) in relation to others’ variously particularized identities. Our identity, according to Namjoshi (1997:97), is not only based on gender, sexual orientation and skin colour, but also on culture, defined by religion and environment, and therefore identity, as such, varies from “place to place and period to period.”

2. Tempestuous Race and Gender Relations

Post-colonial literature offers ample instances of artists living in formerly colonized countries overwriting and rethinking so-called ‘Westernized’ literary history and Lyotardian ‘Master Narratives’. Such works can be shown to possess both post-modern and post-colonial literary features, as they position previously marginalized characters in the focus of the work. These pieces often emphasize the feminist viewpoint in their writing, as seen in the 1966 novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (the post-colonial intertextual rewriting of *Jane Eyre*) by Jean Rhys. Similarly, Paula Vogel’s *Desdemona: A Play About a Handkerchief* (1979) presents an alternative viewpoint to *Othello*. In Aimé Césaire’s work *A Tempest (Une Tempête)* the social status of Prospero, Caliban and Ariel is different in terms of the hierarchical system of colonization. The characters are not now magical beings. Prospero is the white colonizer, Caliban is an African slave, while Ariel is a mulattocharacter living on the Caribbean island. In Césaire’s play the rebellious Caliban condemns Ariel for being a servant of the colonizers. *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) by George Lamming is a collection of essays

that also deconstructs the Shakespearean drama by reconstructing the colonized subjects in the Caribbean region, deprived of their own language and cultural roots.

Although these 'revisited' works all provide an alternative viewpoint to Shakespeare's metanarrative, they do not reflect on the *silenced* characters, such as Sycorax or Prospero's wife. In Shakespeare's drama, these two women characters are never present physically; and information about them is mediated by the main male character, Prospero. While Sycorax's name is mentioned seven times (Harder 2005:127) in the drama, not by any means in positive contexts, Prospero's wife does not even have a name. This female character – as is often the case for women - is defined by her family relationships (Prospero's wife, Miranda's mother) that deprive her not only of voice but also of any independent existence, thus representing absence. Prospero does not have a positive opinion about either of these female characters. In his conversation with Miranda in the second scene of the first act he tells his daughter that his wife was virtuous; however, this is not necessarily Prospero's own opinion, as he is only telling Miranda what his wife had told him, so the information regarding his wife's virtuousness is mediated.

Your mother was a piece of virtue, and /She said You wast my daughter;
and your father / Was Duke of Milan; and thou his only heir
And princess, no worse issued. (*The Tempest* 1. 2.56-58)

The gap that is left by the lack of mother figures is filled by the spirits of the island. Although Miranda's mother is absent, as Stephen Orgel points out, Prospero "several times explicitly, presents himself as incorporating her, acting as both father and mother to Miranda" (1984:4). In

one of the dialogues between Prospero and Miranda, the voyage to the island is described as a “birth fantasy” (Orgel 1984:4).

When I have decked the sea with drops full salt, / Under my burden
groaned: which raised in me / An undergoing stomach, to bear up /
Against what should ensue. (*The Tempest* 1. 2.155-158)

The island provided the possibility of a fresh start for both Prospero and Miranda. The magician and his daughter not only started a new life on the island but also colonized it, throwing Caliban, Sycorax’s son, into servitude. The witch herself was the “victim of banishment.” As Orgel (1998:4-5) notes, the memory of Sycorax is much more present in Prospero’s mind and “she embodies all the negative assumptions about women.” Everything we know about Sycorax is mediated through the memories and stories of Caliban, Ariel and Prospero. She herself does not appear in the action, since she had died well before the narrative time of the play. She was brought to the island from Algiers, as a form of punishment, but it never actually becomes clear what her sins were. As readers, we often give credit to the white magician’s words. “This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child, / And here was left by the sailors. You, my slave, / As you report yourself, were then her servant.” (*The Tempest* 1. 2. 269-271) Probably, it is also due to Prospero’s mistrust in women’s virtue that he tells us that Sycorax’s son was “A freckled whelp, hag-born, not honoured with/ A human shape.” (*The Tempest* 1. 2. 284)

Sycorax is represented as an evil, diabolical witch, a feminine version of Richard III. The reason for such vehement ‘satanization’ does not lie only in Prospero’s obviously misogynistic attitude but, just as in the case of the major vicious character of Richard III, also involves historical and

literary traditions. While the infamous king is a remake of the *Devil* character from the medieval mystery plays, Sycorax is a witch, a person who is always already a marginalized subject. As Montaigne writes: “[w]hat is foreign is that which escapes from a place” (quoted in Purkiss 1996:250). Witches often live in a ‘voluntary’ or ‘forced’ exile, usually close to nature. As Purkiss (1996:250) suggests, they are “always located on the edges, [...] open country or forest,” without being either an acknowledged member of society, like the wise woman or clairvoyant of the village, or even being “part of the social network” (1996:250); the relationship is a problematic one. The stage representation of the witch is inevitably one of invisibility; that is, the aim is to remove her “conceptually and topographically [...] from the centre of dramatic action” (1996:250). Throughout the twentieth century, this marginalisation was often ignored by theatre and film directors alike. In Peter Brook’s 1965 stage version of *The Tempest*, for example, an enormous Sycorax figure appears and gives birth to a grown-up Caliban in a black sweater.

3. From Absence to Presence: The Pre- and Post-texts of *The Tempest*

The source for the character of Sycorax is to be found in classical Greek and Roman texts, such as the myth of the revenging Medea, or Circe in Homer’s *Odyssey* and Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and equally in contemporary stories of the New World describing witches. As Purkiss (1996:258) argues, Sycorax has much in common with these ancient witches, namely the fact that they are all from North Africa, lunar and man-slaying, and embody “a fear of miscegenation”, which becomes a major source of fear of contamination and impurity in their representation.

The New World, strange and foreign as it may have seemed to the explorers, had to be understood, and the easiest way was to turn to classical texts. The newness of new lands as well as their cultures and peoples had to be assimilated to pre-existing categories. As Purkiss (1996:258) points out, the new knowledge was primarily integrated via classical (literary) texts, “because the classics together with the Bible constituted the master discourses of the period.” But even these classical texts were confusing regarding the “discourse between classical and new world geographies, spectacles and narratives” (1996:258). In most cases, newly discovered lands were seen as idyllic and pastoral, the “home of the deities, chased out of Europe” after the spread of Christianity (1996:258).

The Tempest can be read as a metaphor for encountering the New World. Both Catholic and Protestant explorers, settlers and colonizers found themselves in new lands where Christianity was unknown and indeed unheard of. Native Americans were said to be demon-worshippers, while their religion - which connected the indigenous people to Mother Earth, as the sacred beliefs of pre-historic and pre-Christian Europe had once done – was said to be pagan, barbarian. Thus, the images of the ‘savage Indian’ and the ‘barbarian Other’ from Hellenistic and ancient Roman thought were inevitably merged. We can observe the process of ‘othering’ in Shakespeare’s creation of Sycorax, so that the strange, indigenous, woman Other becomes the witch on the Elizabethan stage (Purkiss 258-262).

Several twentieth-century *Tempest* adaptations do have a Sycorax character physically appearing, but they often fail to challenge the subject relations set by Shakespeare. As Thomas Cartelli (1995 :95) writes, authors such as Césaire “accept positional stereotypes whose only real claim to legitimacy is their continued circulation.” He argues (1995:95) that such

works ironically accept “the play’s limited cast of characters as representative of enduring colonial(ist) configurations, as if Shakespeare had immutably fixed the only available attitudes of master, servant.” In order to overcome the “parasitic relationship” of the post-colonial text to a master narrative it has to reconfigure the “fixed subject positions” (95).

At the same time, in colonial literature, Sycorax is the representation of female subjectivity that is the most problematical of all, and this stems from the fact that post-colonial women are subjected to a ‘double bind’, that is, they experience two forms of alienation and/or ‘othering’: gender and racial. As Abena P. A. Busia points out, “both of these factors are the major metaphors of strangeness within colonial discourse” (84). From whichever perspective we approach the issue of Sycorax’s absence and/or presence, in *The Tempest* or in its rewritings in post-colonial literature, the focus remains on patriarchal conquest over female subjectivity, dramatised in the allegory of conquering the tempestuous island.

The common denominator of Sycorax and her predecessors throughout literature is the patriarchal control that casts female characters into an object position. Being deprived of voice and of the agency of speech, they are cast into the grammatical object position by being talked about but never talking themselves. The major problem with the interpretative rewritings of *The Tempest* is that, as Busia (1989:85) states, regardless of our perspectives of “the colonial encounter, Caliban and Ariel are quintessentially male in their activities and objectives.” Women in the play (Prospero’s wife and Sycorax) exist only in relation to the male characters. Post-colonial female characters are not necessarily absent from the plot physically, as their “prototype Sycorax” is (1989:86), but, even when present, they are deprived of their voice and the chance to tell their own

stories. Usually males talk for them, so their stories are mediated several times, just as Sycorax's is filtered through Caliban, Ariel and Prospero:

This damned witch Sycorax, / For mischiefs manifold, and sorceries
terrible / To enter human hearing, from Algiers, / You know, was
banished. For one thing she did / They would not take her life. Is not this
true ? (*The Tempest* 1. 2. 264-267)

Her sins and her one deed that saved her life remain hidden. It is not only the text about Sycorax that is full of absences/gaps, but, according to Busia (1989:86), she is constructed as being essentially absent from any locus of dramatic action or power. Sycorax's absence on/from the Renaissance stage represents voicelessness, i.e., absence from a discourse in which sexuality and access to language together form the discourse granting access to power. This voicelessness is often a "deliberate unvoicing" (Busia 87). It is, however, often crucial in the representation of post-colonial women. At the same time, the marginal position is not necessarily the negative side of the binary of margin versus centre; it may be a form of resistance to economically oriented culture. More crucially, bell hooks notes that "the margin need not be defined as a place that holds markings of less value. Rather [...] it is a "site of resistance" (quoted in Williams 1989:xvii) to racial and gender oppression, silence, despair and invisibility.

4. Sycorax: The Literary De-colonizer

Suniti Namjoshi has experimented with rewritings of the subject positions in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in two poem cycles entitled *Because of India* (1989) and *Sycorax* (2006). In the first of these, she recreates the figure of Caliban. The traditionally masculine Caliban

becomes a woman and thus the heterosexual encounter between the male savage and the civilized female becomes a lesbian erotic relationship. In the *Sycorax* cycle she reanimates the dead Sycorax. Namjoshi comments on her poems in her “Letter to the Reader”. Sycorax returns to the island and tells her own story after Prospero and all the other characters are gone, including Caliban, who also “went with the gods who were only men. It’s/what he deserves. He wanted so much/to be like them” (Namjoshi 2006:xi). Sycorax represents presence in Namjoshi’s poetry by becoming an author and narrating her own story. Her authorship is emphasized on the one hand by the procession of iconic Western and post-colonial authors, such as Sylvia Plath, Dylan Thomas and Kamau Brathwaite, whose works all appear as intertexts. On the other hand, Sycorax’s activities, such as fantasising, dreaming etc., are also associated with mental creativity.

Like many post-colonial authors, Namjoshi also expresses a certain failure to belong to either the Western or the Eastern world. Namjoshi is of Hindu origin, but was educated in the Western world. S. Mann (1997:96-7) notes that instead of achieving “any idealized sense of belonging to one essentialized culture, nation, or group, or, conversely, to arrive at a universal state,” Namjoshi occupies a “third space,” an interstitial location between nations and cultures, as theorized by Homi Bhabha (quoted in Mann 1997:98).

Approaching Namjoshi’s work from both feminist and post-colonialist perspectives, I argue that Sycorax is a literary de-colonizer. As Barbara Fuchs (1997:46-9) contends, in Shakespeare’s age Sycorax might arguably have meant the act of colonization, being the representative of the Islamic world which occupied extensive territories in Europe during the

time of the Turkish Ottoman (Islamic) Empire. In this sense, Sycorax is the first colonizer.

It would be more plausible, however, to interpret Sycorax in Namjoshi's text as a de-colonizer, but not in the traditional sense of the word. She occupies a 'little island' for herself in the ocean of world literature, by being given the voice to tell her own life story. When she gains authority over her own narration by the end of her life, agency is also attributed to her, through the simple act of being able to speak.

Old women do not die easily, nor / are their deaths timely. They make a habit /
of outliving men, so that, as I am still here, / I am able to say clearly that when
Prospero / said he took over an uninhabited island / save for Caliban and the
enslaved Ariel, he lied. (Prologue 1-7)

She uses Prospero's method: claiming something to be one's own property. Whereas in *The Tempest* Prospero out-argues Caliban, claiming the island to be his own, Sycorax does the same in Namjoshi's poetry: "I LIVED ON THAT ISLAND" she announces, "It was my property (at least as much as it was anybody else's)" (Prologue 1). Mahadevan-Dasgupta notes that Namjoshi's Sycorax "is an assertion of identity and rights", by her claim that the island is hers. But more importantly, by the act of claiming a piece of land as her own, she applies the mechanism of the Austenian speech act. Ownership is reversed by a simple linguistic utterance: "mine". Sycorax de-colonizes the island by de-constructing the ownership relations of the piece of land as well as the Shakespearean text. Ironical as it may seem, the line points to the mechanism used by the colonizers in appropriating lands.

The excerpt from the prologue is arguably a rewriting of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, since in this case the text does not *overwrite* the first one (as in the case of a palimpsest), but while revealing the host text, it also adds to it, thus forming a dialogic relationship, resulting in an inverted version of Prospero's lines being given by Sycorax. More credit can be given to Sycorax's words than to Prospero's (as far as her life story is concerned), since in Shakespeare's play Prospero talks about her in a mediated way, in the third person singular, but in Namjoshi's text she tells us her own narrative, in the first person singular.

The rich intertextual nature of this poem cycle is connected on the one hand with authorship, while it results in a number of linguistic modifications in comparison with the host text. The poem cycle or rather mono-drama is framed by two pieces, a prologue and an epilogue, the same framework that we find in many Shakespearean dramas. The choice of mono-drama as generic category for this text is plausible, as in Namjoshi's work Sycorax takes over Prospero's role: she becomes the subject, with agency, and all the other characters become objects, by being talked about. The absence of Sycorax and the presence of the Shakespearean characters are both reversed.

The poem sequence alludes both to Western European and American poets such as Sylvia Plath and Dylan Thomas and to post-colonial authors. Some of the allusions are overtly presented in the text, as is the line: "Ariel is, perhaps checking his reflection in yet another pool" (Prologue 17-18). The allusion to the mythological Narcissus brings sexuality into the focus of this particular piece. Ariel in Shakespeare's play is an androgynous creature: there is no reference to his or her sex. As Sycorax is absent from the Shakespeare play, so the specific gender of some characters, such as Ariel,

is missing. Referring to the Greek mythological story in which Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection introduces the topic of same-sex attraction. Ariel's being a "type of a gay man" is revealed explicitly in a later line (Ariel 1).

A somewhat less conspicuous reference is Sycorax's malfunctioning mind:

One day my mind malfunctioned. / It made copy after copy /of me as I am, / So I
kicked my mind. / It then produced copies /distanced in time./ It said to me, 'You
may speak /to the good witch Syco / at the age of five'. (Copies 1-9)

This stanza recalls Kamau Brathwaite's poems. In these few lines Sycorax tells us that it was only her earlier mind that acted like a muse to Brathwaite (Gowda 1994:691). Although neither Brathwaite nor his poem sequence is mentioned explicitly, the allusion clearly points to the conception of the poems, allowing for a self-referential poem.

The intertextual references to Sylvia Plath are both overt and covert and are closely linked to the issue of Sycorax's authority in the work. Her blue eyes and blonde hair make her similar to Sylvia Plath, though only in appearance.

It's not much fun meeting copies of earlier selves. One knows what they
know. And their stunned disbelief when they look at one is not always
flattering. But the other day, that erratic computer, my meandering mind,
produced a copy of my mother: Syco The Dam, also blonde, and blue-
eyed, but twenty years older, and also engaged in taking leave of her
senses. I asked her—something... Perhaps I asked ... But it's no use. Her
hearing was the first to go. She hears voices, of course. Always has done.
(*Copies* 23-31)

In this passage Sycorax starts a dialogue with her earlier selves. At one and the same time, this not only refers to Brathwaite (erratic computer) and to Plath's appearance (also blonde and blue-eyed) but is a brief and humorous summary of the otherwise serious issue of female authorship. In the cases of Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf, the anxiety of authorship appears, something which is even more applicable when it comes to post-colonial writers rewriting so-called master narratives. Sycorax - as their sister or daughter in authorship - turns to her predecessors in vain, since none of them can answer her, as they themselves both took leave of their senses when they committed suicide.

Namjoshi inserts an almost word for word intertext to Plath's poem *Daddy*. In *Physicality*, Sycorax says: I am the old woman, who lived in a shoe who had so / many children she didn't know what to do because they were / all starving to death (*Physicality* 7-9). Similarly, in Plath's poem, we have the lyrical I also lived in a shoe: You do not do, you do not do / Any more, black shoe / In which I have lived like a foot (*Daddy* 1-3). Besides the apparent similarity between the two excerpts, there are also some important differences between the two poems. In both cases the lyrical "I" was kept silent by certain authorities, i.e., they were absent from the public arena, but while the authority appears explicitly in *Daddy* (being the despotic father figure), in *Physicality* the authority is not necessarily one single person. The oppression appears not only in the form of patriarchy, as in *Daddy* ("lived in a shoe", but also in the form of poverty: Sycorax "had so / many children she didn't know what to do because they were / all starving to death." (*Physicality* 7-9) At this point, the Sycorax-poem and *Daddy* are involved in a dialogic relationship. The subjectivities composed by both Plath and Namjoshi are silenced by a patriarchal authority: one is *Daddy*, the other is

the imperial power of the colonizers, represented by the Shakespearean figure of Prospero.

Besides the intertexts, Namjoshi uses her witty feminist parody and eroticized grammar to subvert the masculine and misogynistic language of the colonizers. Her verse goes on as follows: “I am Old Mother Hubbard, who lived in a cupboard, / who couldn’t give her dog a bone, because she needed it for soup and / had gnawed on it herself” (*Physicality* 9-11). In the web of intertextual references to literary icons, a few lines from the seventeenth-century nursery rhyme *Old Mother Hubbard* crop up. The allusion takes part in the textual playfulness, strengthening the image of being enclosed in a private sphere (“lived in a cupboard”), which refers to a kitchen, which is usually associated with feminine roles and to the fact that, for centuries, women could only occupy this private sphere and were excluded from public life.

Words expressing creative mental functioning, such as: “fantasize”, “dream”, and “inscribe”, make Sycorax the symbol of creativity. Such mental activities are associated with creativity, especially since Romanticism. According to M. H. Abrams (1934:ix) for instance, poets of that era used the dreams they had had under the influence of different narcotics, such as opium, as raw material for their poems. At the same time, Alethea Hayter (1988:334) notes that opium alone might not have been enough to create a poem such as those of the Romantics. In her view, both a tendency to day-dream and an ability to recall that trance-like state of mind and communicate the images seen in the trance are crucial in the conception of a poem. As for Sycorax’s creative powers and authorship, the expressions mentioned above make the poem sequence self-referential.

Finally, we may interpret Sycorax's words as a reflection on the voice she has gained. The poem cycle, being a reflection on artistic creativity and defiance, even in the time of old age, is a plausible path for our understanding, given the line: "I am not going quietly into that good night, am I?." (Namjoshi 8) This line is a paraphrase of Dylan Thomas' poem *Do not go gentle into that good night*. Both authors urge their lyrical subjects to make their voice heard, even when the time of death is close. The difference between the two lines lies in their modalities. While the title line in Dylan Thomas' poem is a command to the lyrical I to bravely accept death but reject silence, the line as asked by Sycorax is a question, as Sycorax cannot be sure whether her words - the fragmented poetry - she wrote on the sparrows' backs would ever be read by anyone; she can only hope for this.

5. Conclusion

This paper has given a brief overview of the Sycorax and / or witch figures in world literature. As we have seen, witches in history, like Sycorax herself, have always been represented as the marginalized 'Other', thus leading to their absence, or at least voicelessness, in master narratives such as *The Tempest*. If *The Tempest* is the dramatization of imperial dominance and the allegory of colonization, then this poem cycle is the dramatization of a post-colonial self, struggling for the authorship represented by telling one's life story.

In Namjoshi's cycle, Sycorax appears as a lonely old lady who understands the whisper of the wind and the song of birds. She tells her story at the end of her life. Through her authorship, she has de-colonized Prospero's universe by claiming *his* island as *hers*. Her authorship is

reinforced by intertextual references to iconic figures among both Western and post-colonial authors. Her dreams and fantasies are written in fragments, just like post-(modern)-colonial text, and are enscribed on the backs of sparrows, who are willing to take Sycorax's word for it that she has always been present in our cultural memories.

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READING LIKE THE JAPANESE: THE GOTHIC AESTHETICS OF HORROR IN SHAKESPEARE'S *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

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***Abstract:** Shakespeare's plays have been universally praised for centuries. However, *Titus Andronicus* was not included in this positive evaluation until the second half of the 20th century, when mainly feminist criticism contributed to an academically kinder re-assessment of this generally gory play. This paper, focusing on the issues of aesthetic value and the deletion of empathy, proposes a defamiliarized, a different reading of this Shakespearean play, from the perspective of the Japanese people, 'famous' for aesthetically enjoying the cathartic showing of gratuitous violence.*

***Key words:** aesthetics, alienation effect, empathy, Gothic, horror.*

Introduction

If Shakespeare were alive today he'd be hosting the 'Late review' and chairing a heated debate about who was better, Keats or Dylan. In his debate, Shakespeare would smugly remind his guests that Shakespeare provides the standard by which

all cultural evaluation is measured. If Shakespeare were alive today he'd be what he is: an impassable horizon protecting the Anglo-American world from anything resembling culture. He's the buffer-zone protecting the Anglo-American world from the claims of any writing that struggles to generate a new mode of perception or a new image of thought (everything is always already in Shakespeare), just as he provides the point of demarcation that delegitimizes any form of popular cultural expression (nothing is more popular both in sales and in the affections of the groundlings than Shakespeare). Shakespeare thus sustains the oppositional couplet, high-low culture, by being both and neither at the same time. Critical and cultural appropriations of Shakespeare, his name, work and myth, articulate multiple contradictory and conflicting positions within a given horizon. As such his fiction sustains a border that remains unstable, but also flexible within his large compass, site of the formation, reversal and dissolution of cultural values. (Botting and Wilson:194, emphasis added)

Following the line of hypothetical Shakespearean urges and self-evaluations expressed by Botting and Wilson in their *Gothic Shakespeares*, this study proposes yet another modality of perception for one particular play. Thus, it suggests that if Shakespeare were alive today, he would probably be sick and tired of centuries of adulation focused on his *oeuvre* in general but not on his first-born, *Titus Andronicus*. The Elizabethan playwright would most likely fume about the disparaged merits of the bloodiest of all his Roman tragedies and try to force us to perceive the carefully calculated effects of aesthetics above agony, beauty beyond blood, and charisma covering carnage. If Shakespeare were alive today, he would demand a fresh perception and maybe compel us to perform the journey to the East, to the Other, and see things through Japanese eyes.

In noticing the cycle of violence which is one of the staples of Japanese high and low culture as well as the crucial feature of *Titus Andronicus*, the present paper suggests a 'Japanese' reading of this

Shakespearean play. To this purpose, *Titus Andronicus* will not be read comparatively alongside a particular Japanese work/s. Rather, this study proposes placing the focus of interpretation on the issue of the *aesthetics of horror*, which, as will be argued below, is artistically achieved through a conscious *erasure of empathy* and an implementation of the *alienation effect*, processes that can also be discerned in Japanese culture at large.

About Gothic Aesthetics and its Relevance to the Subject Matter

Before proceeding with the text analysis, I would like to define the main theoretical framework, which is comprised in the subtitle of my paper, namely *Gothic aesthetics*. Adorno, in his well-known *Aesthetic Theory*, has written that:

Beauty is not the platonically pure beginning but rather something that originated in the renunciation of what was once feared, which only as a result of this renunciation – retrospectively, so to speak, according to its own telos – became the ugly. Beauty is the spell over the spell, which devolves upon it. The ambiguousness of the ugly results from the fact that the subject subsumes under the abstract and the formal category of ugliness everything condemned by art: polymorphous sexuality as well as the violently mutilated and lethal. (Adorno 1997:47)

Moreover, Adorno states, art cannot afford to “disavow remembrance of *accumulated horror*; otherwise its form would be trivial” (Adorno:324, emphasis added). If the negative and the horrific are to be kept as constitutive of aesthetics, it follows that aesthetics refers to a manner of perceiving which, in order to live up to its proclaimed aims – those of not merely establishing standards for evaluating artwork, but also pushing the

boundaries of pre-established responses – has to become an *experience*, “one which unnerves and disturbs” (Ng 2007:13).

The present study takes its cue from Adorno’s vision of what constitutes *aesthetics*; thus, it is designed to be read as the result of an incentive to comprehend what forms the aesthetic response when we approach a linked series of horrors almost gleefully related, like the ones in this Shakespearean tragedy. To re-formulate, I am interested in the aesthetic worth of the literary text and in the means of achieving it. Closely related to answering these tentative questions is also my suggestion that *Titus Andronicus* is a text informed by *Gothic aesthetics*. According to Ng, *Gothic aesthetics* is a composite of *literary aesthetics* (discussing the *Gothic-ness* of a text from the point of view of specific themes and motifs) and the *theoretical dimension* (i.e. employing contemporary theories, such as Marxist, feminist, poststructuralist and psychoanalytical ones) (Ng:15). Moreover, it is also “a mode of engagement with an artwork that involves emotional, evaluative and intellectual appreciation” (Ng:12). For this particular case, as my analysis will strive to argue, the category of *emotional* engagement is almost void and is deliberately displaced by those of evaluative and intellectual appreciation – unless, of course, one were interested in how much emotional effort and involvement it takes *not* to become emotionally involved.

Without entering into too many details at this stage, I am suggesting an assessment of the Shakespearean play as a (proto)Gothic text, chiefly for two reasons. Firstly, as Coral Ann Howells argues, “instead of a sense of stability and harmony what we find in Gothic fiction is a dreadful insecurity in the face of a contingent world which is entirely unpredictable and menacing” (quoted in Ng 2007:15). Secondly, as Stewart mentions, the

Gothic-ness of the text is artistically achieved by an “accumulated sensation of threat as the narrative progresses, indemnifying instead of muting its element of horror” (quoted in Ng:16):

Rather than cancelling the significance of the original event by displacing it, the horror story increases the event’s significance, multiplying its effect with each repetition. It articulates a paradox of reversibility and irreversibility in the given social shape of death. For while death is irreversible in the nonfictive world, in the horror story it may threaten an infinity of reversibility; it becomes the finale which is not final, whose limits are determined by its narrative possibilities (qtd. in Ng 2007:16)

Although both Howell and Stewart focus their discussion on Gothic fiction and horror story respectively, it seems obvious to me that the features which they mention and which are instrumental in assessing the *Gothic aesthetics* of a given text are also the most obvious qualities of this Shakespearean tragedy. Hence, my text analysis will concentrate on arguing for the *Gothic aesthetics* of *Titus Andronicus* and consequently on the *experience* of horror which is, in my opinion, the most significant staple of the text.

Why the Japanese?

When one is attempting to establish one of the many Others to the European Self, the Japanese are among the first who spring to mind. The Europeans and the Americans alike are still captive to the myth that the Japanese are a race so different from the rest of the world that an authentic perception of their values escapes even the most astute of observers. In this respect, Ian Buruma’s fine study, *A Japanese Mirror: Heroes and Villains of Japanese Culture*, while deconstructing such perceptions of alterity, offers a survey of a faraway culture and civilization through an analysis of its fundamental practices, both ancient and contemporary. Buruma discusses

essential figures that appear in literature, theatre and television, such as kamikaze pilots, geisha girls, samurais, and lonely, unruly heroes (*burai*) in search of adventures, in order to understand the ‘mystique’ of the Japanese soul or, to put it more simply, how the Japanese perceive and portray themselves.

In old plays and folk tales we find ghosts and spirits of betrayed wives who psychologically but most frequently physically torment their unfaithful husbands till they drive them to a ghastly and sadistic death (Buruma 2001:6). During the *matsuri* festivals (a rough equivalent of Latin carnivals and *fiestas*), which frequently escalate into real violence, standing on smouldering bonfires or wading stark naked through icy rivers in mid-winter are common practice for contemporary Japanese (Buruma:10). Oshima Nagisa’s 1976 film *Realm of the Senses* tells the story of a love affair between a gangster and a prostitute which ends with the man being strangled by his mistress during a shuddering climax, after which she cuts off his penis in a supreme gesture of ownership (Buruma 2001:50). The main feature of modern Japanese pornography is its overwhelming sadism; sadism as an extreme example of aesthetic cruelty was the principal characteristic of the decadent art of the late Edo period (mid-nineteenth century) as attested by the woodblock prints of Kuniyoshi and his pupil Yoshitoshi and the grotesquely violent paintings of Ekin (Buruma:54). In *Hitori Tabi Gojusantsugi*, Tsuruya Namboku’s Kabuki play, possibly inspired by the horrible act of the emperor Buretsu who ‘had the belly of a pregnant woman opened for an inspection of the womb’, a pregnant woman is tortured and cut open and her infant is tossed up in the air (Buruma 2001:54-55). As Buruma claims:

Aesthetic cruelty, in Japan as elsewhere, is a way of relieving fear, of exorcising the demons. Because female passion is thought to be more demonic than the weaker, male variety – it is she, after all, who harbors the secret of life – and because of her basic impurity and her capacity to lead men so dangerously astray, it is Woman who has to suffer most (55).

Titus Andronicus

Titus Andronicus, Shakespeare's first tragedy, is set during the latter days of the Roman Empire, although unlike the other Roman plays its sources are entirely fictional ones. It draws its substance from a cycle of revenge and a spectacle of endless mutilations, its protagonists being Titus, a Roman general, and Tamora, the dispossessed Queen of the Goths. Due to its overtly gory flavor, *Titus Andronicus* was for centuries marginal in the Shakespearean canon. The Restoration playwright Edward Ravenscroft suggested that Shakespeare's authorial contribution could only have included "some Mastertouches to one or two of the Principal Parts of Characters" and that the raw quality of the language made it "the most incorrect and indigested piece in all his Works [...] rather a Heap of Rubbish than a Structure" (Ravenscroft, quoted in Craig 2008:55). Richard Farmer comments in his *Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare* that:

Indeed, from every internal mark, I have not the least doubt but this *horrible* Piece was originally written by the Author of the *Lines* thrown into the mouth of the *Player* in *Hamlet*, and of the Tragedy of *Lochrine*: which likewise, from some assistance perhaps given to his Friend, hath been unjustly and ignorantly charged upon Shakespeare. (Farmer 1903:203)

In 1765, Samuel Johnson remarked that "the barbarity of the spectacles, and the general massacre which are here exhibited, can scarcely be conceived tolerable to any audience" (Johnson, quoted in Bate 1995:33). In the 19th

century William Hazlitt and Coleridge both doubted Shakespeare's authorship, while in the 20th century even such a Shakespeare *aficionado* as Harold Bloom expressed his negative view of the play, calling it "a howler", "a poetic atrocity", "an exploitative parody, with the inner purpose of destroying the ghost of Christopher Marlowe", "a blowup, an explosion of rancid irony" and concluding that "I can concede no intrinsic value to *Titus Andronicus*" (Bloom 1998:77-86).

Nevertheless, along with those who, disgusted by the goriness of the play, either doubted Shakespeare's 'paternity' of *Titus Andronicus* or remarked on its sub-standard literary features, there were also critical voices that sustained the very opposite, in emphasizing precisely the *barbarous* and/or the *Gothic* qualities of the play as indisputable proof of authorship. In 1762, Bishop Hurd, in his *Letters of Chivalry and Romance*, noticed an association between the 'Gothic' and the 'Shakespearean' which made Shakespeare an authentic inheritor of 'the Gothic system of prodigy and enchantment' (Hurd, quoted in Craig 2008:42). Writing seven years later, Elizabeth Montagu, in her *Essays on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*, was the first to call the author 'our Gothic bard' (Clery and Miles, quoted in Craig 2008: 43). In 1775, Elizabeth Griffith wrote:

I should suppose the intire Piece to be his [...] Because the whole of the fabric, as well as the conduct of it, is so very *barbarous*, in every sense of the word, that I think [...] he could hardly have adopted it from any other person's composition. (Griffith 1971: 403-4)

In the 20th century, prompted by the advent of contemporary literary theories which inspired a re-appraisal of canonical texts from new perspectives, the reputation of *Titus Andronicus* began to improve, especially for the reason that spectacles of violent and gruesome death and

torture are now unanimously acknowledged as staples, albeit problematical ones, of the Shakespearean corpus as a whole. As stated by Kott:

Titus Andronicus is by no means the most brutal of Shakespeare's plays. More people die in *Richard III*. *King Lear* is a much more cruel play. In the whole Shakespearean repertory I can find no scene so revolting as Cordelia's death. In reading, the cruelties of *Titus* can seem ridiculous. But I have seen it on the stage and found it a moving experience [...] In watching *Titus Andronicus* we come to understand – perhaps more than by looking at any other Shakespeare play – the nature of his genius: he gave an inner awareness to passions; cruelty ceased to be merely physical. Shakespeare discovered the moral hell. He discovered heaven as well. But he remained on earth. (Kott 1974: 281-2)

Moreover, *Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare, before the genius of Shakespeare reached its pinnacle; many if not all of the characters of this gory play are mere sketches for their sublime descendants. Thus, Titus' parental agonies foreshadow Lear's, Lucius – if only he had decided to enrol at the university at Wittenberg instead of fraternizing with the Goths in their camp – could have returned metamorphosed as Hamlet, Tamora – she most definitely is the precursor of the highly efficient Lady Macbeth, and as for Lavinia – her unawareness “of suffering” renders her a sister to Ophelia (Kott 1974:282).

True as Kott's remarks are, regarding both the amount of violence in *Titus Andronicus* and the exceptional qualities of the genius-in-former who penned it, modern readers and theatre-goers, in spite of being well-familiarized with and exposed to 'gore', still experience ambivalence in reconciling themselves to a play which draws its substance from rivers of blood. As Marshall claims:

[...] the Elizabethans had, like us, a penchant for gory entertainments [...] the correspondence of tastes is merely tautological when it comes to explaining the problematic appeal of this play's violence. To see the play as demonstrating the cycles of revenge, for instance, or offering the recuperative comfort of fantasy, or training its audience in acceptable responses to unimaginable grief – each of these approaches leaves the most basic question unanswered: why would an audience, any audience, enjoy *Titus*'s reiteration of violence against the human body? "Enjoy" may seem an odd verb to use here, since most viewers today will claim to appreciate the play *in spite* of its violence or alternatively to reject it *because* of the effects Palmer calls *horrific*. (Marshall 2002:107)

It is not my intention here to deny the obviousness of the *horrific*; nevertheless, it is my contention that we can read *Titus Andronicus* as an achievement in the *Gothic aestheticization* of horror, a complex process which, as will be argued below, is situated at the crossroads between the *formalization* of horror and the *annihilation* of emphatic reactions.

As has been pointed out by William T. Hastings, the world that *Titus Andronicus* recreates is a Renaissance world devoid of nuances, delineated by black and white, the basic chromatics that symbolise extremes (chastity versus lust, love versus hate). These extremes are designed to subvert the very idea of a moral code; instead, the play of instincts only focuses on complete self-sacrifice and unlimited revenge (Hastings 1942:117). Characters suffer from being depicted in terms of binary oppositions, in that they are assimilated to either supreme virtues or unspeakable vices, so that the audience feels compelled to disassociate itself from the events and protagonists on stage. Consequently, the very humanity of the characters is destroyed in the process, as they cannot be developed beyond their fulfilling of the function of classical echoes or "types" (Reese 1970:79). In this sense, the scene in V ii where Tamora and her two sons assume the allegorical roles of Revenge, Murder, and Rapine is representative for the dynamics of

characterization which inform the entire work (Reese:79). The *formalization of horror* can also be observed in the mirroring of words, phrases, scenes and images. Titus' entrance in Act I becomes a subject for parody at the opening of Act III where he begs for the forgiveness of his sons, ironically from the very same officials who had earlier celebrated him as Rome's savior. The scene in Act IV when the amputee Titus and his brother Marcus each bear the head of one of Titus' executed sons is mirrored in the scene where Lavinia gruesomely carries her father's severed hand between her teeth (Reese 1970: 80). Moreover, given the richness of the sources for this play, repetitions can be detected at the level of intertextual references; Shakespeare repeats Ovid, the midwife Cornelia repeats Cornelia of the Gracchi, and so on. As remarked by Laughlin Fawcett:

These flickers back and forth from one instance of a thing to another and from the figurative to the literal tempt us to speculate about the intersections of language and the body, and "art" and "life". (Laughlin Fawcett 1983: 268)

Apart from these echoes and instances of parody, the whole play is haunted by the spectral presence of the *hand*. Lavinia, the female victim, loses both of hers: Titus, whose hand had frequently saved Rome, loses one of his; his remaining hand he will use to "thump down" his heart "all mad with misery" (III. ii. 5-10); Lavinia is assigned the task of writing and identifying her attackers "Without the help of any hand at all" (IV. i. 70)

Besides the black and white chromatics that indicates the replacement of morality by the foul play of instincts, this binary opposition also denotes racial differences. As mentioned by Royster in *White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus*, the Moor Aaron and Tamora, his adulterous lover, the Goth Queen turned

Roman Empress, are black and hyperwhite respectively; moreover, the fruit of their adulterous liaison “appears as a kind of enhanced miscegenation, ultrablack crossed with ultrawhite” (Royster 2000:432). Although traditionally black is associated with ‘Otherness’, in *Titus Andronicus* it is Tamora’s extreme whiteness that marks her out as racially different and makes her into a different kind of ‘Other’, ultimately no less threatening to the Roman world than her black lover (Royster 2000:433). Saturninus’ reference to Tamora’s “hue”, his acknowledgement of her Germanic paleness and beauty, develops into a classical comparison of significant aesthetic value. Thus, he compares her with the pale goddess of the moon: “lovely Tamora, Queen of Goths, / That like the stately Phoebe ’mongst her nymphs / Dost over-shine the gallant’st dames of Rome” (I.i.315-320). Interestingly, Shakespeare appears to deconstruct complacency in automatically associating white with purity and beauty, by having Aaron, the black character, deride Tamora’s sons’ skin colour and the disadvantages this brings with it: “Why, there’s the privilege your beauty bears. / Fie, treacherous hue, that will betray with blushing / The close enacts and counsels of thy heart” (IV.ii.117-118). Instead, Aaron proudly seems to suggest that *his* skin colour matches up to the standards of beauty, conceived as fixed, ‘non-treacherous’, resistant and eternal: “Coal-black is better than another hue/ In that it scorns to bear another hue; For all the water in the ocean/ Can never turn the swan's black legs to white/ Although she lave them hourly in the flood (IV.ii. 98-102).

Arguably the character who resides at the very centre of Shakespearean horror is Lavinia, whose maimed body and blood disrupt the black and white moral and literal imagery on which the play rests. Critics have commented on her as lacking status and agency and attributed this to

her overexposure as a pornographic image, an aspect to which I will refer below. Reese comments that horrible as Lavinia's fate is, we do not feel for her as we feel for Desdemona; the former is a mere emblematic figure, a symbol of Injured Innocence, whereas Desdemona is a real woman (Reese 1970: 79). At first sight, in *Titus Andronicus* Lavinia is even less than a type or an echo. What sustains her scenic presence is a mere "gulf of silence" whereas her horrible mutilation "is granted its own fetishistic attraction" (Marshall 2002: 109) as it is not only aesthetic but aesthetic *and* useful at the same time. Marshall suggests that her being described as "trimmed" by Aaron (V.i.93) may be read as a reference to the process of cutting off "the excrescences", or it may signify "to make comely, adorn, dress up", "by way of suggesting a third, overarching meaning: 'To put into proper condition for some purport or use' (OED 11, 7, 2)" (109). Thus, Demetrius and Chiron perversely prolong the effects of Lavinia's seductive physical presence even after having raped her; in "trimming" her, they freeze her attractiveness. Lavinia's all-too-graphic martyrdom is all the more pertinent because of its resemblance to images of the early Church's saints and martyrs, which frequently juxtaposed mutilation and eroticism. Such images of unspeakable physical assault and torture perversely enhance eroticism, but also, as previously mentioned, annihilate it via overexposure. In Marshall's words, Lavinia is "so thoroughly undone by this overexposure that [...] she fails to acquire a sense of subjective identity altogether [...] she remains merely a sketch, a cartoon, an unfortunate image" (Marshall 2002:127).

In this play, Lavinia's mutilations are grotesquely aestheticized in a twofold manner, as we can read her amputated corporeality as either *work of art* or *text*. As *work of art*, Lavinia arguably fails to achieve agency since

the role she fulfils is that of a speechless emblem – she is made into “*a work of art* [...] designated to show the limits of art and artful language” (Murray Kendall 1989:306, emphasis mine). When whole, Lavinia was “Rome’s rich ornament” (I.i.52), but now her arms/ornaments are horribly absent and she is transformed by Marcus’ words “into a kind of Daphne caught halfway in the process of her metamorphosis and mutilated by a woodsman [whose] arms “are “branches” that cast “shadows” (Murray Kendall 1989:307). The *horrible aesthetics* of the present *un-whole* Lavinia is juxtaposed with the image of Lavinia as *whole*, a Lavinia of the past, with “lily hands” (III.ii.44) and capable of producing with her “sweet tongue” (III.ii.49) a “heavenly harmony” (III.ii.48). The now mute Lavinia is compelled to walk and her ghastly/ghostly presence demands an explanation for her stubborn persistence in the text. As previously mentioned, apart from her ascribed qualities as *work of art*, she is also *text*:

[...] a “map of woe” whom, like a map, we must learn to read. She is, in Blakean terms, a kind of vortex, a point of intersection between the inner and the outer, a space seeming at once both finite (and further delimited by her mutilation) and infinite (in the sense of value held within her). Especially, her muteness places her in the situation of the audience of the play: knowing what has happened, possessing both seed and names, and condemned to watch others fumble toward her truth. (Laughlin Fawcett 1983:265)

Since she is now truth dismembered, the story of her rape and mutilation as speculated on by Marcus becomes a textual collage; Philomela, Cerberus, Orpheus, trees, rivers and human bodies are blended in a “desperate effort to match what has happened with *artistic precedent*” (Murray Kendall 1989:308, emphasis mine). As a text, Lavinia is waiting to be deciphered by others, but she is also the *producer* of text, in so far as her efforts to reveal

the names of her rapists/torturers result in the creation of *meaning*. In inscribing Demetrios' and Chiron's names, this horribly mutilated character actually achieves agency and temporarily erases – ironically by writing names in the sand – the overpowering tones of helplessness and victimization that have so far traced the contours of her presence in the text. Thus, the character of Lavinia, far from representing generic 'woman destroyed' (in Simone de Beauvoir's words), is decipherable through the acknowledgement of the common features that she shares with the *generic* artist/writer. As Laughlin Fawcett explains:

In Lavinia we see the possibility for communication moving from the tongue to the pen/staff. Her mutilation makes her write. Speech may be silenced, but as long as the body can move at all, writing will out; it is the basic tool (literally and figuratively) of thought. Further, perhaps her situation itself, in its iconic quality, embodies the situation of the artist as he assimilates himself to his role: the writer giving words to others to speak, asking others to do revenge for his unspoken and unspeakable wrong. (Laughlin Fawcett 1983:266)

The audience's sinuous road towards establishing agency is a different matter altogether, if we do not take into account spectators' will to oblivion. As a theatre official reported laconically of the 1955 Peter Brook production: "At least three people pass out nightly. Twenty fainted at one performance. Ten swooned on Friday" (quoted in Marshall 2002:106). Obviously, in the act of approaching the Shakespearean play, such is the strength of *horror* imagery that in the attempt to come to terms with it, the reading or the viewing subject is not allowed his own agency. *Titus Andronicus* is characterized by a thorough *excess of lack* (missing body parts which figuratively reclaim the aesthetic space) as well as a carefully-

sustained effect of gender. I read this *excess of lack* as equivalent to an *aestheticization of horror*, a voluntary annihilation of the effect and decomposition of empathy assessable from within the framework of the Brechtian A-effect (Alienation effect). The source for the concept of the A-effect (or V-effect, from the German *Verfremdung*) which Berthold Brecht employed in order to interpret Chinese theatre was Russian formalist literary theory. It appears to be a precise translation of Viktor Shklovsky's term "priem ostranenniya" - "the device of making strange" (Brecht 1936:99). The concept itself and its creative severing of the emphatic links between the actors and the audience actually enhance the *aesthetic* perspective and its consequent estrangement from the moral dimension of any play to be assessed from this angle. As stated by Brecht in his 1936 essay *Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction*:

The dramatic theatre spectator says: Yes, I have felt like that too – Just like me – It's only natural – It'll never change – The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are inescapable. That's great art: it all seems the most obvious thing in the world – I weep when they weep, I laugh when they laugh.

The epic theatre spectator says: I'd never have thought it – That's not the way – That's extraordinary, hardly believable – It's got to stop – The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are unnecessary – That's great art: nothing obvious in it – I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh (quoted in Willett 1978:71).

It is a common misunderstanding that the defamiliarization which Brecht argued for is intended to construct an arctic, emotion-free zone. Rather, as Mumford points out, there are only some forms of empathy and identification that Brecht remains suspicious of, namely those which constitute themselves in "the tendency to believe these experiences familiar, real and normal rather than to ask whether they are the norm, and if so,

whether they should be” (Mumford 2009:63). The Marxist Brecht initially advocated *defamiliarization* as theatrical technique, *precisely* to achieve spectators’ or readers’ more active critical and social engagement. However, there are many ways of perceiving Brecht, as there are many ways of assessing Shakespeare. When considering the A-effect as the most effective reading strategy for Shakespeare’s tragedy, I am obviously more interested in a shifting of focus from content to form, i.e. to *aesthetics*. Such a perspective seems the most legitimate, given the presence of hardly any moral and/or empathic dimensions in *Titus Andronicus*. The play abounds in scenes which betray an obvious fracture from the possible, from the real. One of the most significant is built around the crippled figure of Lavinia and her attempts to convey the meaning of the horror that has befallen her to her uncle and her father. From Act Two onwards, with her tongue cut out and her hands cut off, Lavinia can but mime pain and suffering, as voice and gestures are denied to her. What is left is just the mute message of the eyes, the painful flutter of veiled hands, the shape, the walk. Hence, in the stage and screen adaptations of *Titus Andronicus* there is only one way in which the very improbability of life in a body thus mutilated can be conveyed, i.e. via what I consider to be a superb example of the famous Brechtian *Gestus* of showing. Brecht regarded *Gestus*, ‘the art of *showing that you are showing*’, as a “feature of many presentational performances, including the popular entertainment and Asian traditions” and “often cited fairground ballad singers, acrobats, Chinese actors, comedic performers as well as law-court witnesses as sources of inspiration for this ‘theatre of demonstration’” (Mumford 2009:59, emphasis mine). I am suggesting here that given her mute presence in the play and her performance that has to rely entirely on the negotiation of enforced silence, Shakespeare’s Lavinia brilliantly

embodies *Gestus* and thus may be read as an aesthetic product of the Brechtian concept of alienation.

Conclusion

The present study has aimed at a different reading of *Titus Andronicus*, by arguing that the extreme chain of violence and gore that designates its plot and characters can be approached in terms of *Gothic aesthetics*. As suggested at the outset of this analysis, *Gothic aesthetics* in this particular play relies on the *formalization of horror* – achieved through various literary devices, such as parallelisms, repetitions, mirrored characters and events, as well as on the *alienation effect* – which prevents the readers from experiencing empathy and identification with the characters' plight. In support of the above argument, the paper has proposed a voluntarily alienating reading of this Shakespearean play – a 'Japanese' one, based on the extremely strong emphasis on various acts of violence, torture, and disembowelment which, as maintained by Buruma in his study of contemporary Japanese culture, are among its most poignant characteristics. My reading, naturally, does not advocate an undifferentiated assessment of violence when present in reality or in fiction. In this context, I would like to end this short study by quoting Buruma's words, which, in my opinion, best summarize the theoretical basis of my analysis and the findings of such a *purely aesthetic* enterprise:

Respect for human life, dignity, the female body and all those other matters we are taught to take so seriously in the West, are taken seriously in Japan too, but not on the level of play. For once again, it is not the overriding principle people adhere to, but the proper rules of conduct governing human relations. One has no relationship

with an actress playing a part, or a character in a comic-book, so why ever should one feel any compassion for them? (Buruma 2001:223)

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**BREAKING STEREOTYPES: MALE VIEW OF THE FEMALE
PRINCIPLE IN RAJA RAO'S *THE CAT AND SHAKESPEARE***

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***Abstract:** In Raja Rao's novel The Cat and Shakespeare the existential quest of Pai, an Indian male, can be studied as mirroring that of Hamlet. However, Pai's progress consists in his resistance to the stereotyped power-imbued values of both 'Shakespeare's' and his own culture, i. e. those related to colonization, radical authoritarian nationalism, caste, species and gender, the last-mentioned being the focus of this paper.*

***Keywords:** cat, guru, house, Shakti, spiritual progress, stereotype*

1. Introduction

The beginning of Raja Rao's *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) finds Pai, one of the protagonists and also the narrator, just arrived in Trivandrum. Trivandrum, or Thiruvananthapuram, in Travancore (India), is a place on

which Rama, the protagonist of Rao's previous novel *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), focuses at the end of that work, his spiritual quest having been relatively unsuccessful up until then. What can nevertheless be considered a definite achievement is his awareness of the necessity, indeed an inner compulsion, for him to go to Travancore, which he calls "my country" (Rao 1960:410) and "my real home" (Rao 1960:411), and his identification with the place is accomplished when he calls it "my name". (Rao 1960:410)

Here then we have, at the beginning of *The Cat and Shakespeare*, Pai, a male protagonist who has just arrived in Trivandrum, Travancore, and who can be perceived as a kind of re-incarnation of or successor to Rama. Pai's reminiscences, which relate to the previous period of his life, seem to be preoccupied with two issues: one can be called 'an acquisition of a house' and the other 'a women's question'.

2. Pai's Spiritual Quest

In order to deal with the latter, which is the subject of this paper, we have first to understand more of the former: what the significance of the house, or of an acquisition of a house, is. Pai seems almost obsessed with the idea of a house, indeed with living in his own house. He repeatedly prays for the fulfillment of this wish/urge, being thus in tune with the worldview of Govindan Nair, his neighbour and guru, who claims that "[o]ur houses must look like us." (Rao 1965:6) Govindan also calls Shantha, Pai's companion and pregnant with his child, "by her house name as if her house were she." Pai is persuaded that "[i]n fact her house *is* she." (Rao 1965:21;emphasis mine.)

Thus, as I argued in an earlier paper, there is ample evidence in the

novel that ‘the house’ represents an “interior condition of man, a metaphorical space representing the potential of faculties for spiritual progress in terms of personality growth and making use of these faculties. This includes a highly active and meaningful interaction of the Self with the outside world.” (Volná 2010:299) This personal quest of Pai’s can be rightly viewed as reflecting Hamlet’s existential puzzle in the Shakespeare play.

If Pai, in his previous appearance as Rama, says “my real home” is in Travancore, then home, indeed the real home, apparently implies a house. When Pai arrives in Trivandrum he starts living in ‘a small new white house’ (Rao 1965:3), which symbolizes a modest but nevertheless a new beginning in terms of his personal growth or fulfillment. He considers this house his own even though he is not really its owner, and soon he starts craving and praying for a bigger one, more precisely a three-storied house, which he will himself build. He is thus well aware of an absolute necessity – and responsibility – for personal growth for himself. And it is only after he has been in Trivandrum for two years that he is capable of contemplating his previous situation.

2.1. Former Reality

At the previous place Pai lived with his wife Saroja and two children, their daughter Usha and their son Vithal. Clearly, at this place Pai’s interior well-being was challenged to the point that, as he openly admits, he struck Saroja. Not only so, but at this point in the narration, at the beginning of his spiritual-personal journey, he says “I struck my wife only twice and left marks on her face.” (Rao 1965:6) This is most certainly a representation of a savage male mind breaking a female body. How he puts it either accentuates the savagery, in the sense that he believes he should

have struck her more times, or can be understood as an expression of an extreme degree of interior frustration, the fact that he held himself back from giving her more blows. Pai's relationship with Saroja has, however, a still more profound significance.

Pai leaves this family behind. The family estate, the Kartikura house, where they lived together, he perceives as not belonging to him in any sense: firstly, it comes from his wife's family as their property, and now not only is Saroja its owner in the material sense but the house is a representation of her affairs and interests. Pai sees Saroja's significant traits as devotion to material riches and a stereotyped tradition-shaped vision of woman's position, and her presence as overwhelming:

Tangamma [Usha's teacher] was always telling [Usha]: Child, you have the fingers to make a nice braid. You will be a dutiful wife. My wife Saroja said: "Nice things for teachers to be talking of wives already." But that is the way with my wife. She cannot help all the time talking of the wife. I am a quiet man and to speak the truth I don't yet know what it is to mean husband. (Rao 1965:3)

To paraphrase the quotation above, for Pai the Kartikura house *is* Saroja, and it is so in more than one respect. Pai recalls having been taught that the god Shiva is supposed to occupy "the place of the heart" and therefore rightly asks, "[t]hen what is the place Parwathi [Shiva's wife] occupies? I sometimes wonder whether I have a heart." (Rao 1965:6) As concerns women Pai is at a loss, indeed lost, disappointed by his relationship with Saroja, and he has no clue as to what position woman should occupy in relation to him. In fact, Pai perceives this situation as unbearable heat – and then he strikes.

2.2. Stepping Forward

Now Pai starts living in a small white house in Trivandrum and perceives this as a liberation from the previous state of affairs and a new beginning. He believes in God and wishes for his guidance – he wants to build a big house. A neighbour, Govindan Nair, comes to see him, and Pai renders his entry as that of a cat: Govindan Nair, “the mixture of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Shakespeare” (Rao 1965:8), is a cat-like creature,

this big creature Govindan Nair leaps across the wall. That he is round and tall makes no difference to his movements [...] Then he would spread his fat legs on my bench, open his paws. (Rao 1965:8)

Why is Shakespeare mentioned as one of the two components of Govindan Nair’s personality? First, it is necessary to understand the significance of his cat-like appearance. Govindan Nair calls himself ‘a kitten which is carried by the cat’. (Rao 1965:8) The mother cat carries her kittens by the scruff of their necks, and thus this gesture represents kitten-like individuals’ total surrender and joy (Rao 1965:9) at being maternally cared for by a higher being, God. As to this aspect of Govindan Nair, Pai perceives that “[t]he fact is, to him *all the world* is just what he does. He does and so the world comes into being.” (Rao 1965:8;emphasis mine.) In some way or other, the whole world – and indeed the entire existence of each individual, as we will see in more detail below – can thus be seen as being encompassed.

Coming now to the significance of Shakespeare in the novel, Neelum Saran Gour (1993:1) mentions Raja Rao himself as being “singularly unclear” about the place the former actually occupies in his work, and “a certain critical discomfort” (Gour 1993:1) related to the interpretation of the

novel from this point of view. Examples such as “[H]ow are you, my lord and liege?” and “Better than if the kingdom were at peace and no wars anywhere” (Rao 1965:24) testify, as C. D. Narasimhaiah (1973:164) observes, to the presence of Shakespearean syntax and vocabulary. Apart from what is also much too obvious, i. e. the theatrical pattern of the dialogues in the novel and a paraphrase of Hamlet’s most famous soliloquy, “Shakespeare’s enigmatic identity in literature has been suggested as a parallel to the mystery of the Mother Cat” as related to *maya*, the Hindu concept of reality vs. illusion. (Gour 1993:1) This will be developed below; for the time being we can see it as related to Sudhir K. Arora’s (2007:161) mentioning of the symbolic significance of the ration shop in the novel as “the larger world, macrocosm of Malabar with Christians, Brahmin, Nair, and Muslim. For [Govindan] Nair the ration shop becomes ‘the kingdom of Denmark.’ [...] ‘He philosophises, saying’ - Arora quotes from the novel - “Shakespeare knew every mystery of the ration shop [...] We live in continual mystery.” (Rao 1965:81, 82.)

The Cat and Shakespeare is a complex and complicated work imbued with philosophical meanings which are not easy to elucidate. “Only a Nair can see right” (Rao 1965:40) says Pai. Govindan Nair belongs to a lower caste while Pai is a Brahmin, a member of the highest caste. Brahmins are supposed to know and teach *brahman*, all that is included within the socio-philosophical system of what is now called Hinduism, and yet Govindan Nair has at his disposal knowledge and abilities that surpass those of the Brahmins. Recognized for what he is by Pai, Govindan Nair teaches him – and others – and becomes Pai’s guru, a spiritual guide. Govindan Nair then, as someone aware of the need to be guided by the Cat, “the guru in the feminine aspect representing divine wisdom and Love,” in Raja Rao’s own

words (Rao 1992:128 cited by Alterno 2007:38), fulfills a double role. He is both (a) kitten and (a) cat, he both lets himself be guided and guides.

Clearly, Govindan is a bearer of values alternative to those embodied in what is called the great, Brahminical, mainstream tradition. The pattern of beliefs as preached by Govindan, a kind of counter-tradition within Hinduism by contrast with mainstream Shivaism and Vishnuism, is expressive of worship of *Shakti* and the Mother Goddess. *Shakti* is a cosmic female principle which endows the male gods with creative force or energy, Cosmic Energy, a force responsible not only for multiple representations of creation, but also for destruction. (Zbavitel 1993:62-64) Through the Mother Goddess, the embodiment of *Shakti*, the Absolute (God) moves into creation. It is thanks to this maternal energy of nature that both microcosm and macrocosm can be created, kept going and re-created.

In order for this circle of re-creation or rebirth to be kept going for individuals (the microcosm), they have to strive to make the spiritual progress which needs to be achieved before they can aspire to a higher level of existence. As Pai is guided by Govindan Nair towards this spiritual quest and its accomplishment, a kind of enlightenment, we will now analyze the ways in which his progress is reflected in relation to the feminine aspect as represented in the text. The feminine there becomes the protective maternal feminine and is embodied in the character of the cat, presented as both symbol, in the first part of the novel, and a real cat, in the second, and also in Shantha, Pai's female companion, his daughter Usha, and other female characters.

Pai does not follow the principal concepts of Hinduism, those traditionally recognized by Brahmins, which can thus be called 'male' or 'patriarchal' as 'Brahmin *houses* near the temple are dilapidated' (Rao

1965:116) while pursuing his spiritual/personal quest. Instead he chooses the cat-like Govindan Nair as his guru and Govindan's philosophy which runs counter to accepted values.

This is true in a number of respects. Firstly, as has already been clearly stated, it is Govindan, a Nair, not a Brahmin, who mediates the guidance, and the guidance itself is based on the *Shakti* concept, not on the worship of any male deity. Another breaking of a stereotype may be seen in the fact that the *Shakti* principle is expressed by an animal, and specifically by a cat, an animal despised by Brahmins. Creative aspects and activities become vital: the mother cat brings forth her kittens, and there are other females with whom maternal features are associated, Shantha and even Usha. Personal progress is symbolized by building houses, which, in turn, is contrasted with war and colonization: "Who cares if they have guns? We have sinews. You build empires. We build houses." (Rao 1965:27) 'The building of empires' and war are activities traditionally associated with the male part of humankind, 'the building' there being no more than a euphemism. This particular kind of greed for material and territorial profit and power is a capitalist value which not only destroys the houses of 'the others' but also runs counter to the capacity to construct one's own metaphorical house, i.e. to achieve any personal progress. (See Volná 2010) Thus power-related structures, which are all associated with destruction, are rejected, i.e. patriarchal order, speciesism, casteism, colonization and war.

The beginning of Pai's spiritual-personal quest as it starts in Trivandrum, in a new place and a new house, finds him wondering:

I developed a bad habit. I like women. Not that I like all sorts of women. I like woman, in fact. What is woman, you may ask. Well woman is Shantha. [...] Shantha is not just a woman, she is woman. (Rao 1965:20)

There are two women-companions in Pai's life, Saroja, his legal wife, and Shantha, who, in Pai's eyes, is a representation, an incarnation indeed, of a state of womanhood, of ideal womanhood.

Saroja is associated with patriarchal aspects and other power-related structures: as we have seen, she is in favour of the concept of a 'dutiful wife'. Capitalist values are extremely important for her, as "[s]he is busy inspecting the rope making [...] [F]or her fact is that which yields." (Rao 1965:29) at the cost of showing tender maternal concern for her daughter Usha. She even threatens Usha with being sent away with the 'Dutch' (the colonizers). Significantly also, Vithal, Pai and Saroja's son, stays with his mother while Usha moves to live with Pai. Vithal as the male offspring will inherit Saroja's property. Saroja, who knows how to "take" (Rao 1965:21), becomes a symbol of destructive values.

By contrast, "[Shantha's] giving is complete." (Rao 1965:21) With Shantha Pai's quest becomes possible, as "Shantha worships me and has herself." (Rao 1965:21) Pai realizes that it is only through caring for oneself – that is, through striving for individual personal progress, 'building one's own house' – that one can meaningfully project oneself into the surrounding world. Individuals have first to find and be firmly rooted in themselves in order to be able to go out towards their environment and thus also fully appreciate each thing in its own right. Only in this way can they have a clear vision of things. In short, it is only if individuals are rooted in themselves that they can be rooted in the world and find their place. While Pai realizes

he has not yet achieved this stage of personality growth, he is also aware that Shantha has done so.

Pai appears to be held back by the socio-religious stereotypes of his culture; he repeatedly states that Saroja is a Brahmin and he himself is too, while both Govindan Nair and Shantha are Nairs, people belonging to a lower caste. These latter two are not bound by Brahminical requirements; as has been mentioned above, they do not follow the Brahminical tradition: “they worship their mothers. [... Shantha is] not worried about marriage. I am a Brahmin. Shantha is not ashamed to be woman. I am afraid to be a man.” (Rao 1965:21)

Along the same lines, later on Pai recognizes that “[t]o be a wife is not to be wed. To be a wife is to worship your man” (Rao 1965:30), that is push forward your closest life companion. This is to be truthful. It is because Shantha is not ashamed to be woman that she worships Pai. On the other hand, Pai, being afraid to be a man, i.e. to be fully himself, to stand by his personality and indeed his identity, admits that “I worship nothing [...] I don’t think I care for anything.” (Rao 1965:21) There is as yet no reciprocity in this regard.

Apart from Shantha – and of course from Pai’s guru Govindan Nair – it is Usha, Pai’s daughter, whom Pai admires and recognizes as ‘being fully herself’: “Usha is the dearest thing in my life. She is my child. She is not merely that. She is child. [...] for me walking is Usha. When she sits it is sitting.” (Rao 1965:28) For his child Usha Pai buys a house, the first house he acquires as property. Usha is a child to become a woman.

The maternal care of the Divine Being, the Mother Goddess, becomes a crucial aspect in the novel and is represented by feline ways: “The kitten is being carried by the cat. We would all be kittens carried by

the cat” (Rao 1965:8) says Govindan Nair. From a certain point of view, the cat is the main character in the novel; being represented as ‘anticipation’ in the first part, as she is repeatedly spoken about by Govindan Nair, and as a real cat in the second, her maternal mission being accomplished when she gives birth to kittens and is recognized as a being endowed with abilities beyond those humans can understand.

It is the maternal aspect of both Shantha and Usha which is emphasized and celebrated by Govindan Nair, and Pai adopts the same attitude:

The wife is she who makes you the child. That is why our children resemble us men. [... Usha] loves her mother, who is Shantha, for Shantha is kind and will not talk of the Dutch [...] Mother is Shantha [...] Mother, I worship you. (Rao 1965:33, 64, 66)

When the children Shridhar, Govindan Nair’s son, and Usha meet they talk about marriage and the maternal aspect is emphasized in this context: “Usha got fever that night. She thought she was growing eggs.” (Rao 1965:63). Usha also behaves like a mother towards Shantha’s newborn baby. (Rao 1965:107)

3. Conclusion - Accomplishment

As Pai approaches the accomplishment of his spiritual-personal quest, the cat gives birth to her kittens, and this significantly coincides both with the birth of Shantha’s (and Pai’s) baby and with Pai having built a house two stories high. The accomplishment of Pai’s growth is symbolized by his venturing across a wall (this is yet another symbol) as ultimately led by the Cat: he thus feels *enlightened*:

That was the first time I went across the wall. I found a garden, all rosy and gentle. There were bowers and many sweet-smelling herbs, there were pools and many orchids that smelled from a distance. (Rao 1965:112)

In this garden the old men who represent the Brahminical tradition speak to no one, whereas

young men [...], children and women[,] sang or danced to no tune but to the tune of trees. Snakes lived there in plenty, and the mongoose roamed all about the garden. [...] The air was so like a mirror you just walked toward yourself. [...] I had also met some of my neighbors. [...]How is it that I never saw the others anywhere or when I saw them I did not know they were here, across the wall? (Rao 1965:112, 113)

Here, the point of accomplishment of the novel can perhaps also be perceived as a culmination of what Gour (1993:1) again calls “the perfect cohesion between the world-view offered by Rao and that present in Shakespeare”, namely, as has already been suggested above, that “[o]ne of Shakespeare’s foremost philosophic questions is that of the appearance or reality of the world”, expressed indeed as moving “between dream and delusion, between waking, sleep and death, between imagination and madness.” (Gour 1993:1) Not only does Pai find himself in this paradise environment, but it is through ‘seeing’ others that he recognizes his true self, hitherto hidden to him. He starts to feel at ease with others and with himself. This is only made possible through his ‘going out of himself’, through going towards ‘the other’, through ‘transcending’ the common obvious reality of everyday life and attaining a kind of ‘higher reality’.

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**TAMING THE HEART OF THE WILD: THE DOMESTICATION
OF WOMEN
IN JOHN FLETCHER'S *TRAGEDIE OF BONDUCA***

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***Abstract:** Fletcher's Bonduca is quite explicit in dealing with the patriarchal objective of domesticating the rebellious woman. Bonduca and her two daughters do not conform and so are sanctioned. They are portrayed as wild animals and marginal figures that have to be tamed, broken in through violence and rape in order to be re-integrated into the nation. When they refuse to be domesticated, their only option is suicide. However, this also stands as an allegory for taming the wild heart of England's colonial spaces.*

***Keywords:** Boadicea, Bonduca, Boudica, Caratach, Fletcher, gender.*

Introduction

John Fletcher's *Tragedie of Bonduca* was first presented to a London public by the King's Men sometime in 1613 or 1614 and stands as a record of the change in the status of women in Jacobean England. Not only is Bonduca,

the British queen of the Iceni, excluded by her cousin, Caratach, from the decision-making process of leadership, but she is also demoted as military leader and head of her family when Caratach assumes command of Bonduca's army and family, even taking their nephew, Hengo, into his care.

The play's title announces it as a tragedy whereas it actually belongs to the genre of romance. It is a Roman history play, based loosely on the rebellion of Boudica and her tribe against the Roman occupation of Britain in 60-61 AD, but, in a contrast with the historical accounts, this story ends in a reconciliation between Caratach, general of the Britons, and Suetonius, the Roman leader, following a Roman victory. The 'tragedy' of the play refers not to the Britons' military defeat but to the deaths of Bonduca, her two daughters, her nephew Hengo and other British and Roman characters. It is Bonduca's refusal to follow the honourable path of other women, a refusal which nearly ends in national annihilation, which is the real tragedy.

The two intersecting battle lines which separate the Romans from the Britons and the men from the women are represented as the antithesis between masculine Roman order and feminine barbarian chaos, and the play offers its spectators two equivocal messages (I say 'equivocal' because certain of the dialogues seem to express criticism of the dominant view). Firstly, it is implied that the new British empire under James I is imposing order and civilisation on the conquered peoples of Ireland and America, and on its own Celtic fringes, whereas the very notions of civilisation and barbarity are in fact questioned by the play. The second message apparently implies that female excess leads to the destruction and loss of the family and of the nation, whereas in reality gender roles are aired and opened up to debate.

Bonduca and her two daughters do not conform to the desired image of the perfect woman, which is one of obedience, docility and chastity, and so they are sanctioned. Fletcher's play is quite explicit in dealing with the patriarchal objective of domesticating the rebellious woman. Here the women are portrayed as wild animals and marginal figures that have to be tamed, broken in through violence and rape in order to be re-integrated into the nation. However, Bonduca and her daughters refuse to be domesticated and choose suicide rather than slavery; they may well represent subjects who have got away. This article examines these ideas.

The clearest reference to the role of women is when Caratach shouts at Bonduca for her bad military judgement and tells her to return home:

Caratach. Why do you offer to command? the divell,
 The divell, and his dam too, who bid you
 Meddle in mens affairs?

Bonduca. I'll help all.

Caratach. Home,
 Home and spin woman, spin, go spin, ye trifle.

Exeunt Queene and Daughters

III. v. 132-5

The dialogue above demonstrates male anxiety over powerful women and shows the male protagonist of the play pushing Bonduca and her two daughters back into the domestic sphere of the home. The reference to the devil and his mother further implies that women who meddle in the public affairs of men are motivated by evil impulses which come from the wild

side of their nature. Yet just as the historical Boudica was given a regiment of women to lead in Boece's Scottish account of Boudica's rebellion (Boece 1540: The feird buke, fo. cli), so too is Bonduca in Fletcher's play:

Caratach. Come, worthy Lady,
 Let's to our several charges, and henceforth
 Allow an enemy both weight and worth.

I. i. 186

It is of passing interest to note the double sense of the word 'charge' here. In fact, both Caratach and Bonduca have military responsibilities and regiments with which to charge the enemy but they also have their children to look after (Bonduca has her two daughters and Caratach their nephew). Yet within the course of the play Bonduca is shown to be an incompetent and irresponsible war leader, not to mention a poor mother. She is not "a conqueror" (I. i. 123) but "a talker" (I. i. 24) whose gender disqualifies her from understanding military strategy. The war tactics of Bonduca and her daughters are determined by sexual traps and treachery, which Caratach calls "a woman's wisdom" (III. v. 67). Not only is Bonduca ignorant of the rules of war, but she is assigned complete responsibility for Britain's defeat when Caratach, outraged by her inexplicable error of judgement, cries out:

Caratach. Charge 'em i'th' flanks: O ye have plaid the fool,
 The fool extremely, the mad fool.

Bonduca. Why Cosin?

Caratach. The woman fool. Why did you give the word
 Unto the carts to charge down, and our people
 In grosse before the Enemie? We pay for't,

Our own swords cut our throats: Why? ----- on't,

III. v. 126-131

Initial British successes are attributed to Caratach's sound military judgement, and defeat comes only when Bonduca uses her own initiative. In Caratach's soliloquy at the very beginning of the fifth act, which is dominated by him following Bonduca's death, he lambasts Bonduca for her treacherous leadership in the final battle which has effectively led to defeat in the war and to the destruction of the nation and of the very fabric of society with the loss of an entire generation of men:

Caratach. O thou woman,
Thou agent for adversities, what curses
This day belong to thy improvidence?
To *Britanie* by thy means, what sad millions
Of widows weeping eyes? The strong mans valour
Thou hast betraid to fury; the childe's fortune
To fear, and want of friends: whose pieties
Might wipe his mournings off, and build his sorrows
A house of rest by his blest ancestors:
The virgins thou has rob'd of all their wishes,
Blasted their blowing hopes, turn'd their songs,
Their mirthful Marriage songs to Funerals,
The Land thou hast left a wilderness of wretches.

V. i. 3-15

Sadly, Bonduca's widowhood, which had opened the door to her emancipation and power as a woman, raises the proleptic spectre of a nation

destabilised by female rule and defenceless against enemy attack. Britain is now a land of lost souls, and this, according to Jodi Mikalachki, would have been Boudica's legacy to Britain if she had been victorious against the Romans. It is also a legacy that left its mark on British history: "the fear of collapsing into such grotesquely feminized savagery is Boadicea's legacy to early English nationalism" (Mikalachki 1998:15). Such women need to be put down, put back into their place, and in this play naming seems to be a significant factor in this process. For example, Bonduca's name may feature as the title of the play, but it is rarely mentioned. Instead her name is frequently replaced by generic insults such as "woman fool" (III. v. 128).

Bonduca's position of national leader and heroine is further undermined by her presentation as an unnatural mother. She is shown to be harsh and infanticidal when she forces her second daughter to commit suicide. Both Suetonius and the second daughter herself plead with Bonduca in an attempt to save her life:

2. *Daughter.* O perswade her, Romanes:
 Alas, I am young, and would live. Noble mother,
 Can ye kill that ye gave life? are my yeers
 Fit for destruction?

Suetonius. Yeeld, and be a Queen still,
 A mother, and a friend.

IV. iv. 93-96

Caratach, on the other hand, is represented as a protective maternal figure for Hengo. In the initial stage directions in Fletcher's foul papers Bonduca enters with "(*hir Daughter*) **Hengo:** (*hir Sonne*) **Nennius :&**

Soldiers” (Fletcher 1951:2 & Preface xiii). She was thus originally Hengo’s mother. This was later amended to “aunt” and her daughter was given a sister. We can say, then, that Caratach was later chosen by Fletcher to play the maternal role towards Hengo in order to create a binary opposition between the destructive motherhood of Bonduca and the caring motherhood of Caratach. Of Caratach’s role Mikalachki notes: “Caratach takes on the maternal role [...] His whole concern in this last act is the nursing and feeding of the boy, Hengo, who is dying of sickness and hunger after the British defeat. Caratach’s language to the boy is tender and protective” (Mikalachki 1998:105).

The appropriation of the maternal role by Caratach effectively reverses the traditional gender identities of the sexes. In this play Bonduca may be the Queen Mother but it is really Caratach who is the king and, like James, “the new loving nourish father” to his people (Orgel 1990:119-39). Catherine Belsey also makes an interesting point when discussing the “recurrent disappearance of mothers from interpretations of the fifth commandment [honour thy father and thy mother]” during the Jacobean period, when the emphasis was laid more on the father as the head of the family and of the state which effectively excluded any authoritative place for wives (Belsey 1985:158).

However, two points need to be added. Firstly, Bonduca refuses to charge the enemy’s lines until she knows where her daughters are and that they are safe (III. v. 55-56). Secondly, Bonduca and the first daughter invoke suicide as the only means to protect their honour from the charge of whoredom (IV. iv. 96-97) and in order to protect them from further rapes (IV. iv. 110-111). With these arguments the second daughter finds the courage to kill herself. Although both Bonduca’s and Caratach’s roles end

in the death of their children, we witness once again the exclusion of women from their maternal role.

In the literary texts of the time those women who did not conform, the ones who refused to be brought into the home, were punished; they were pushed to the margins of society as witches, Amazons or wild animals, where they had to be broken in through violence in order to be re-integrated into the nation through marriage. Those women who did conform to the respectable image of feminine honour displayed an image of obedience, silence and sexual purity, traits which are lacking in both of the daughters in *Bonduca* because of their rebellion and their having been raped. Unfortunately for them, the chaste and honest woman had to appear to be so, and she herself was responsible for protecting her reputation. Little sympathy is shown for the daughters' having suffered rape and they are shown more as a threat to male control and national security. This is transparently clear when Bonduca's second daughter says to her uncle, Caratach: "We will have vengeance for our rapes" (III. v. 69). To which he replies: "By ____/ You should have kept your legs close then" (III. v. 70).

Accused of implicit compliance, rape victims in the literary texts had only one recourse to prove non-complicity: suicide. At the end of this play Bonduca's first daughter refers to two Roman ladies, Lucretia and Portia, who had killed themselves for this reason (IV. iv. 115-119), after which she too commits suicide. Another reference can be found in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, in which Lavinia, who has been raped by Tamora's sons, is unable to commit suicide due to the mutilation of her body, but she still has to die in order to save her honour, and so it is her father who stabs her in the final scene of the play:

Titus. Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee;
 And with thy shame thy father's sorrow die!

V. iii. 46-47

Here, it is not just Lavinia's shame or honour which is at stake but also that of her family name. This is clearly recognised by Junius in *Bonduca* when he falls in love with Bonduca's second daughter and says to himself: "But to love there .../Mine honour dare not ask: shee has been ravish'd" (II. ii. 33-4). Because of the loss of her honour through rape Junius knows that he should not fall in love with Bonduca's daughter or his own honour will be compromised. Such 'dishonoured' or 'dishonourable' women are represented as wild animals, savages and marginal figures.

Bonduca and her daughters feed into the social idea of the disobedient woman as something wild and free that has to be controlled. In *Bonduca* we learn that the attempt to tame the female characters has already occurred before the opening of the play; Bonduca has already been flogged by the Romans: "they abus'd me" (I. i. 146), which is the only reference to her historical whipping, and her two daughters have been raped. The reference to the second daughter as "crackt i' th' ring" (I. ii. 271) may be a reference to her loss of mental balance, but its primary meaning is the loss of her virginity through rape. A 'ring' in early modern English had several meanings, of which two are applicable here: the ring as the female vagina and the ring as the *gyrus*, a training ring for breaking in horses. Not only has she been "crackt" open by rape but she has also been broken in like a horse.

The notion of rape as a crime is ambiguous in a number of the Jacobean plays. In law it was certainly a crime but in the literary texts of the early modern period rape could prove a man's virility and/or his position of

power within his community, as it does for Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Theseus, the Duke of Athens, has won Hippolyta's love after defeating her in battle:

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

I. i. 7-9

The “injuries” refers to Theseus's rape of the Amazon queen. Their fight and the defeat of Hippolyta through rape seems to symbolise the ritual passage of a female into marriage and thus into womanhood. Traditionally, marriage was seen as domesticating the Amazon woman by integrating her into society (Macdonald 1988:6). This seems to be the case in a number of Fletcher's chastity plays too, although Nancy Cotton-Pearse inserts a degree of warning into this interpretation of Fletcher's plays when she writes “that some component of the so-called Elizabethan world picture has been lost to us, and that this loss makes us unable to see the didactic qualities in the Fletcherian plays”. Certainly the initial critics of Fletcher's plays commended them for their didactic benefit in teaching correct and virtuous behaviour to the two genders. It is, of course, surprising that in some of the early modern plays the rape victim is held responsible for her own rape, as we saw earlier in the passage in which Caratach tells his niece that she should have kept her legs together. Such rape victims had only two courses of action open to them: suicide, or marriage to their rapist.

In Fletcher's *The Queene of Corinth* (1617) another rape victim, Merione, should traditionally plead for death but instead pleads for marriage when she says to Theanor:

You have had your foul will; make it yet fair with marriage;
Open your self and take me, wed me now.

II. i.18

Following Cotton-Pearse's analysis of this play we can concur with her view that "Merione is a Christianised Lucrece in that she does not contemplate suicide as a remedy for rape" (Cotton-Pearse 1973:163). Instead she intends to "live a poor recluse Nun" until she dies or "till Heaven shall ... send me comfort" (II. ii. 25). The "comfort" in question would be eventual marriage to the man who had raped her (Cotton-Pearse 1973:162). Even if marriage did not save them from the charge of complicity at least it saved their honour, their place in society and their lives.

However, here, in *The Tragedie of Bonduca*, the first daughter invokes suicide as the only choice. Furthermore, the deaths of the female victims are seen as acts of heroism and defiance against the male conqueror. The daughter's speech is particularly challenging in this respect:

Generall,
Hear me, and mark me well, and look upon me
Directly in my face, my womans face,
Whose onely beautie is the hate it bears ye;
See with thy narrowest eyes, thy sharpest wishes,
Into my soul, and see what there inhabits;
See if one fear, one shadow of a terrour,
One palenesse dare appear but from my anger,
To lay hold on your mercies. No, ye fools,
Poor Fortunes fools, we were not born for triumphs,

To follow your gay sports, and fill your slaves
With hoots and acclamations.

IV. iv. 50-61

Their suicides will protect them from Roman ‘triumphs’, from further rapes and armed conflict, for death is a place “where no Wars come,/ Nor lustful slaves to ravish us” (IV. iv. 110-110). As a rejection of her place as controlled subject, a woman’s suicide, as analysed by Catherine Belsey, was “paradoxically, the supreme assertion of both the autonomy of the subject and the sovereignty of the social body” (Belsey 1985:124). The literary critic Peter Berek even suggests that the powerful women in the Beaumont and Fletcher plays functioned as a challenge to Jacobean absolutism (Berek 2002:359-377).

A further interpretation of the two battle lines, between the Romans and the Britons and between men and women, could link them to the Jacobean debate about England’s own colonial ambitions in the British Archipelago Isles and the Americas. Taming the rebellious woman is an allegory for taming the heart of the wild, that is, the colonies and the colonised too. In Fletcher’s play Britain’s integration into the Roman Empire stands primarily as an allegory for Welsh integration into England. If Wales holds a significant place in the Roman plays of the period we may add that Ireland is the subtext and the sparring ground for penetration into the Americas. Yet relations with the native population could also be dangerous and could threaten the identity of the coloniser. For example, intermarriage between the coloniser and the colonised, as envisaged by Junius, the Roman captain, when he falls in love with Bonduca’s younger daughter, could submerge the identity of the occupying forces and lead to a loss of reason and a return to a more primitive state. When Junius falls out

of love with Bonduca's daughter he cries: "I am my self" (III. v. 126), for he has recovered his mental faculties.

Contact with native women is represented as something which could lead to degeneracy and a loss of military judgement, as shown in Petillius's necrophilic desire for Bonduca's first daughter, now dead:

Petillius. What do I ail, i' th' name of heaven? I did but see her,
And see her die: she stinks by this time strongly,
Abominably stinks: she was a woman,
A thing I never car'd for: but to die so,
So confidently, bravely, strongly.

V. ii. 1-5

Junius mocks Petillius's wandering mind by saying:

Observ'd him,
And found him taken, infinitely taken
With her bravery: I have follow'd him,
And seen him kisse his sword since, court his scabbard,
Call dying, dainty deer; her brave minde, mistriss;

V. ii. 89-93

Read in this light, Fletcher's play is somewhat ambivalent. The refusal of the female characters to be tamed, a refusal which results in their deaths at the end of Act Four, can be interpreted as a stand for female independence and as a challenge to absolutism but also as a stand for colonial, or ethnic, freedom, for individual freedom or even for Protestant activism against the Roman Catholic threat. Clearly, the narrative of

Bonduca is not simply one of gender conflict; it is also one of native resistance to empire. The play includes a colonial message for the contemporary Jacobean audience, for inscribed in the play there is a certain questioning of the ethics of colonial ambitions. The new 'British' empire under James I is seemingly imposing order and civil ways on the conquered peoples of Ireland and America, whereas, in fact, the very notions of civilised and barbarous are something this play calls into question.

The stage onto which such ideas were projected in the early modern period was that of the female body, emblem of the earth and of new lands waiting to be opened up and cultivated. In Fletcher's play the Roman soldiers' rape of the two British girls contains these further meanings; the conquest of their bodies represents the conquest of virgin territory and its integration into the Roman Empire. And yet with the ambiguity of Fletcher's play the treatment of unruly women, and their heroism, is equally an allegory for indigenous resistance – and for its suppression.

A significant aspect of *Bonduca's* resistance to her Roman aggressors is that of her death oration before her Roman conquerors. Despite *Bonduca's* occlusion from the play at the end of Act Four, the playwright's treatment of her is not unsympathetic. Her speech is certainly an enigma within such a written ovation to masculine supremacy. Here I include a part of it. When Suetonius tells her that she "must adore and fear the power of *Rome*", and that she "cannot scape our strength" (IV. iv. 14-15) she replies:

'tis fitter I should reverence
The thatched houses where the Britains dwell
In careless mirth, where the blest household gods
See nought but chaste and simple puritie.

'Tis not high power that makes a place divine,
Nor that the men from gods derive their line.
But sacred thoughts in holy bosoms stor'd
Make people noble, and the place ador'd.

IV. iv. 19-26

In spite of Caratach's criticism of Bonduca, she possesses courage and a very clear-sighted patriotism and love of her country, which stands in contrast to Caratach's equivocal love of Britain and his admiration for the Romans. What is more, this speech holds a contemporary message, both religious and political, for Jacobean England. It clearly includes the Protestant values of home, chastity and purity, but its anti-absolutist message: "'Tis not high power that makes a place divine,/Nor that men from gods derive their line," would not have been lost on an audience living under a king who did believe he was God's elect on earth and, what is more, a king who had certain Catholic sympathies, including a wife newly converted to Catholicism.

However, such an anti-absolutist message would also have shocked contemporary audiences, particularly that of the court itself. Another reading of Bonduca's speech may suggest that Fletcher is criticising her insularity. She is represented as an insular Briton in the debate over a united 'Great Britain' (England, Wales and Scotland). Despite this she still emerges as a national icon, proposing a nation of people in opposition to Caratach's vision of territorial amalgamation with Rome. We can say that Bonduca's death even saves British honour and shows that British patriotism has not been tamed.

Following the suicide of Bonduca's daughters Suetonius still pleads with Bonduca to surrender by offering her terms of her own choice (IV. iv. 138). Refusing these, she embraces her end, even claiming victory in death:

Ye should have ti'd up death first, when ye conquer'd
Ye sweat for us in vain else: see him here,
He's ours still, and our friend; laughs at your pities;
And we command him with as easie reins
As do our enemies. I feel the poison.

IV. iv. 142-146

Such exchanges stand for allegories of territorial consolidation, unity and national identity as primitive Britain is absorbed, tempered and civilised by the Roman Empire. Caratach's British embrace of the Roman enemy, the coloniser, the other, at the end of the play represents an initiation into civilisation and the construction of a national identity, but its rejection, the position chosen by Bonduca, leads to death or the loss of self-identity in the wilderness.

In this tragedy, just as Bonduca dies, Decius, a Roman commander, enters to announce to Seutonius: "'Tis won, Sir, and the Britains/ All put to th' sword" (IV. iv. 154). The reconciliation in the play only takes place in the final act once the British resistance has been destroyed. If this is an allegory for 'British' imperialism in Ireland and the Americas, can we say that the English nation was really integrating the conquered peoples into 'civilisation' through violent subjugation followed by reconciliation and education, or were they, the English colonisers, themselves the barbarians? Fletcher's play does seem to question the ethics of conquest and the role of

England in the new world order, as well as looking at masculine honour and the subjugation of women.

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FEMALE FETISHISED DEATHS IN JACOBAN TRAGEDY

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***Abstract:** I explore the violent deaths of Jacobean heroines on stage, looking at their fetishised dead bodies as a register of male repressed fear of women's physicality that is perceived essentially as the equation between womb and tomb. I argue that this fetishisation is a hegemonic effort to combat this fear through the consigning of the heroines' bodies to utter destruction. However, there is a residue left from the dialectic of death and desire that runs through Jacobean tragedy and sexualises the political issue of tyranny. The heroines' violent deaths, while not expressing heroic transcendence, mark the ultimate self-destructiveness of patriarchal politics.*

***Keywords:** cultural materialism, feminist theory, Jacobean tragedy, psychoanalysis.*

Introduction

In Thomas Middleton's *The Maiden's Tragedy* (1611), the Tyrant commits necrophilia on the virtuous Lady's corpse, which has been snatched from her grave by his soldiers: the Lady returns as a ghost to complain that

even death is unable to protect her chastity from his lust. She says of the Tyrant that he:

Weeps when he sees the paleness of my cheek,
And will send privately for a hand of art
That may dissemble life upon my face
To please his lustful eye. (Middleton, *The Maiden's Tragedy* 1998:217)

The corpse's face is painted with poison by her fiancé, the deposed King, Govianus, and upon kissing it the necrophiliac Tyrant dies. In Middleton's *Revenger's Tragedy* (1606), the gaping mouth hole in Gloriana's skull is painted with poison by her lover, Vindice, and (once again) upon kissing it the Duke dies, thus meeting with exactly the same kind of death that he had inflicted upon her for not submitting to his lust. In John Marston's *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* (1606) a Libyan king, Syphax, the rival of Sophonisba's husband Massinissa, another king in the same country, is threatening to have sex with her dead body should she commit suicide, something that she eventually does by drinking poisoned wine. The villain, in a further attempt to seduce the virtuous heroine, unwittingly commits the heinous sin of having intercourse with a devil in female form, the necrophiliac witch Erictho, whose terrifying sexuality signifies evil, sin and corruption. In John Fletcher's *The Tragedy of Valentinian* (1614), the tyrant Valentinian rapes the chaste Roman matron Lucina, whose suicide provokes tyrannicide in a tragedy that offers a rare instance of a second tyrannicide within the same play: on his enthronement as the new emperor, Lucina's widower Maximus is murdered - by a woman this time, Valentinian's widow Eudoxa. This is a weak reminder of an earlier female

tyrannicide, Evadne, in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* (1611), who carved her royal lover's body in bed as in sadomasochist foreplay. In John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613) the Duchess' dead body lies horizontally at the mercy of the erect Ferdinand's imperious gaze in a tableau that genders power positions in a typical manner. However, her tyrannical brother's "eyes dazzle" (Webster 1995 [1972]:260) at the site of his own incestuous desire that eventually turns him into a werewolf roaming through the churchyard carrying dead people's legs on his shoulders. His lycanthropia symbolically re-inscribes him as a beast (he crawls on all fours), while, at the same time, his obsession with corpses prefigures necrophilia. In *The Insatiate Countess* (an unfinished play by John Marston, 1610), the nymphomaniac Isabella is executed for her promiscuity in the only scene of execution actually shown on the Jacobean stage, while her second husband kneels and embraces her body on the scaffold.

In all these tragedies written around 1610, and in several others, there are a number of recurring patterns that I see as signifiers of the psycho-political text about subjection which the dramatists construct on stage. This text clusters around a tyrant's sexual violation of a woman or the endangering of her chastity, in rape and necrophilia, female suicide and violent death, but also the thing after, which for lack of a better term I call the revenant. In this sense, although *The Insatiate Countess* is paradigmatic of the male fear that sexual desire ascribes agency to women, this being the crime for which Isabella must be executed in public, it does not strictly fall within my scope. What I want to examine is not so much the staging of the heroines' violent deaths as what happens afterwards in terms of the specific forms in which tyrannical politics is

both reproduced and challenged by the dead female body. I premise that in the absence of physical femininity on the stage cross-dressing de-naturalises femaleness by underscoring the constructed character of gender, thus appealing to male spectators' homoeroticism. At the same time it functions as a mere convention and as such becomes so familiar as to be "naturalised" in the context of the theatrical spectacle.

Thanatos and Eros in Jacobean Drama

Sophonisba, the Lady, Evadne, Antonio's wife in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and Lucina all commit suicide after lives in which they have been passed around among men for the establishment of homosocial bonding, masculine political dominance, and above all the preservation and inflation of male ego narcissistically transcribed as honour. In *Sophonisba* the senators of Carthage give the eponymous heroine as a gift to Syphax and then to Scipio for his Roman triumph. Sophonisba refuses to accept her objectification as booty to adorn a triumph and poisons herself. Both *The Maiden's Tragedy* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* centre on a woman's poisoned body (the Lady's corpse and Gloriana's skull respectively) as a terrain that offers the spectacle of male politics of revenge. Govianus and Vindice become tyrannicides, each of them asserting his political agency over and through the corpse of his betrothed. These acts of heroic assertion in the face of tyranny are considerably qualified by the Lady's and Gloriana's symbolic prostitution by their own lovers after death. In reality Govianus and Vindice function as the procurers of their adorned corpses by using painting to sexually lure the two royal rapists into suffering violent deaths by their own hands.

However, there is nothing heroic about female suicide, no assertion of individuality in the face of death, but rather simple annihilation. Because women's subjectivity is constructed on the basis of the principle of chastity, suicide emerges as a masochistic means of self-assertion that is essentially an act of self-annulment. Irrespective of whether these women have been raped or not, all of them must die. Their survival would signify the acceptance of whoredom as the only available position for unchaste femininity and at a deeper level the need for a painful restructuring of their "subjectivation". In Judith Butler's reading of this Foucauldian notion as a process that is "bound up with subjection" she argues that subjectivation nevertheless allows "resistance to regulation or to the form of subjection that regulation takes" (Butler 2000:151). Faced with the dominant practices of female subjection, which identify existence with chastity however self-destructive, these suicidal heroines opt for death both as submission to patriarchal regulation and as resistance to that very regulation. This is a "solution" that whoredom cannot afford; nor can it offer the same promise of eternal fame as does the exemplary womanhood pre-conceived by male gender ideology.

The tragedy of the Jacobean period emphatically inscribes this specific form of its heroines' entrapment in the male ideological hegemony that has persuaded the female subject that there is no existence outside it. Only by completely denying their bodies can these heroines acquire a place in a cultural hypertext that represents women's physicality as a dangerous materiality deeply threatening to men. This renunciation is celebrated by the male authors as that which returns from the grave, the dis-embodied woman is idealised precisely because she no longer poses a threat to masculine "wholeness": a

ghost, a skull, a voice or an echo, a “wife’s voice” (Webster 1995 [1972]:282), “a dead thing” (Webster 1995 [1972]:283). “Therefore she must not live” is Maximus’ callous appraisal of his raped wife’s life (Fletcher 1998:276). Good wives are dead wives, because the traits most appreciated in virtuous wifedom, that is, “silence, coldness, containment and passivity—bear a striking resemblance to the traits of the dead” (Watson 1999 [1994]:31). Hence we have another dramatic motif, that of women as sepulchers and marble, that is, as objects that are cold and solid, therefore eternally chaste and silent, whereas living women are ascribed fluidity. As Elisabeth Bronfen argues, “[i]f the living woman is unstable because ambivalent in her meaning, seemingly dissimulating (adulteress, saint, both, neither), her death affords somatic fixture, resolves the lies and intrigues with which her existence was inscribed” (293). The sepulcher reassures men of women’s constancy precisely because it marks the ideal cessation of their oscillation between the two extremes: those of the virgin and of the whore. As a paradigm of the masculine wish for an attainable ideal of female sexuality, Sophonisba dies a “virgin wife”, an oxymoron most emblematically staged by Marston in the use of the curtained bed-sepulcher ready for a marital consummation that is never completed.

The heroines’ objectification is verbally registered in metaphors that suggest the immortality they achieve as monuments of chastity. For Govianus the Lady is a “treasure of mankind”, “a jewel” (Middleton, *The Maiden’s* 1998:202) and a “Temple of honour” (Middleton, *The Maiden’s* 1998:215). After her death the Duchess of Malfi is transformed into a “figure cut in alabaster” (Webster 1995 [1972]:193). As a monument of female martyrdom she is eternally fixed into that position of sexlessness that she fought against as

a young widow who asserted her claims to physical pleasure in her secret marriage to Antonio. For her cynical husband, Maximus, Lucina's suicide will secure her a place in eternity through her tomb: "all that is chaste, upon thy tomb shall flourish, / all living epitaphs be thine" (Fletcher 1988:276). As a raped wife she has no place in the social order because her loss of chastity reflects on his honour, the structural principle of early modern masculinity. In a typical instance of chastity as constitutive of a male ego that feeds on homosocial bonding Antonio exhibits his wife's dead body to the full view of other lords as "a fair comely building" that fell when it was undermined by "violent rape" (Middleton, *The Revenger's* 1988:91). His assessment of her suicide as a virtuous precedent for other wives makes sense in his final self-congratulatory statement that "being an old man, I'd a wife so chaste" (Middleton, *The Revenger's* 1988:93). This is the ironical close of a theatrical act that ignites revenge and at the same time reasserts an insecure masculinity and power for the sake of and over other men.

The heroines' total reification is significantly displayed in the fetishisation of their dead bodies at the hands of men who are often, ironically, their own victimisers: Sophonisba's dead body is adorned with the Roman triumphal regalia by a husband who stoically accepts the existing system of politics, however treacherous. The Tyrant kisses and embraces the Lady's corpse, dressed up in black velvet with a chain of pearls and a crucifix in a tableau of necrophiliac aesthetics, while her pale face at once intensifies and mitigates his desire. At the end of the play Govianus enthrones and crowns the Lady's decked-out dead body, something of which her ghost clearly

disapproves, in a scene in which “the distance between him and the necrophiliac Tyrant narrows to a hair’s breadth” (Wiggins 1998:xvii).

Philippe Ariès (1975:56-57) argues that “from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, countless scenes or motifs in art and in literature associate death with love, Thanatos with Eros.” The important question is why Jacobean tragedy harps obsessively on women’s violent deaths while at the same time fetishising their dead bodies as weird artifacts. The answer has to do with the representation of intense and dramatic corporeality that dominates early seventeenth-century tragedy in its interrogation of relationships of power and resistance. These are inscribed in the body, the violence done to it, the pain and/or the pressure that it suffers. Sensational visual representation of extreme corporeality, far from being a token of the dramatists’ personal “depravity”, a Grand Guignol kind of exhibitionism, a gruesome sensationalism or a sheer virtuosity in artifice is, as Francis Barker (2000 [1997]:19) has brilliantly shown us, “systemic rather than personal: not the issue of an aberrant exhibitionism, but formed across the whole surface of the social as the locus of the desire, the revenge, the power and the misery of this world.” What Barker however left undiscussed in his classic *The Tremulous Private Body* is the *gendering* of the body whose materiality he nevertheless foregrounds. This is rather a peculiar omission in view of the classic association of woman with materiality. The omission is thrown into relief when he argues for the loss of corporeality as a representational practice by pinpointing the body’s disappearance from the visible as central to emergent bourgeois subjectivity. More specifically, in Barker’s narrative of the rise of the bourgeois subject the

body is always already masculine because neutral, and therefore the subject is “naturally” male:

That the body we see is so frequently presented in fragments, or in the process of its effective dismemberment, no doubt indicates that contradiction is already growing up within this system of presence, and that the deadly subjectivity of the modern is already beginning to emerge and to round vindictively on the most prevalent emblem of the discursive order it supersedes. (2000 [1997]:21)

I suggest that this thus-displayed corporeality, often seen in fragments upon the stage, is prevalently female insofar as it serves as the ideal paradigm for the vindictive “deadly subjectivity” of the emergent bourgeois order that Barker adumbrates. The growing contradiction is most graphically displayed in the transubstantiation of the Duchess of Malfi from sexual materiality to ethereal femininity in the trope of the revenant. However, the corporeality still lingers in the figure of the woman on stage that has cracked because of the terrible pressure exerted on her body. These pressures originate in the feminine body that is culturally constructed as representing deep anxieties concerning subjectivity in the specific manner of an internal division: female physicality expresses the inner split between the spiritual and the physical, purity and lust, the weak and the strong, beauty and decay. In short, the female body *par excellence* signifies the terrible divisions that bring to the fore the interplay of the archaic forces of desire and death. As Jonathan Dollimore (1996:371-372) argues, the

vision of desire as at once impossible and a kind of death is everywhere present in the literature of the Early Modern period, especially in the anarchic excess of Jacobean tragedy. In some of these plays the death/desire dialectic is present not just as a theme, but as a principle of dramatic structure and psycho-social identity, as the dynamic which simultaneously drives and disintegrates the world.

This dialectic is literally embodied in the living and/or the dead body of the desirable female, which serves as a conduit of death for man even when (or should I say especially when) it obstructs male sperm by remaining impenetrable to unlawful desire. Woman is closely umbilicated with life through motherhood and for this same reason also with the inevitability of death, as in the womb-tomb trope: “As the mother, ‘woman’ is the original prenatal dwelling place; as the beloved, she draws fantasies of desire and otherness; and as Mother Earth, she is the anticipated final resting place” (Goodwin and Bronfen 1993:13). In the sexual act man loses himself in the body of the woman where the limits of one’s self vanish because *le petit mort* of sexual pleasure is confused with actual dying. However, sex, as a form of violence done on the feminine body in the form of penetration, makes up for man’s loss into the Other and offers the fantasy of a transient victory over death. Seduced, raped or chaste, the dead heroine signifies something broader than perishable femininity. Via her death a site of resistance is opened up for the male protagonist and thus empowerment is offered to the defiant subject, empowerment which springs from the illusion that a man can after all not only resist death, the invincible enemy, but also contain it. This containment of and mastery over death, however transitory and illusory, is the psychological effect of the violent end of woman on the spectator during the performance.

Witnessing the death of another affords a sense of jubilation at one's own survival that is felt especially intensely because

[d]eath is gendered. Probably without exception, at least in Western culture, representations of death bring into play the binary tensions of gender constructs, as life/death engages permutations with masculinity/femininity and with fantasies of power. (Goodwin and Bronfen 1993:20)

The spectator to whom the spectacle of dead female bodies is predominantly addressed is male and the “surveyed” body confirms the power of the male gaze that objectifies it. That this is an act of re-appropriation essentially foregrounds what de Lauretis has pinpointed (1987:37), namely that although the woman's body appears as the locus of sexuality the latter is in fact a male attribute. In the Jacobean theatre man's striving to achieve mastery over physical decay takes the form of a “quaintly” staged spectacle which is predicated on “the central function of the fetish [which] is to make an object present to sight which stands in for the absent phallus” (Bronfen 1992:103), the signifier for wholeness. The heroine's dead body in its entirety but most significantly in its fragments serves precisely as the fetish which, severed from a materiality that is synonymous with decay, signifies the male refusal to acknowledge death. Its fetishisation on stage offers the spectator the narcissistic perception of his own self as “whole and immortal” (Bronfen 1992:97) in the face of the unwelcome awareness that he is neither. The ideal Renaissance beauty in the Petrarchan trope of breaking up the woman's body into objects such as, for example, lilies, cherries and pearls, is a strategy that precisely dispels the threat of death that woman embodies. She turns into “a collection of

exquisitely beautiful, dissociated objects” (Vickers in Finke 1984:362) that does not cohere into a complete whole. Gloriana’s disguised skull “dressed up in tires” is presented both as a *memento mori* and as a sarcastic reminder of the fetishised emblazoned body in poetry, jewels in place of women. Vittoria as a diamond in John Webster’s *The White Devil*, the chain of pearls across the Lady’s dead body, Sophonisba’s nightgown-petticoat and regalia, the use of an echo for the “actual” woman, i.e. the Duchess, all betoken man’s pleasurable illusion in possession. In particular, the fetishised *chaste dead body* paradigmatically reflects the male fantasy of a retrieved wholeness that is imperilled by the fear that it will be irrevocably lost in the actual penetration of the living woman; but the fear is essentially of his own body penetrated by the superior male, namely the tyrant. Thus the male subject’s transgressive pleasure in (sexual) possession and power via the woman’s sacrificed body fundamentally expresses the triumphant assertion of masculinity over the real object of desire, which is the tyrant.

This raises the question of the extreme political urgency of expressing relations of subjection in sexual terms. The answer inevitably raises the issue of tyranny in a period in which, interestingly with the exception of the political writings of James I, tyranny was generally the unspoken word everywhere but in the theatre (Bushnell 1990:72). Politically wronged men or those seeking for revenge displace onto the marble-like stage spectacle of dead woman their desire for an ideal purity and wholeness that cannot be satisfied by the corrupted and rotting body politic that the tyrant heads. This displacement is predicated on the death of women for the symbolic purification of the social body insofar as their physicality culturally inscribes internal violence as

manifested in the body's discharges, especially of blood (Bataille 1990 [1957]:54), a kind of decay that female beauty paradoxically intensifies by turning into a mask of death: "Beauty is desired in order that it may be befouled. [...] Human beauty, in the union of bodies, shows the contrast between the purest aspect of mankind and the hideous animal quality of the sexual organs" (Bataille 1990 [1957]:144). The stage violence focuses the truly explosive psychic burden of the subject's terror of death, a natural, integral part of mortality but grotesquely magnified in the figure of the tyrant, the Signifier of absolute power. After all, it is the male subjected to power who risks being penetrated and thus feminised by the tyrant.

Jacobean tragedy intensely sexualises power relations in the public sphere in order to speak of the male subject's place within the political. It acknowledges early seventeenth-century man's self-awareness as the submissive and hence feminised subject of monarchical absolutism, but simultaneously denies this by hinting at an alternative place as the defiant agent of resistance. Thus, the dominant anxiety concerning positionality vis-à-vis political power is transposed to the theatre as the space for the enactment of precisely this anxiety, and for its alleviation. In tragedy's sexualisation of hierarchical power and dependence in the political sphere, tyranny is intended to signify the excess of the appetitive, the narcissistic desire for pleasure and a sovereign will to absolute power. For dramatists such as Marston, Middleton, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher and others, what the tyrant represents is not so much power in itself but desire as absolute power:

The overwhelming and unquenchable appetites that possess the tyrant motivate his actions; these appetites lead him in the end to seek the political power that enables him to satisfy his appetites without hindrance by the law. It is appetite, and not power, in the end, that topples the hierarchy of reason, converting man into beast. (Bushnell 1990:53)

From Valentinian's fantasy of relentless sexual potency there emerges the fearful possibility of a wholesale destruction of the social body itself when he gleefully threatens to implant "the royal seed of Caesar" (Fletcher 1998:290) into his subjects' wives. And it is *most emphatically* the Tyrant's necrophilia in *The Maiden's Tragedy* that serves as the dominant trope for desire as absolute power and its reverse, namely, unlimited power as infinite pleasure. At the same time, necrophilia as a scene of transgressive desire *par excellence* paradigmatically incorporates the macabre eroticism of graveyards, tombs and revenants, elements that pervade early seventeenth-century theatre. Necrophilia typically expresses the conflation between death and the extreme gratification of the senses in the act of sex, the prolongation *ad infinitum* of the state of *le petit mort*. The confusion is so great that the death of the beloved, far from cancelling pleasure, intensifies it, so that the corpse becomes in its turn the object of desire.

What these tragedies display is the interplay of death and female sexuality as a twofold representation that persistently and eloquently inscribes the question of power. Because of woman's culturally ascribed "secondary" nature, her dead body is the ideal fetish for the tyrant's narcissistic self-perception as omnipotent. It fully serves his fantasy of complete control over his victim's life, death and significantly also hereafter and at the same time it

occludes his own death. Does not the tyrant own all his subjects? Is he not God, after all? In *The Maiden's Tragedy* the Tyrant's necrophilia is transcribed as "self-deification, an appropriation of God's power "to bring the dead back to life"" (Daileader 1998:97). In the eponymous tragedy, Valentinian, on hearing that Lucina is dead, blames his courtiers for having convinced him that he is omnipotent, an idea disproved by the fact that he cannot bring her back to life: "Why do ye make me God that can do nothing? / Is she not dead?" (Fletcher 1988:290).

In his need to maintain his illusory god-likeness he is ready to force himself on Lucina's now dead body but, ironically, he conquers "nothing", the bawdy word at the time for female genitalia (Bronfen 1992:74), a nothingness and/or "lack" that still inscribes male signification of difference. Poisoned by Aretus, one of his eunuchs, Valentinian painfully recognises that he is mere flesh and that he is "A man, a mortal man" (Fletcher 1988:312), but this offers no relief to the victims of his tyranny. To them Valentinian, like all tyrants, has always been, as Aretus says to him, "but man, a bad man too, a beast / and like a sensual bloody thing thou diest" (Fletcher 1988:313). In an eloquent gesture Fletcher invites the spectators to relish, in the spectacle of the tyrant's prolonged agony, the terrible suffering inflicted by the poison and his tortuous corporeal disintegration, something offered as a recompense for their suffering in the limited context of revenge. However, there is no jubilant restoration of order, since Maximus, the new emperor but no better a man than the dead tyrant, will be poisoned, significantly by a woman, Eudoxa, avenging her monstrous husband, an act that underscores the absolute lack of any alternative to this deadly system of power.

Conclusion

Michael Neil argues that early modern tragedy “offered to contain the fear of death by staging fantasies of ending in which the moment of dying was transformed, by the arts of performance, to a supreme demonstration of distinction” (1997:32). However, this does not apply to the victims of tyrannous masculinity, the heroines, although their return from the grave as voices, echoes and/or ghosts might be represented as a harbinger of the eventual punishment of the tyrant. The only exception to this, the heroine as an actual avenger of the wronged subjects of absolute power, is Evadne in *The Maid’s Tragedy*. Julia Kristeva’s incisive analysis of the psychology of the violent political female subject shows at the same time the limitations of Evadne’s revolt:

But when a subject is too brutally excluded from [the] socio-symbolic stratum; when, for example, a woman feels her affective life as a woman or her condition as a social being too brutally ignored by existing discourse or power (from her family to social institutions); she may, by counter-investing the violence she has endured, make of herself a “possessed” agent of this violence in order to combat what was experienced as frustration. (1990 [1986]: 203)

As the only female tyrannicide Evadne is throughout already entrapped in the affective/personal. She is unable to turn her fury into a political cause and thus transcend it, despite her partial recognition that her sexual reification as a whore of the King is part of a wider system of exploitation. Significantly, when she stabs her royal lover in bed she invokes the family, precisely the institution that has victimised her: “This for my lord / Amintor, / This for my noble

brother, and this stroke / For the most wronged of women” (Beaumont and Fletcher 1998:144). As a “‘possessed’ agent” of violence Evadne cannot therefore be entitled to heroic distinction, a distinction that male tyrannicides historically enjoy. On the other hand, the heroines’ “resurrections” mark out the tyrants’ power as finite, but in no way can the revenant be seen as a transcendental confirmation of distinction. The violated heroines’ deaths simply consign them to utter annihilation, with the arguable exception of the Duchess of Malfi: the only instance of articulation of a female defiant subjectivity is offered by her. At the point of death she echoes Anthony’s heroic self-assertion in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, “I am / Anthony yet”, in her famous statement “I am Duchess of Malfi still”, but this will be immediately challenged by Bosola’s political cynicism (Neill 1997:349). Her tomb as a symbol of the new moral politics that the ending promises signifies that heroic closure for women’s lives cannot exist outside a new order of things, but that ironically this can only take place over their dead bodies.

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER-SPECIFIC AUDIENCES IN THE WORKS OF EARLY 17TH CENTURY WRITERS

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***Abstract:** My article centres on the intricate intertwining of gender, sexuality, identity and writing in the first quarter of the 17th century, dealing with Aemilia Lanyer's most famous work Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum (1611) a cornerstone in the construction of female readership, offering at the same time an example of a collaborative rather than competitive model for literary creation, advancing the plea for a female genealogy.*

***Keywords:** female genealogy, female readership, proto-feminism, querelle des femmes, revisionism*

Introduction

Canonical in terms of early modern women's writing, Lanyer's 1611 collection of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, is a compelling medley of

genres including eleven encomiastic dedications, themselves deploying a whole range of poetic forms and 2 prose pieces. Pride of place is held by a long poem reenacting Christ's passion; the poem begins with the apotheosis of Elizabeth I "And crown'd with everlasting Sov'raintie; Where Saints and Angells do attend her Throne, And she gives glorie unto God alone" and ends with the apotheosis of another woman, the Countess of Cumberland, in what is considered to be the earliest of English country house poems, (predating Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" of 1616) *Cook-ham*, the Berkshire village, the former estate of the Countess of Cumberland being conceived of as a paradise of women, inhabited by unfallen females (Pearson 1998:45); there is also a final prose address "To the Doubtfull Reader" where Lanyer says that she dreamed of the book's title long before she wrote the book, thus implying its divine commissioning.

We are in general tributary to the received wisdom about the patriarchy of the Jacobean age, an oppressive and repressive period for women, as a glorious court ruled by a powerful woman gave way to a court whose ethos was prevalently masculine and homosocial, if not homosexual as well (see Lewalski 1991). Catherine Belsey mentions the "recurrent disappearance of mothers from interpretations of the fifth commandment [honour thy father and thy mother]" during the Jacobean period, when women's public persona became entirely obliterated (Belsey 1985:158).

Misogynist plays and tracts of the age vie with one another for underscoring the inferiority of women in the hierarchy of being and their immorality (John Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* and Robert Gould's *Love Given O'er: Or a Satyr on the*

Inconstancy of Woman would be two examples only). At the same time Lanyer's was an age that gave numerous examples of women making serious inroads into patriarchal power, women that given the right opportunities could flourish in politics and arts, giving the lie to notions of female inferiority, exemplary being not only Elizabeth I and Anne of Denmark but a host of women aristocrats and writers in their own right, nine of whom are among Lanyer's dedicatees in the poem discussed here. Although Elizabeth disappeared from the scene her model continued to influence and inspire the emergence of talented and ambitious authors whose literary endeavours perfectly illustrate resistance to the prevalent patriarchal ideology and the gradual construction of female networks, communities and readership.

Protofeminist Revisionism in the 17th Century

Lanyer's book is radical in its theology and gender politics and could aptly be called proto-feminist. Both the prefatory poems and the title poem argue for women's religious and social equality. Although the title would suggest a celebration of masculinity (a verb and three masculine nouns) it is meant to emphasize and empower the female at every level, literary, political and spiritual.

Revisionist tendencies and in particular Bible criticism and reinterpretation are common traits of works penned by early English women authors from Jane Anger's *Her Protection for Women*, a pamphlet published in 1589 to Esther Sowernam's *Ester Hath Hang'd Haman* (1617), Margaret Fell Fox's *Womens Speaking Justified* (1667) and Sarah Fyge Egerton's *The Female Advocate* (1686) in which the latter answered a grossly misogynist attack by

Robert Gould with a long poem at the tender age of 14. It so outraged her father he banished her from his house (Lerner 1993:153). They all offer fresh feminist glosses on Genesis chapter 3, the Scriptures alongside classical philosophy being invoked for centuries by masculine voices pronouncing upon women's inferior and posterior ontological status when compared with men.

Entering with unprecedented vigour and sense of empowerment the century-long polemic tradition of the *querelle des femmes*, the late sixteenth-century and early-seventeenth century English women authors emphasize that Adam should take most of the responsibility for the Fall since he was deemed to be theologically and ontologically anterior and primary, so he should have advised Eve; moreover God recognizes Eve's lesser role in the lapsarian drama by tempering Eve's punishment with mercy and making her the mother of the human race and one of her descendants the mother of Christ (Gamble 2004:5-8).

This revisionist feminist version of the events from the Scriptures is central to Lanyer's version of Christ's Passion, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* being a meditation on the Passion which argues that men and not women were responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. Women including Pontius Pilate's wife are presented as virtuous and grieving onlookers who do not collude in Christ's execution (Gamble 2004:12-13) and they create an influential female audience in this major religious drama, whereas all judges, scribes and Elders of the Land were men. Moreover, in an extended section entitled "Eves Apologie in Defense of Women" Lanyer argues that Eve was less culpable than Adam, then compares women's sinfulness in the Edenic context to men's sinfulness in the

context of the crucifixion, advocating in the end women's social and religious equality with men.

Your fault beeing greater, why should you disdain
Our beeing your equals, free from tyranny?
If one weake woman simply did offend,
This sinne of yours hath no excuse, nor end.

One of the chief techniques of pro-women argumentation is the invocation of virtue construed in the feminine - Deborah, Jael, Judith, Susanna, Helen, Lucrece, Octavia, Rosamund, Matilda -, although in Lanyer's text the role of simple women is emphasized in the passion narrative, the women of Jerusalem being foregrounded as protagonists on equal terms with Pontius Pilate's wife, the Virgin and the other Maries. This is only one of the features that entitles comparisons with Christine de Pizan, famous for being most likely the first woman to have added a strong female voice to the *querrele des femmes* debate that had had before her only men on both sides of the fence (defenders and detractors of women) and who at the turn of the 15th century launched an impassionate defence of women in her feminist utopia *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*.

One of the landmarks of Lanyer's lengthy poem is the emphatic feminization of Christ himself, as Pearson rightfully claims, born without the assistance of man, and displaying the primarily female virtues of endurance, meekness, patience, obedience, chaste behaviour and even beauty (1998:46).

He plainely shewed that his owne profession

Was virtue, patience, grace, loue, piety;
And how by suffering he could conquer more
Than all the Kings that euer liu'd before.

The beauty of the World, Heauens chiefest Glory;
The mirrour of Martyrs, Crowne of holy Saints;
Loue of th'Almighty, blessed Angels story;

As Irigaray says in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, (1985:259), the human incarnation of the son is the most feminine of all men. Moreover, his vulnerability to slander and his silence are contrasted with the corrupt uses to which language is put in the mouths of those who betray him; vituperation and invective are characteristic of such passages: blasphemers like wicked Caiaphas, *vipers defacing the wombes wherein they were bred*, proud and arrogant Apostles and Prophets *dishonoured Christ, Against those Vipers, objects of disgrace, Beeing the Scorpions bred in Adams mud, Whose poy's'ned sinnes did worke among thy foes*, monsters, blind, dull, weak, stony-hearted, full of spite, wicked actors, hateful vengeful foes, Jewish wolves, biting and prophaning truth.

Divine Grace Construed in the Feminine

Throughout the poem and also in her 11 dedication pieces penitence, grace, the intimacy of the relationship with God are construed in the feminine. Praises are showered on Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, first and foremost for her being a translator of the *Psalms*, - instrumental to the

articulation of penitence in the 16th century, essential to Protestant confessional requirements and church liturgy (Trill 1998:37-40). Not only were they recommended for daily reading, but they became gradually a crucial discourse in the construction of autobiographical writing (she continued her brother's translation of the *Psalms* cut short by Philip Sidney's untimely death, translating *Psalms 44-150* in a dazzling array of verse forms). Their huge importance in the development of English poetry in the next two centuries is celebrated by John Donne in a poem dedicated to them.

Pembroke's literary achievements and her greater penitential devotion are lauded without reserve. Penitential devotion, alongside the recurrent tropes of humility and self-abasement deployed in the text should not be cursorily considered as mere conventions typical of the discourse of women authors: they should be seen in the broader perspective of women's being likened to Christ. Men in their inability to abase themselves, to articulate emotionally their religious passion and their penitential discourses are less able to achieve such intimacy with God.

What we see at work in Lanyer's revisionism of Christ's passion is the reversal of hierarchies: the powerful are judged by the weak, the all-commanding King submits to be counted a *seeming tradesman's son* and such reversals prove to be very profitable for those removed from the sources of power in society on grounds of class or gender (Pearson 1998:47)

Greatnesse is no sure frame to build vpon,
No worldly treasure can assure that place;
God makes both euen, the Cottage with the Throne,
All worldly honours there are counted base,

Those he holds deare, and reckneth as his owne,
Whose virtuous deeds by his [especiall] grace
Haue gain'd his loue, his kingdome, and his crowne,
Whom in the booke of Life he hath set downe.

Indeed if in the new Jerusalem he that is the greatest may be the least, then the weaker and more oppressed have more to gain:

But yet the Weaker thou dost seeme to be
In Sexe, or Sence, the more his Glory shines,
That doth infuze such powrefull Grace in thee,

It comes as no surprise that the high esteem in which women are held would recommend them for high offices - those that are considered the province of men, those of saintly and even divine priests anointed with *Aaron's pretious oil*. The Countess of Cumberland and her daughter Anne Clifford are seen as female St Peters and Mary Sidney is represented as nothing short of a God figure:

Directing all by her immortall light,
In this huge sea of sorrowes, griefes, and feares;
With contemplation of Gods powrefull might,
Shee fills the eies, the hearts, the tongues, the eares

Women Reclaiming Authorship

Lanyer engages actively with all kinds of demeaning tropes for women, reopening the debate on women as books and texts. Women as books, texts to

be read or blank pages to be inscribed by the masculine hand are repressive metaphors in the age and they feature as a recurrent sexist stereotype in many writings of the time - Desdemona *fair paper, this most goodly book* on which Cassio has allegedly written *whore*; Sidney's Stella is a 'fair text' into which the poet will 'pry'; in Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* women are books in which their faults can be read (*poor women's faces are their own faults' books*), texts so volatile that women cannot be considered subjects, agents or authors of their own actions, but only the paper, the instrument that awaits authorship in men's hands. But as with the biblical argument turned on its head by Lanyer to achieve opposite effects, she reclaims and reworks such repressive images:

*Yet Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke
From Eves faire hand, as from a learned booke,*

so woman becomes nothing less than the generatrix of men's learning (Pearson, 1998:51), no longer the passive page awaiting man's inscription but she gains agency and becomes an author in her own right. Here again we feel tempted to speculate that among the books that she might have consulted in the well-stocked libraries that Lanyer had the privilege to use - as she was fostered in the household of Susan Bertie Wingfield, Countess Dowager of Kent and later the household of Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, and her daughter, Anne Clifford - she might have chanced upon the English translation of Christine de Pizan's works. Her *Livre de la Cité des Dames* was first translated into English by Brian Anslay in 1521 (see Curnow 1976:300-345). In a revolutionary and

radical way, Christine makes women the inventors of all arts, sciences and crafts in her masterpiece of 1405 (Pizan 1998[1405]:64-86).

Throughout the dedications in Lanyer's poem images of books, texts, reading and writing are recurrent, the central tenets of Christian religion - incarnation, atonement, redemption and judgment, being frequently imaged as acts of reading and writing. Women's entitlement to authorship, their literacy and their legitimacy as readers and writers are authorized by Christ Himself (Pearson, 52). He is the book, the reader, writer, and also, like the woman herself, text and muse at the same time, the inspiration of the poet *whose power has given me power to write/ He is able to reade the earthly storie of fraile humanity/ and he writes the Covenant with his pretious blood. He has written the virtuous in the book of life in the eternal book of heaven* and has cancelled the *black infernall booke of due punishment*; at the last judgment when the *heavens shall depart as when a scrowle is rolled* Christ will *open the books and undoe the Seales/In deepe Characters, writ with blood and teares*.

Constructing a Female Readership

Lanyer's feminist revisionism of Christ's passion and her vindication of women certainly connects her to the tradition of early female authors joining the *querelles des femmes* pamphlet debate, but it also connects her to developing narratives of professional authorship and - like Christine de Pizan - she proudly claims to have been divinely inspired, as in her dream *she was appointed to performe that Worke* (comparisons are also invited to Ben Jonson and even John Milton, who also famously claimed to be divinely inspired poets).

Written specifically to praise women and to place women at the heart of Christianity, her poem aims at having women participate in the debate over women's access to education, literacy and she strongly avers that by becoming authors and readers women do not transgress the boundaries of female virtue. Lanyer's poem is exemplary as far as claiming female authorship goes. It engages with the emergence of professional authorship in the early modern period through the sustained endeavour of the deliberate self-construction of an author and her audience. In *Renaissance Women* (1994) Diane Purkiss suggests that in her collection Lanyer creates an interpretive community of female virtue by bringing together the power of women as readers in order to register and display that power. Studying the dedications provides insight into the process by which Lanyer defines her reading audience and develops a female community predicated upon that audience; also by invoking the literary merits of some of her dedicatees, although all of them were patrons of the arts if not writers (in particular Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, Lucy Bedford and Ann Clifford with her *Diary*), we see her efforts to find her place in a female cultural genealogy.

The female dedicatees are not at all a mere convention; they are the subject, the content, the very instrument of the poem, *the ground I write upon*, they are all celebrated as powerful and with an established place in the world of letters, but at the same time they inspire, generate literary texts like their mythological counterparts, the Muses.

One wonders how well Lanyer knew the women to whom she dedicates her writing. Emilia Lanyer, *née* Bassano, was a member of Queen Elizabeth's court, but she was decidedly on its fringes and her paternal ancestors were court

musicians who had come to England from Venice at the end of Henry VIII's reign. The poet was educated under the direction of Susan Bertie Wingfield, Countess Dowager of Kent whose Protestant humanist circle had a profound influence on the young Lanyer (there is internal evidence about this in Lanyer's poem: *Susan Berte Grey Your beauteous Soule, and fill it with his grace./ You that were the Mistris of my youth, / The noble guide of my ungovern'd days*).

The practice of being sent from one's family to be trained up in service in an aristocratic household, like that of Susan's, was then widespread and she was later attached to the household of Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, and her daughter, Anne Clifford, both of whom are repeatedly addressed throughout the poem.

Lanyer must have been educated along with the noble girls whom she attended, for her work shows familiarity with poetic genres and verse forms and with the 1560 Geneva Bible. Later in her life she embarked upon an affair with Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, Elizabeth I's cousin and chamberlain (45 years her senior) and a patron of the arts and theatre (he was the patron of Shakespeare's theatre company, known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men), which ended in 1592 when she became pregnant with his child and was married off to Alfonso Lanyer, another court musician, her first cousin once removed, in 1592 (Lasocki and Prior 1995:106;102). Like the Countess of Cumberland and her daughter Anne Clifford she will have a long court wrangling with her late husband's brother and the latter's heirs. Interestingly, Lanyer first came to prominence as a subject of literary study as one of the early candidates for Shakespeare's "dark lady" in the sonnets; however, that claim has subsequently been disproved. (It was Alfred Lesley Rowse who advanced this hypothesis in

Shakespeare The Man of 1973. However, more recently scholars refuted his claims, acknowledging, however, the great influence exerted by Rowse on Lanyer studies, see Bevington, 1998:10-28)

The degree of contact that Lanyer had with the noblewomen to whom she dedicates her poems in 1611, almost twenty years after her marriage, remains a problematic question in Lanyer scholarship, but it is important to note that Lanyer does not simply write in search of patronage—she specifically writes in search of patronesses. While the dedications are often ignored or simply taught as paratextual material indicating nothing more than Lanyer’s fierce and insistent desire for patronage, the biographical ramifications of Lanyer’s dedications pale in comparison to their conceptual significance. Women as texts to be read by other women is a new and innovative trope and to achieve her goal Lanyer lays emphasis on mirroring, reflection, and similarity. Throughout the dedications Lanyer insists that her text is the “true mirror” of its readers’—and its dedicatees’—virtue. Mirror which is a key image in the Elizabethan age for a work of literature is at the same time a conventional female symbol, hence the accumulation of literary creativity and femaleness, as Pearson astutely remarks (1998:50-51). The works of her dedicatees are mirrors themselves, mirrors of their virtues, self-mirroring and self-fashioning become thus leading traits in the text.

By presenting her work in this way, she is able both to invent and draw upon a network of patronesses and imagined readers. In her first dedicatory poem to Queen Anne, the wife of James I, Lanyer implores her to *Looke in this Mirrour of a worthy Mind, / Where some of your faire Vertues will appeare*; While Lanyer’s mirror reflects some of the Queen’s virtues back at her, that act

of identification becomes possible for all virtuous women and thus by balancing the discourses of praise and individual exemplarity with community in an act of reflection and contemplation, the virtues reflected in the text encourage any reader to reflect upon her own virtue. Exactly as the common women of Jerusalem become protagonists in the passion of Christ, all women become the equals of her dedicatees creating in this way a strong sense of female solidarity. Active, participatory readership is necessary for Lanyer's project to succeed—without it her text remains incomplete and unfinished.

Striving Towards a Female Cultural Genealogy

In Lanyer's poem female networks and female genealogies are buttressed by the concept of maternity, literal and metaphorical: Anne of Denmark and Elizabeth of Bohemia; Catherine Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk and Susan Bertie Wingfield; or Margaret, Countess of Cumberland and her daughter Anne Clifford. Margaret and Anne engaged in a protracted legal battle to contest the will of George Clifford, husband and father setting themselves against the whole of Jacobean patriarchy, father, husband, male relatives, Archbishop of Canterbury and James himself included. (Lewalski 1991:90)

Ann Clifford's *Diary* is praised today for its intensely introspective and personal character that makes it almost unique for its time (it was edited and published in 1923 by Vita Sackville West, a descendant of the brother of her first husband, Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset). Her diary also communicates her sense of worth, her authority judgment on all the men around her, emphasizing matrilineal heritage and kinship networks - the Russel aunts, Queen Elizabeth and Anne, who much loved her as a child, the countesses of

Bath and Warwick. She also enlarges upon her humanist education, her favourite books and authors. She starts her *Diary* in 1603 recording with the eyes of a 13-year old girl a flurry of impressions caused by the death of Elizabeth I and the succession of James I and Anne of Denmark. As Lewalski points out, the *Diary* celebrates the emergence of a female self, empowered to resist existing social norms and find strength in female bonding and expressing women's conviction that the Divine Patriarch was their ally against the earthly patriarchs (1995:95-96).

Conclusion

In Lanyer's poem female networks and maternity are celebrated over patriarchal networks of power transmission, Elizabeth featuring as *virgin mother of the common-weale*. At the same time the poetic structure of her lengthy poem is modelled on women's pregnancy, as the imbrications of themes can be seen in terms of a web of maternities where the appeal to female patrons contains the passion story, which contains the speech of Pilate's wife and that one the vindication of Eve and then Eve is seen as the creative force behind all generations of women. We can conclude that in an Irigarayan sense the narrative functions as 'a series of enfoldings modelled on pregnancy (47) wombs within wombs' (Pearson 1998:47).

Lanyer scholars often underline the personal motivation underlying her extraordinary choice of dedicatees. After all, Lanyer was a Jacobean woman who published literary work and so emerged dangerously from the private realm to which she was confined by the patriarchal terms of her time (the very term 'public' suggested moral dissolution for women as we can understand

from Othello's disparaging 'thou public commoner' in *Othello*, IV, scene 2,). Her work should be celebrated above all as an extraordinary defence of women's writings and their reading in which disparities of power and class are erased and women's activities of writing and reading become not only virtuous but even god-like activities. Lanyer's poem helps us understand how early modern English women read and wrote their world and themselves.

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**FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA'S *YERMA* (1937) AND RUTH
CARTER'S *A YEARNING* (1999): THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN
THROUGH SPACE AND TIME**

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***Abstract:** My paper examines Lorca's Yerma and Carter's A Yearning and the transposition of the work from a regressive agricultural Andalusia into a traditional urban British-Asian Punjabi community. Though written in different periods and cultures, the two plays illustrate that discrimination and domestic entrapment of women have prevailed. The heroines' inability to fulfil their socially required roles, to procreate, condemns them to seclusion and desperation with a violent outcome.*

***Keywords:** Adaptation, A Yearning, Carter, Lorca, Punjabi community, Yerma.*

1. Introduction

This article establishes a comparison between Lorca's *Yerma* and Carter's *A Yearning*, the latter being an adaptation of Lorca's play and a transposition from Andalusia in the 1930s to a contemporary multicultural Punjabi community in Britain. The play was performed in 1995 by the Asian theatre company Tamasha ("commotion" in Hindi), in collaboration

with the Birmingham Repertory Theatre Company. Tamasha was founded in 1989 by director Kristine Landon-Smith and actor/playwright Sudha Bhuchar; their aim is to intersect Asian culture with mainstream British culture. Plays such as *East is East*, by Ayub Khan-Din, or *The Trouble with Asian Men*, by Landon-Smith, Bhuchar and Louise Wallinger, have played a key role in opening up largely unknown worlds to British audiences.

Ruth Carter is well known for a number of film scripts and adaptations. In her adaptation of Lorca's *Yerma*, Carter "revisits and revisions a 'canonical' text" (Aston 1999:249), dramatizing the subject of childlessness and ardently-desired motherhood. Lorca's *Yerma* is transformed into Amar and her husband Juan into Jaz, a Glaswegian Asian. The setting in *Yerma* is rural Andalusia, while Carter's play unfolds in urban Birmingham, where Lorca's shepherd is converted into the owner of a thriving taxi firm.

Andalusia, Lorca's native soil, was still a regressive society in the 1940s. *Yerma*, together with *Blood Wedding* (1933) and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1936, but published posthumously in 1946), are often referred to as "rural plays". In them Lorca questions various aspects of bourgeois morality, such as its destructive myths, hypocrisy, and discrimination against women in male-dominated Spanish society. *The House of Bernarda Alba*, subtitled "A Drama of Women in the villages of Spain", is a straightforward indication of Lorca's critique. He intended it to be "a photographic documentary", as stated in an introductory note to the play: a true reflection of the Andalusian and, by extension, the universal Spanish society of his time in which strict customs, such as honour and decency, were the cause of profound physical and moral suffering. Furthermore, the author drew many elements from the intermingled cultures

of Andalusian history, covering a period of over two millennia: pre-Roman (Tartessian, Phoenician), Roman, Christian, Jewish and Islamic. Besides this, there are reminiscences of magical thinking, resembling those of ancient religions with their pagan rites. Lorca became significantly obsessed with the *pena negra* (black pain) mentioned in Andalusian folk music lyrics, *cante jondo*, a fusion of Arab, Jewish and Gypsy music. This pain with no apparent cause is a historical pain, a torrent of suffering, of social and racial injustices and curses, flowing into the culture of a country and transmitted from generation to generation. It is “an incurable pain, the black pain we cannot get rid of except by taking a knife and opening a deep buttonhole in our left side” (Maurer 1992:xxiv).

2.1. *Yerma* – Male Control and Women’s Repression

The opening of the play presents the typical image of a woman in Lorca’s time, confined to her home, a sewing basket at her feet. Yerma is dreaming and visualizing a shepherd leading a child by the hand, which reveals her desire for motherhood. However, her very name points to her tragic destiny, since Yerma means “barren” in Spanish. United to the earth by her very name, Yerma is described as a daughter of Nature. While able to enjoy Nature’s splendour, at the same time she forms part of its sterile process.

In Lorca’s traditional Spain, marriage demanded reproduction in order for the wife to be fully defined as a married woman. After two years, Yerma is still desperately waiting for a pregnancy. Her physical barrenness, produced by the emotional atrophy of her husband, Juan, has caused a dramatic emptiness in Yerma, one she needs to fill with a child. Interestingly, Lorca chose metaphors relating procreation to the field and to

seed. The woman is like a field, waiting for the male to deliver the seed. Men have to tend and control their “field” because their power depends on possession of this field. Unfortunately, Juan’s main concern lies in the accumulation of actual land. His focus on material goods is counterbalanced by the procreative vacuum experienced in Yerma, and the idea that her “field”, her body, may remain barren is assuming the form of an obsession. Following the logic of agricultural law, Yerma believes that if the field lacks water, it remains unproductive. Therefore, the metaphorical title of the play refers not to a sterile field but to a barren field unproductive because it is untended.

Yerma projects procreation on to a cosmic scale by observing that even stone “procreates”, even hedge mustard flowers (1992:68). The brutal contradiction between cosmic laws and nature’s disorder produces a serious identity crisis. She considers herself a parody in the midst of nature’s beauty and productivity, her belly, breasts and blood having lost their meaning. The following words are spoken “*as if in a dream*”:

[...] O blind breasts under my clothing!
O doves without eyes, doves without whiteness!
The stinging pain of imprisoned blood
Nails hornets to the nape of my neck!
But surely you’ll come, my love, my son!
As the sea gives salt, and the earth bears grain,
Our womb will swell with a tender child,
Like a cloud which brings the sweet, fresh rain (93).

Juan is troubled not by Yerma’s frustration but by the danger of losing control over his “field” caused by her absences from home to seek solace in nature. Reacting to gossip, Juan insists on his honour, based solely

on appearances, which is the upholding of his power over her. He tries to confine her to the house, threatening to lock her up, “because that’s what a husband is for!” (92-3) Yerma becomes a prisoner in her own house, watched by her husband and his sterile spinster sisters. Significantly, she compares her house to a tomb, and the sensation of imprisonment intensifies as the play progresses. The couple are trapped in the vicious circle of their incompatibilities, having married for convenience. They are bound both by social tradition and by the inflexible code of honour. Honour is, in fact, a central theme in *Yerma*. Not considering the possibility of procreation outside marriage, owing to her virtue and moral rectitude, Yerma had accepted the hierarchical nature of the marital order and agreed willingly to her father’s selection of a husband.

As a last act of desperation, Yerma hurries to a soothsayer, desiring to participate in the tragic fertility rite in the Sanctuary. She joins the Chorus of six barren women, who start the rite by beseeching Christ to “let all the roses bloom” over the “withered flesh” (106). Their songs are full of sensuality and passion, praising the magic of love. The fertility rites “are based in part on the yearly pilgrimage to Moclín, in the province of Granada, but Lorca easily convinces us of their wholly pagan character” (Maurer 1992:xxii). In fact, an ancient fertility myth is re-enacted through the wild dance of a He-goat and She-goat, the former seizing a horn of a bull, an obvious phallic symbol, with which he pursues the female.

At the end of the pilgrimage the Pagan Old Woman blames Yerma’s husband and his ancestors for her barrenness, as they do not behave “like a breed of real men” (112). Her invitation to Yerma to copulate with her son provokes her bitter complaint:

I'm like a parched field big enough to hold a thousand teams of oxen plowing, and what you give me is a little glass of water from the well! Mine is pain that is no longer of my flesh! (112)

When Yerma is reproved by her husband at the end of the ritual scene, the hope she had felt during the enactment of the fertility myth vanishes, giving way to violent frustration. His unexpected desire to possess her sexually provokes her final sense of desolation, because she feels pursued rather than loved. In a mortal embrace, she chokes her husband to death, depriving him of the air he had metaphorically taken from her in their marriage. Her inability to conceive has turned Yerma into an irrational creature. Her husband's death signifies the end of her hope, as she proclaims:

Barren. Barren, but sure. Now I know it for certain. And alone. [...] With my body dry forever. [...] I have killed myself, have killed my son (115).

As in Greek tragedy, Lorca makes frequent use of a Chorus to underline the tragic Fate of his characters. At the end of the play, the pilgrims' chorus is heard, which evokes Yerma's hope as contrasting with her final tragedy, that of being incarcerated. Her pain can be defined as Lorca's *pena negra*, as it is deeper than her previous longing for a child, which "has given way to something much more difficult to define" (Maurer 1992:xxv). Maurer (xxv) has rightly observed that "Yerma's tragedy is *not* that society keeps her from fulfilling a biological urge or realizing herself fully. It is that she can desire, can imagine and feel what is absent". Lorca has here portrayed the frustration of women who feel suffocated because they are not allowed to realize themselves as human beings. His humanism

and liberalism make use of poetry to put forward his “appeal for justice, for freedom and for sexual and social equality” (Maurer:xxv).

2.2. *A Yearning* – Domestic Entrapment in the Punjabi Community

It is over eighty years since the first presentation of *Yerma*. Fortunately, since then the situation for women even in rural Andalusia has improved. Medical treatment has succeeded in remedying numerous cases of infertility or sterility, and in addition it is now socially accepted that a woman is not obliged to endure a loveless marriage for ever. Conversely, in many parts of the world women still suffer oppression and injustice in a male-dominated society, as demonstrated by *A Yearning*. Carter’s play is set, as mentioned above, in a British Punjabi community. London-Smith, the director of Tamasha, explains:

The Punjabi community in Britain does not seem to have lost connection with its rural roots. It is almost as though the community, in an effort to retain its culture against a foreign landscape, is even more traditional than the Punjabi community in Indian society today (Programme notes, 26 September 1995).

In such a community, as Patel (1998:262-3) states, “[t]he choice for women who dare break out of the very narrow confines of the roles prescribed by religion and culture is stark; either they remain within the parameters of permissible behaviour, or they transgress and risk becoming pariahs within their own community”.

Amar, the heroine of the play, has left her Indian birthplace to marry Jaz, as arranged by her father, and to live in a Punjabi community in Birmingham. Aston (1999:249) defines Amar appropriately as a “cross-border figure” as she has had to cross borders in order to settle in Britain

and to contend with the geo-social dislocation brought about by her marriage. The play shows the intricacy of multicultural Britain through Jaz, a Glaswegian Punjabi living in Birmingham, the owner of a minicab company, yet adhering to traditional Indian culture by accepting an Indian bride in an arranged marriage. He acts in accordance with the Punjabi community's socio-cultural rules that accord young women hardly any value except that of serving male needs and confine them to their domestic spheres. Griffin (2003:145) describes the customs of a Bengali community in Britain, which to my mind can be extrapolated to the British Punjabi community: "[A] man's public life and relationship with his male peers in his community is much more significant in his life than his relationship with his wife". Griffin refers further to women's lack of freedom in the Asian communities in Britain: "Their freedom is severely curtailed, and their emotional wellbeing depends to some extent on the relationships they can build with other women in their households and communities" (145).

In fact, the British Punjabi Community is organised as an all-party group and is acknowledged in Parliament as the voice of the Punjabi community. It is estimated that there are nearly a million people of Punjabi origin in Britain, Punjabi being the country's second language. Britain "allows the state to mediate between itself and minority communities, using so-called 'community leaders' as power-brokers and middle-men" (Patel 1998:263). Ali (1992 in Patel: 263) states further: "Needless to say, such leaders are male, from religious, business and other socially conservative background, who, historically, have had little or no interest in promoting an agenda for social justice and equality, least of all the rights of Asian women". It should be mentioned that in the UK there have been debates since the 1970s concerning arranged or forced marriages among Asian

women, with these being regarded as “antithetical to the gender equality, individual autonomy and self-determination, freedom of choice, and liberalism that supposedly govern British culture” (Griffin 2003:146).

Indeed, Carter’s play stages precisely “the pressures facing young Asian women caught between the traditional ways of India and living in a multi-cultural Britain” (Aston 2003:138). Carter does not therefore represent “Amar’s move to Britain [...] as an ‘advance’ on a ‘backward’ Indian home; rather, the play shows the complexities of a cross-cultural, inter-national oppression that ultimately positions Amar as isolated, friendless and desperate” (Aston 138).

The opening of the play illustrates the hybridity that exists in multiculturalism. “AMAR *is sleeping on a settee facing a TV set on which a Hindi video movie plays. A sewing machine with sari material has been abandoned* (1995:7). The scene shows the juxtaposition of a modern home – a settee, a TV – with Indian culture – a Hindi video movie and the eye-catching colour of Indian material such as a sari. At the same time, the opening introduces the main issue of the play, a yearning for motherhood. Amar is dreaming about a crying baby. Her craving for a child is placed in contrast with her husband’s “exclusive concern with reproducing capital and not family” (Aston 2003:139). He proudly proclaims: “Next year maybe I can take on another cab. Luckily we don’t have children to lay out on” (8).

Amar’s desperate clinging to him is offset by his apparent coldness. He wants to bind her to the house, sewing and watching videos: “I don’t like you out of doors on your own. [...] Women get raped” (10). An opportune ring on his mobile phone serves as an excuse for him to depart quickly, leaving a desperate Amar behind. The opening scene of Lorca’s *Yerma* is even more emblematic, revealing another important, probably unconscious

longing. In Yerma's dream, she sees a shepherd who stares at her, "*lead(ing) a child dressed in white by the hand* (1992:67). The shepherd is Victor, whom she intuitively loves and whom she associates with the cheerful spring light, warmth and vigour of Nature, water and fertility, as opposed to her husband's aridity and coldness.

Carter has maintained most of Lorca's poetic speech and plot line, although, naturally, she has adapted it to the modern period and to the speech of English city life mixed with allegorical Indian language. When Amar is alone, she "*strokes her belly as she sings to it. The song begins in Punjabi and melts into English*" (10).

AMAR. From where do you come, my love, my child?
[...] When, my child will you come? [...]
Inside me a cradle awaits you
My womb, aching for you
When, my child, will you come? (10)

Confined to her home, and living in an Indian Diaspora, Amar seeks the companionship of the female Punjabi community, and the women, in turn, come to her house to benefit from her sewing skills. At the same time, she can enjoy women's talk and emotional comfort through the articulation of her deepest problems, which always concern her barrenness. Darshna, one of her closest friends, feels embarrassed when she reveals to Amar that "[i]t finally happened" (11), that she is expecting. She feels discomfited by Amar's inquisitiveness as she asks her to disclose to her what the couple were feeling when it happened. Filled with pity for her, she uses a beautiful allegorical comparison to explain the sensation in her womb: "'Look, have you ever held a live bird shut in your hand?' [...] Well it's the same, but in

your blood” (12). In this way, Darshna’s happiness and poetic description of pregnancy establishes a contrast with Amar’s longing for a child and her growing despair. Amar confesses:

[...] two years and twenty days is too long for me to wait. Eaten up with longing, counting each day, waiting each month. Inside me, I’m wasting away. [...]. If I go on like this, I’ll go mad (13).

In fact, as Amar is “surrounded by child-bearing women from her community” (Aston 1999:249), her obsession with her childless situation grows. Clashing with her husband’s insensibility to her yearning, she also suffers pressure from her Indian family and the Punjabi community, who expect her to bear children. Arvind, Amar’s beloved and humorous cousin (the counterpart to Victor in *Yerma*), entreats her to follow Darshna’s example, because “[t]his house needs a child.” He tries to lighten the mood by repeating the words of Sarbjit Kaur, their relation in India: “... tell her [...] in the conception department melon is very fortifying for ladies. [...] [T]ell her to put a tikka behind *both* ears” (15; emphasis original). He leaves a message for Jaz “to think less about work” and “to dig deeper!” (15). When he departs, Amar sings to herself, first in English, then in Punjabi:

Deeper! Much deeper!
My child, it’s true
I’m torn and broken in for you.
My womb and empty cradle aches for you,
When, my child, when will you come (16).

Gradually, Amar loses her self-esteem, and this is “rooted in her ‘failure’ to conceive, to become a mother”. Indeed, “[A] *Yearning* shows,

and is critical of, the extent to which the identity of the young Asian wife is bound up in a maternal identity” (Aston 1999:250). In this sense, Amar exclaims: “A Punjabi girl who doesn’t produce sons – she is as useless as a handful of husks” (36). Aston (250) explains further that “[t]he pressure on young Asian women to conceive early in marriage was researched for the play through women’s organizations. One Asian reviewer explained:

According to Neeru Desai, chairman of the Harrow Women’s Association, [...] there is pressure on the young wife to produce the first child fairly quickly. If after a year or two of marriage, there isn’t a child, people start asking questions. It’s usually the women’s fault, even if in medical terms it isn’t (in Aston, 250).

In fact, Jaz is incapable of admitting that *he* is to blame for Amar’s childlessness. Lacking empathy with her desperate condition, and obsessed with his reputation, he unreasonably accuses a blameless Amar of vice and lunacy:

I enter the office, everybody goes quiet. [...] My regular customers, they’re not friendly like they used to be with me. [...] There’s a look in their eye. Why? You tell me why? (45)

He can put up with the lack of a child, but he cannot endure Amar’s absences from home that give rise to gossip. Undoubtedly, *A Yearning* deconstructs ‘the construction of the homogenous Asian family’ which ‘hides other realities, power relations and power struggles between different caste, class and ethnic groups, and especially between men and women’ (Patel 1998:261). Like Lorca’s Juan in *Yerma*, Jaz wants to exert his power and control over Amar. “She is the slave”, as Aston (1999:250) puts it, “the colonized ‘other’, who endorses his position as colonizer/master”. Jaz seems

to resent woman's power to create new life, and he therefore has to protect himself against her powers by keeping her subjugated (Horney in Rich (1984:114). Amar is controlled by her husband and by his frustrated spinster sisters, who are ordered to spy on her in a home that has become an unbearable prison.

Most of the women of the community, though at first they were friendly, turn against Amar and join in spreading rumours about her supposed infidelity and madness. Echoing the function of Lorca's women in *Yerma*, the women in Carter's play represent a kind of Greek chorus, with a degree of dissonance among their voices as some of them express their dissatisfaction with the traditional role expected of Asian women - to bear children and to cook samosas for their husbands. Astonishingly, and I here agree with Aston, "[t]he strongest objection to the social construction of the Asian wife/mother from within the female community comes from the voice of the old woman" (1999:251), who raises a critical, feminist voice. It is interesting to note that Lorca's "old woman" bears the epithet "pagan", which in my view stands precisely for her liberal attitude as opposed to a more conventional, Christian outlook.

Amar meets the Old Woman in a littered city park during one of her flights from an ever more suffocating home. She discloses her deepest anguish, asking startling questions such as "Why am I like a barren desert inside?" (18) and pleading with the Old Woman to tell her what she should do to have a child. In Lorca as in Carter, we are presented with two antithetical characters. While Amar agonizes over her barrenness, the Old Woman has had two husbands and fourteen children. In her life "[c]hildren came like rain" (18). She deduces rightly that Amar's arranged marriage is loveless and passionless, and she explains to her: "Our men must give us

pleasure, unplait our hair, fondle us into the right mood, prepare us for their seed, they must make us feel like a flower thirsting for rain” (19).

During their first encounter the Old Woman speaks euphemistically, trying to make Amar comprehend the need to find another man and to abandon a husband “whose rotten seed brings nothing but tears!” (21) Amar does not grasp the meaning of her metaphorical speech; instead, she complains that of late “nobody will be direct, and that everything here is a smudge of hints and nudges” (20). In their second encounter, however, the Old Woman is much more outspoken, blaming Amar’s husband directly for her childlessness, which runs counter to the established, traditional view that the woman is always to blame. She openly invites her to live with her family and to copulate with her bachelor son, “with good strong blood” (50), who will give her children. Not surprisingly, Amar objects strongly to this proposal, saying: “Water can’t flow backwards, the moon can’t shine at noon. I have my honour”, while the Old Woman stresses: “These are modern times!” (50) As in Lorca’s *Yerma*, honour plays a significant role in Carter’s *A Yearning*. Amar’s Punjabi honour will not allow her to consider taking a lover. In fact, “[t]he displacement of [...] Asian women in arranged marriages, fertility, [...] makes this an especially, but not solely, female drama” as the Old Woman “tries to teach Amar that life is for living, not wasting in impossible desires” (Hoftijzer 1995:no page).

Like *Yerma* in Lorca’s play, Amar has now reached the nadir of her maddened despair, triggered by Jaz’s desire to “possess” her sexually as her master, to subdue her to his power. She “*clutches JAZ by the throat. [...] She sustains the pressure on his neck until she kills him*” (53). Indeed, she kills the husband who would not allow her to lead her own life, who would leave her “barren forever” (54). *A Yearning* presents “[t]his violent rebellion

of the colonized ‘other’” as the only alternative to a life of domestic subjugation” (Aston 1999:250-1).

3. Conclusion

As in Lorca’s play, Amar’s tragedy transcends her failure to conceive, being rooted chiefly in her frustration as a woman suffocated by her husband and the community. She can only liberate herself from these metaphorical shackles by taking the life of her oppressor. Another alternative to a desolate life would have been to take her own life. Patel (1998:263) refers to the high suicide rate among Asian women between the ages of 16 and 35 in Britain, which is three times the national average.

I would like to conclude by reproducing to the words of another suffocated Asian wife, Kiranjit Ahluwalia, who was sentenced to prison in 1989 for the murder of her husband:

My culture is like my blood [...] It is the culture into which I was born and where I grew up which sees the women as the honour of the house. In order to uphold this false honour and glory, she is taught to endure many kinds of oppression and pain, in silence. In addition, religion also teaches her that her husband is her God and fulfilling his every desire is her religious duty. A woman who does not follow this part in our society has no respect or place in it. [...] I have come out of the jail of my husband and entered the jail of the law.

“Ahluwalia’s words might well serve as an epilogue for Amar after the “killing” of her husband. In life and in dramatic fiction, these two lawbreakers are testimony to the (violent) desperation and disempowerment that may be the hidden experience of some Asian women in their different (family) communities” (Aston 2003:140).

A Yearning, though written in a different space and time, in contemporary British Indian society, illustrates that the domination and disempowerment of women has continued since the presentation of *Yerma*, set in rural Spain in the 1930s.

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**“UNDER THE MOON” – IMAGES AND FORMS OF ‘FEMALENESS’ IN
ADRIENNE KENNEDY’S PLAYS**

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***Abstract:** This paper sheds light on the challenging imagery of femaleness in Adrienne Kennedy’s plays. Reshaping dramatic forms, she deconstructs the traditional narratives of motherhood, child bearing and birth. Her plays link the images of reproduction and proliferation with that of death. Kennedy reconstructs the fragmented self through visions of the inner terrain of the psyche which is projected through the moon-like, ever changing female body.*

***Keywords:** African American literature, feminist aesthetics, theatre*

1. Introduction

Adrienne Kennedy’s plays present terrifying images of femaleness, child bearing and the problematic parent-offspring relationship on one hand and the disturbing visions of motherhood on the other. Her nightmarish hallucinations of “turning into a river of blood” at the time of giving birth in her autobiographical play *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*

(1976) occurs in her other works as well, such as *A Lesson in Dead Language* (1968), a short play, displaying a ritualistic initiation into womanhood. Kennedy's first two one-act plays *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) and *The Owl Answers* (1965) both present a young mulatto heroine, who has to come to terms with her mixed racial heritage. The protagonists, Sarah and Clara Passmore respectively, have split personalities and are both confronted with their haunting past and ultimately they both die at the end of the plays. Even though critics such as Claudia Barnett (1996:141) and Ruby Cohn (1982:109) agree that Kennedy's plays are projections of the terrain of her protagonists' tormented psyches, the substrate of her text focus on the female body and reproduction and at the same time, the relationship between children and their ancestry.

The question of parent—child relationship has been an evergreen motif of African American literature, perhaps since Langston Hughes' poem: *The Mulatto*. The parentage and the parent-child relationship can be approached from several perspectives. From a feminist point of view, child birth is a metaphor of bringing forth text from the womb as *écriture féminine*, in which case we might expect a hysteric – in other words subversive – text. At the same time, the parent—child relationship is analogous to that of literary forefathers and foremothers to the newer generation of authors. A further perspective of the parentage and childhood therefore, is the way African American (as well as post-colonial writers, at least to some extent) relate to the culture of the colonizers.

In this essay, firstly, I argue that Kennedy's play *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers* are revisions of the white man—African American relationship from the 'post-slavery' period of American history until the 1960s. Secondly, Kennedy's works allegorize the *écriture féminine*

(women's writing) by representing the terror and pain of childbirth in plays like *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* by subverting the traditional feminine position of the mother. Thirdly, I propose to discuss the feminist aesthetics of Kennedy's plays.

2. Haunting Ancestry: Tangled Family Relations on the American Stage

The American family and its twentieth-century disintegration have featured with elemental force in the post-war American drama. The great trio of the era, Eugene O'Neil, Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee all depict the disintegration of the post-war nuclear family in the United States. According to C. W. E. Bigsby (2004:125), Edward Albee, as far as his themes are concerned, is a „post-nuclear writer“, like Beckett, but unlike Albee's European contemporary, whose works “would breed irony, here, at least in the early plays, it generates a faith in the possibility of redemption.”

Family often becomes the subject matter of literary works by African American authors. The theme is usually described sensitively, highlighting the pain and terror of giving birth to children in a society in which reproduction is the only value assigned to Black women. Providing a few examples, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Beloved* (1987) both revolve around the issues of pregnancy and birth. In the first example an eleven-year-old girl Pecola is impregnated by her own father. The incestuous relationship eventuates in a stillborn baby, whereas in *Beloved*, the story of a slave woman unfolds, a mother who kills her own daughter, so that she could not be recaptured and taken back to the plantation that she had fled.

Adrienne Kennedy's plays portray post-nuclear families with racial overtones. These plays usually present a female, mulatto character (Sarah, in

Funnyhouse of a Negro, or Clara Passmore in *The Owl Answers*), whose ancestry is problematic, to say the least. The nuclear family disintegrated in her plays to the extent that parents are seldom shown in these works. Her plays delineate only a lone female child – as if they were the counterparts of Albee’s imagined, dead and stolen babies.

The Funnyhouse of a Negro revolves around a young black student, named Sarah, who is in her twenties and has mixed racial heritage. Her father appears as a haunting Black man, who had diseased her birth. Sarah’s mother appears on stage at the beginning of the play, carrying a skull, and like the chorus in a Greek tragedy, narrates her past and circumstances leading to her death.

Black man, black man, I never should have let a black man put his hands on me.
The wild black beast raped me and now my skull is shining. (Kennedy:2001)

Sarah’s father, whose identity remains mysterious throughout the play, except that he might be a social worker, who had a sexual encounter with Sarah’s mother and later returned to Africa, thus violating the unwritten law according to which African Americans were not supposed to ‘touch’ white women.

The Owl Answers features a different, yet similar problem of parenting; different in terms of the ethnic identity of the parents, African American mother and a white father this time, but similar in the sense that the child, born out of the relationship is likewise rejected by society. Such problematic parent—offspring dynamism is the theme of Langston Hughes’ work *The Mulatto*. This polyphonic poem is a ballad about a mulatto child, who, just like his female counterpart Clara Passmore, identifies himself with the white ancestors: “I am your son, white man” (Hughes 1927:n.pag.).

The lyrical I in *The Mulatto* and Clara Passmore in *The Owl Answers* both face rejection from their white ancestors. Neither of these texts talk about bondage, nonetheless, Hughes' poem allegorizes the time of slavery, while Kennedy's play describes the consequences of the abolitionist movement, which nevertheless did not abrogate segregation and racial-based prohibitions, such as banning interracial sexual encounter. The child resulting from such usually extramarital relationships was very seldom recognized as a legitimate son or daughter of the master: "You are my son! / Like Hell" – says the white master in Hughes' poem. The white father disavows his little yellow Bastard boy as cruelly as "She, who is Clara Passmore, who is the Virgin Mary, who is the Bastard, who is the Owl," is denied by her white European ancestors: William the Conqueror, Shakespeare and Chaucer: "Bastard, if you are his ancestor why are you a Negro" (Kennedy 2001:32)

In both texts the lyrical I and Clara Passmore intend to overcome bastardry. The African American child of mixed ethnic background was kept as a bastard for many decades and consequently, the history of Black Americans is like an illegitimate child, compared with the history of the USA. W. E. B. DuBois, in *Souls of Black Folks* sets up an analogy between a child's development and her or his coming of age. The evolution of the Black race is depicted metonymically as the development of Black masculinity into "manhood" (Du Bois 1903:n.pag). The emancipation of the 'bastard' child into a legitimate one leads through his self-realization and retrieval of self-respect. He writes: "He began to have a dim feeling that, to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another" (Du Bois 1903:n.pag.) Approaching *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers*, from this perspective, we can read them as the spiritual striving of a Black

American woman for her racial identity, subjectivity and coming of age: i.e., her attempt to overcome her double bind in a white patriarchal society.

Whereas the two previously discussed plays unfold the conflict within an African American family, *Lesson in Dead Language* focuses on the larger scale society, represented by the environment of a school. It displays a classroom scene along with seven girl pupils wearing white organdy dresses and a great white dog, the teacher. The class-room is full of artefacts: highly colored statues of Biblical figures such as Jesus, Joseph, Mary and the three wise men. The lesson the girls have to learn and understand is the corporal symptom of menstruation:

WHITE DOG. (Woman's voice.) *Lesson I bleed.*

(The *PUPILS* write in unison with their arms on imaginary tablets. What they write they speak aloud.)

PUPILS. (Slowly dully.) *I bleed.*

WHITE DOG. The day the white dog died, I started to bleed. Blood came out of me.

The mechanic repetition of phrases that the girls do not even understand, the setting of a school, as a place of learning and initiation in Western culture, the religious references, all culminate in a rite of passage through which the girls acquire their biologically assigned roles in society.

While the first two plays by Kennedy (*Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers*) allegorize the search for an identity through the problematic relationship with either the Black or the White father, menstrual blood in *A Lesson in Dead Language* denotes the rite of passage through which schoolgirls are initiated into womanhood. The common motifs in these plays is kinship in a racially mixed family and the positioning of the mulatto off-spring to his or her ethnic and cultural inheritance. The active

denial on behalf of both ancestors and descendants in the first two one-act plays is replaced by passive resistance in *Lesson in Dead Language*. Although the pupils make the effort to learn the phrases within the context of the lesson, thus painstakingly trying to live up to the demands of an alien culture, they do not gain insight and understanding.

The following sections approach the subject of a family from the perspective of the mother figure. In contrast with the traditional imagery of motherhood, as a metaphor of life giving and instrument of epiphany, Kennedy's mother characters embody the pain and fear of birth, but they also celebrate the creativeness of childbirth.

3. Written in Blood: The Écriture Feminine in Kennedy's Plays

A Movie Star has to Star in Black and White takes its settings from Hollywood movies of the era: *Now, Voyager* (1942), *A Place in the Sun* (1951) and *Viva Zapata!* (1952), three classic films from the golden age of Hollywood and it exemplifies the "double consciousness" (Du Bois 1903:n.pag.) of an African American woman watching movies in which the characters are all white. Clara, the protagonist of the play is constructing her subjectivity first by identifying with the characters from Hollywood films and then by subverting this identification and constructing a new identity.

The heroine is struggling with her identity crisis in which her subjective ontological apocalypse is linked with the images conveyed by contemporary Hollywood representations of women. Clara is in a catatonic state of mind: first, she identifies with great white cinema stars; secondly, she criticizes the very hegemonic white power she identified with previously. An alter ego of Adrienne Kennedy, this character defines herself as a figure deriving from the above-mentioned film productions. As the play progresses, however, she becomes more critical of the movie productions and the roles they lay out for her. She rejects her position in society and assumes a critical attitude towards the position assigned to

African American women by protesting against racial overtones and gender-based prejudices.

The thirty-three-year-old Clara in *A Movie Star* lives in a society that encloses her in a double bind of rules and expectations. She is expected to fulfill the role of an angelic woman within her domestic and public world. She is a professional writer valued by her mother (and family) according to her actual performance of motherhood:

CLARA: I'm not unhappy mother.

MOTHER: Yes you are.

CLARA: I'm not unhappy. I'm very happy. I just want to be a writer. Please don't think I'm unhappy.

MOTHER: Your family's not together and you don't seem happy.

CLARA: I'm very happy mother. Very. I've just won an award and I'm going to have a play produced. I'm very happy.

MOTHER: When you grow up in boarding school like I did, the thing you dream of most is to see your children together with their families. (Kennedy 2001:71)

According to her socially prescribed role, Clara should become a housewife and support her husband's university career. Nevertheless, she envies him for an opportunity that was, at the same time, denied to her. After her confession concerning their doomed marriage, the character impersonating Bette Davis gives voice to Clara's emotions: "I get very jealous of you Eddie. You're doing something with your life" (Kennedy 2001:69).

Another bind in Clara's life is related to her race: whereas for Eddie, her husband, to have a teaching job at Columbia is taken for granted, for an African American woman, however, this seems out of the ordinary. The protagonist decides to become what she has always dreamed of, an acclaimed author. She says:

CLARA. (*From boat:*) Ever since I was twelve I have secretly dreamed of being a writer. Everyone says it's unrealistic for a Negro to want to write. Eddie says I've become shy and secretive and I can't accept the passage of time, and that my diaries consume me and that my diaries make me a spectator watching my life like watching a Black and white movie. (Kennedy 2001:75)

The menstrual blood and childbearing according to Claudia Barnett (1996:141) are the most significant subtexts in Kennedy's plays. As she argues, "Kennedy's plays focus on the mind, their subtexts are riddled with references to the body and the reproductive process. Kennedy's plays may be seen as expressions of failed pregnancies that end in miscarriage and madness." Relying on *Women's Time* in which Julia Kristeva argues that man and women perceive time differently, the first as production, the other as reproduction, Barnett suggests that childbearing is almost obsessive in Kennedy's plays, although a truly fruitful pregnancy is barely ever encountered in her texts. Rather, the characters' pregnancy is seen as a cause for their mental disturbance.

Instead of the traditional representation of motherhood and / or child bearing, as the metaphor for epiphany, Kennedy relates pregnancy and birth itself to insanity and death. What Clara says in *A Movie Star*: "I wonder with what or with whom can I coexist in a true union", is a reference to the desire of being loved through childbirth. However, as Claudia Barnett points out,

Clara's fragmentation—the "radical splitting" which seems to have occurred within her consciousness—has been triggered, if not caused, by a pregnancy that ended in miscarriage while her husband was fighting in Korea (Barnett:1996:142)

The troubling imagery of mother-child relationship and the fear of reproduction reinforce the representation of feminine reproduction as metaphor of artistic production. The claustrophobic spaces of these plays (mostly small, enclosed spaces: a chamber, a subway train, the Tower of London, and a hospital room) symbolize the female womb in which the creation of a new life begins. This new life metaphorically is not the child, but the female text. Claudia Barnett (1997:143) points out that although Clara writes a drama, her “play production cannot compare in value to her reproduction.” Clara, nonetheless, does not choose her family over her artistic career. She does not go back to her husband, but instead of fulfilling her traditional feminine role she meticulously writes one page a day and sees that her play is coming together, thus gaining agency through artistic creation.

Clara in *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* is a playwright, writing her own drama, and through that process she gains her own voice. Creativity and writing usually characterize male characters/authors. In their book entitled *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979:6) assert that the author “is a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis.” Although it is debatable whether female writing can be defined in terms of biological essentialism, Gilbert and Gubar (1979:7) raise the question of creative metaphors: “If the pen is a metaphorical penis, from what organ can females generate texts.” The logical answer to this question seems to be the womb. The text, then, the ‘écriture féminine’ comes forth from the body as milk and blood. In *A Movie Star has to Star in Black and White*, the heroine is pregnant, bleeds

and writes at the same time. This way the menstrual blood turns into the metaphorical ink.

Although *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black in White* is a powerful illustration of the female reproduction and artistic production analogy, we can find references and traces of writing and/or artistic creation in all the four plays mentioned so far. In *Lesson in Dead Language* the writing appears in a monotonous form. The pupils write down mechanically what their teacher teaches them. The writing is not yet creative therefore, but a mimetic and uncritical acceptance of the classic European culture. Similarly, in *The Owl Answers* writing as such appears, but not literally this time. Creative writing is symbolized by two allegorical figures: Chaucer and Shakespeare. These quintessential figures of British culture appear as guardians of the Western cultural legacy, barring the post-colonial subject Clara Passmore from taking part in her dead white father's funeral. Clara nonetheless insists on her rights to cultural inheritance and at the end of the play she ironically turns into an owl, the symbolic bird of Pallas Athena, the Greek Goddess of wisdom and arts. The owl on stage, however, takes the form of a canary, thus the play also parodies the Western European cultural tradition.

Kennedy's plays are loaded with references to such western cultural themes as Jesus, the members of the Holy Family as well as Greek and old English mythologies. Taken from myths and the Bible, characters often feature as their own caricatures. In *Funnyhouse of a Negro* Jesus – one of Sarah's selves – is presented as a yellow dwarf, while the figures of the Holy Family appear in the form of grotesque wooden statues in *A Lesson in Dead Language*. The next section focuses on *Motherhood* in which

Kennedy gives an alternative story of the crucified Jesus, subverting both the role of the mother and that of the saviour.

4. “Savage Saints”: Rethinking of Jesus’ Crucifixion in Kennedy’s *Motherhood*

Part of the cycle known as *The Alexander Plays*, *Motherhood* (2000) recounts the events of the middle-aged Suzanne Alexander, the heroine of the loosely joined plays in the cycle. Largely based on Kennedy’s life, Suzanne graduated from Ohio State University and married David Alexander, with whom she travelled to Africa and Europe. She eventually became a playwright, feeling compelled to write about: “violent imagery [...]; bloodied heads, severed limbs, dead father, dead Nazis, dying Jesus.” (Kennedy 2001:151)

Suzanne gave birth to her twin daughters while she was a student at Ohio State University, but they were murdered by their own father, one of the university professors on the campus. Beginning a new life with David Alexander, Suzanne gave birth to a son.

Shrouded in autobiographical references, the play *Sleep Deprivation Chamber* (1993) chronicles the savage beating Suzanne’s son suffered at the hands of a corrupt police officer. *Motherhood* returns to the events unfurled in *Sleep Deprivation Chamber* focusing on Suzanne’s revenge. The substrate of this text is the *Bible* and the medieval mystery and miracle plays illustrating the Holy Scripture. Suzanne joins a troop of actors in New York, in which the policeman who beat her son also acts.

This policeman who had haunted me for nine years performed a play nightly: it was an ancient miracle play.

Evenings I could hear the actors, from the roof of my brownstone where I went to rest. [...] Now nine years later I sat on the grass at the monument and watched Fox: acting the role of the Savior. (Kennedy 2001:161)

They perform a miracle that centres upon Christ's torments and crucifixion and during the performance, Suzanne murders her son's former tormentor.

The play is based on the revenge theme of medieval and Renaissance plays, such as Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. The play enacts the tense dialogue between the text of the law and the desire of taking revenge:

[...] I had wanted to find him. I wanted to find his house somewhere in the suburbs of Virginia, but the lawyers concealed any information about Fox from me. [...] "You're behaving like a mother," the lawyer said. "You could hurt your son's case. Don't interfere. (Kennedy 2001:152)

More importantly, the allegory of writing and authorship resurfaces. From the passive onlooker of the different scenes, Suzanne Alexander joins the troop: "I became their only Black member. They said I could rewrite a section of the play" (Kennedy 2001:155). The obedient, law-abiding mother orchestrates the revenge, as if directing a play and thus she brings forth death.

5. Staging Femeness: Theatricality in Kennedy's Plays

These plays are examples of the feminist perspective in staging a play on the one hand, and in the use of allegories of artistic creation on the other. Kennedy's plays are cyclical, expressing a feminist aesthetics in drama. As Patricia Schroeder (1996:71) argues, neither form, nor characterization in and of themselves are capable of defining feminist aesthetics as such.

According to her, in our approach to define feminist drama, as such, we have to focus on dramatic forms that “reflect women’s experience.” As she puts it, “a feminist play resists the oppression of traditional dramatic practice in theme and form, as well as in characterization.” (1996:71) The form of Kennedy’s plays is of paramount importance in this approach. Her plays resist the traditional, “hierarchical structure” (1996:71) of Western, male-dominated theatre, which is linear, based on the mimetic principle and 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 Schroeder 1996:71)

In contrast with the traditionally male dominated mimetic theatre, Adrienne Kennedy indeed applies kaleidoscope-like scenes and character representations. Theatricality is the comprehensive element in Kennedy’s plays. Sarah in *Funnyhouse* creates her selves (Jesus, Patrice Lumumba, Queen Victoria and the Duchess of Habsburg), which work as alternative subject positions for her.

Part of the time I live with Raymond, part of the time with God, Max Millian and [...] Albert Saxe Coburg. ... 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 try to create a space for myself in cities, New York, the Midwest, a southern town, but it becomes a lie. I try to give myself a logical relationship but that too is a lie. (Kennedy 2001:13-15)

She is able to switch among these selves, continuously acting in and out of roles. Conversely, as she is the creator of these roles or selves, she functions as a metaphorical author or 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 1995:301-302) Her authority, however, collapses, when she loses her control over her multiple selves and this leads to her death.

The notion of the character is deconstructed throughout Kennedy’s plays. Sarah in *Funnyhouse*, Clara Passmore in *The Owl* and Clara in *A Movie Star* are all acting out roles. Their role playing, however, is imperfect. Although they want to be a queen, a duchess or identify with movie stars, they can never become one or the other, and the result of their fantasy of being someone else leads the characters to madness, catatonia or ultimately, death. Turning this problem upside down and inside out, the selves projected by the heroines also act roles. They all appear as the protagonists’ created egos, thus the white selves act out the African American characters. Either way, the harmony among the actor, the role and the character is questioned. Thus the play theatricalizes the role-playing nature of the search for identity.

6. Conclusion

Even though critics argue that Adrienne Kennedy’s plays mainly present the subject’s identity crisis through the psychological torment and break-down of a usually female mulatto character, the works also often concentrate on issues of family relations, the female body and reproduction. Kennedy’s plays approach the racial relations within a family subversively, deconstructing the role of motherhood, and femaleness in general. The characters in her plays go through a ritualistic coming of age, through bleeding and pregnancy in order to gain agency.

Structurally Kennedy's plays might be considered feminist. The characters do not usually engage in dialogues, in the traditional sense of the word. The plays feature parallel monologues. Instead of forming a hierarchical relationship, the characters relate to each other paradigmatically. Their connection to one another on the one hand, and the plot's non-teleological nature, on the other (the plot consists of kaleidoscope-like scenes), result in a feminist aesthetics.

By the same token, Ihab Hassan (qtd. in Patsalidis 1995:305) argues that such plays follow the structuring of the post-modern drama, in which "Things and subjects are simultaneously out of their proper time and topos. The plays represent pluralism, making use at the same time of the tools of analytic plays (we learn about the protagonists' families from the characters, for instance) drawing the audience nevertheless into the surrealistic imagery of a split mind. Randomness and discontinuity are the chief ingredients of the plots discussed above, as the order of the scenes - and often even the lines - could be changed, or exchanged. Instead of the integration of the subjects into the proper social order, the end of the play brings disintegration, suicide, madness or murder.

Representational reality is eliminated from Kennedy's plays since it cannot, by definition, characterize African American culture. As Kennedy notes: "representational linearity (based on cause and effect) does not characterize African American culture and experience; instead, ambivalence, deterritorialization, heterogeneity, plurality, eclecticism, discontinuity, parody and paradox reign supreme" (qtd. in Patsalidis 1995:305)

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ANTI-ANTIFEMINISM IN CHAUCER'S *THE CANTERBURY TALES*

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Abstract: *A characteristic of the medieval fabliaux is the dogma of antifeminist traditions. The present article will investigate whether The Canterbury Tales, as a type of fabliaux, are antifeminist literature or if, on the contrary, they stand as a reply to this genre and indirectly militate for feminist literature. Are The Canterbury Tales antifeminist writings or something one might call 'anti-antifeminist' literature?*

Key words: *Christian etiquette in the Middle Ages, fabliaux, female dominance in marriage, natural lifestyle, romance.*

Introduction

“A characteristic of Medieval Latin writing that is widely exploited in the fabliaux [...] is the dogma of antifeminist traditions: traditions which present women, the daughters of Eve, as generally morally reprehensible and dangerous to men: insatiable and extravagant sexual sirens, [...] perjurers, temptresses or endless naggers with their tongues” (Hines 1993:31). This is

what John Hines argues in his book *The Fabliau in English*, adding that Chaucer's fabliaux in *The Canterbury Tales* are samples of the aforementioned type of antifeminist literature. The best examples would be *The Miller's Tale*, *The Prologue of the Wife of Bath's Tale* and *The Wife of Bath's Tale*. It must be noted that although the *Wife's Tale* is not a fabliau but a romance, her *Prologue* is nevertheless considered to be a typical fabliau (Benson 1997:11).

Hines' argument does not pay sufficient attention to one key element in these three literary pieces: in each of them, Chaucer indeed presents his female characters as sexual 'sirens', and sometimes he even adds a touch of cruelty and vulgarity to their portraits. It is also true that Chaucer turns the outcome of their adulterous or hedonistic acts to the advantage of these conspicuous women. In spite of their unorthodox *Weltanschauung* and *modus vivendi*, he still presents them as winners, prevailers over their husbands in their battle of the sexes. That is why, paradoxical as it may seem, the medieval poet indirectly praises these devilish, nymphomaniac female characters.

Following this line of thought, an epicentral question arises: are *The Canterbury Tales* a piece of antifeminist literature, in line with what John Hines states about fabliaux, or, on the contrary, do they stand as a response to this genre and indirectly militate for feminist literature? Are *The Canterbury Tales* antifeminist literature or something one might call 'anti-antifeminist' literature?

Body: Sly and Adulterous Female Personages

If we consider *The Miller's Tale*, Alison, the young, sensual and beautiful wife cheats on her foolish old husband John. She also makes vulgar and merciless fun of Absalom, her over-fastidious admirer, in the scene of the

misplaced kiss. Finally, Nicholas, her lover, is branded by the jealous Absalom, while the latter endures a threefold humiliation: first Alison openly mocks him while he is singing a love song in the middle of the night, secondly he endures the scene of the misplaced kiss and lastly he is forced to witness Nicholas' flatulence.

Beyond any doubt, husband, lover and admirer all endure their fair share of humiliation and physical pain. Each of them has to undergo suffering except *the one* who is the real sinner: Alison, the adulterous, cruel and vulgar wife. Although she is the one causing trouble to each of them and is the source of evil, nevertheless she is the *only one* who is not punished by Chaucer in any way. What is more, she emerges as the only character in her group who thoroughly enjoys this adventure and comes out scot-free, as the sole victor.

Following Alison, the Wife of Bath is a second example for Chaucer's positionality regarding his evil female characters: she embodies hedonism, an easy-going carelessness ("Since I twelve year was of age, / [...] Husbands at the church door have I had five", Chaucer 2000:142), sexuality taken to vulgarity or even to perversity ("But of no number mention made he, / Of bigamy or of octogamy; / Why then should men speak of it villainy?" (142); "In wifhood I will use mine instrument / As freely as my Maker hath it sent" (144) and, above all, female dominance in marriage ("Which shall be both my debtor and my thrall, / And have his tribulation withal / Upon his flesh, while that I am his wife. / I have the power during all my life / Upon his proper body, and not he" (144).

What is more, in the same way as Alison does, the Wife of Bath also takes full advantage of the men in her life: she is the only one who fully enjoys

her adventures and the sole victor as well. By exploiting all her five husbands to the maximum, she receives *material* profit from them and sexual pleasure too: “They had me giv’n their land and their treasure, of no account / Me needed not do longer diligence / To win their love, or do them reverence. / They loved me so well, by God above, / That I tolde no dainty of their love. / A wise woman will busy her ever-in-one / To get their love, where that she hath none. / But, since I had them wholly in my hand, / And that they had me given all their land, / Why should I keep them for to please, / But it were for my profit, or mine ease?” (145).

Lastly, we scarcely need mention that *dominance* in her marriages is hers as well. These are the three main gains she extorts from her pitiful husbands and the three paramount pillars of her existence.

Promoting Novelty and the Natural: Female versus Male Characters.

Why should Chaucer have praised his adulterous, vulgar female characters and made them into the victors of his *Tales*, thus showing them indirect or veiled appreciation? As proves to be the case, the *Tales* are not antifeminist literature but in fact anti-antifeminist literature, that is, veiled praise of womanhood. They function “as a kind of interface between readings from antifeminism and responses to antifeminism” and the Wife of Bath’s part becomes an up-front reply to medieval antifeminist literature (Blamires 1992:198). Yet my epicentral question craves an answer: *why does Chaucer choose to praise this type of female characters, who are, morally speaking, fallen, putrid, decayed? Why does he offer them auctorial salvation, especially considering the fact that he was living in the Middle Ages, when the*

intransigent Christian moral code was omnipotent and unequivocally castigated such (female sexual) behavior? Why does the poet choose to take the risk of confronting the Church?

The most unambiguous answer to this question is an element that these two female characters share, their metaphorical common denominator: their enviable vital force, their effervescent existential vigor, their exuberance for life as a very simple, yet natural and grand celebration. Their *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* presuppose a quite simple yet natural philosophy: living life in a very sprightly but at the same time in a hedonistic way, enjoying every moment of life and of men's weakness, without ever suffering from feelings of apprehension. They enjoy life's (and men's) spontaneous gifts, basing all their conduct on their own instinctive and passionate decisions, and they place their personal, feminine wellbeing above all social, moral and religious Procrustean matrices.

I will mention in this context the portrait we are given of Alison in *The Miller's Tale*, which suggests her close connection with Nature and with a thoroughly natural lifestyle, as it contains numerous associations with natural elements: "Fair was this younge wife, and therewithal / As any weasel her body gent and small / A seint she weared, barred all of silk, / A barm-cloth eke as white as morning milk / Upon her lendes, full of many a gore / White was her smock, and broider'd all before, / And eke behind, on her collar about / Of coal-black silk, within and eke without" (89); "But of her song, it was as loud and lively / As any swallow chittering on a barn / As any kid or calf following his dame. / Her mouth was sweet as braket, or as mead / Or hoard of apples, laid in hay or heath. / Wincing she was as is a jolly colt" (90).

She seems to be part of Nature herself and therefore she has no sophisticated existence such as that of her lover Nicholas, the scholar. Alison only enjoys human life within an unaffected, genuine, instinctual framework, based on her feminine and gender-specific impulses, wit and presence of mind. At the other end of the spectrum, Nicholas represents masculinity-associated (yet sterile) reason. He is the perfect bookworm, who lives life according to the books he reads and to what he deciphers from the stars, since he is an astrologer

As a visionary of his age, Chaucer appears to be announcing the imminent twilight of the Middle Ages, by constantly castigating the unnatural, old-fashioned, inflexible (male) characters who seem to be prisoners of the previous age. On the other hand he promotes his natural, ingenious (female) personages, the only ones who dare challenge the obsolete etiquette of the past in an *avant-garde* fashion.

Alison's vivacious lifestyle is also opposed to that of her husband, whom Chaucer portrays as a cuckolded and jealous elderly husband. He is clearly presented as ridiculous as he constantly acts *against the laws of nature* and *against natural impulses*, by imprisoning his beautiful young wife in a golden cage out of fear that she may cheat on him. He therefore figures as a stubborn opponent of women's freedom and of the laws of natural attraction, while Chaucer constantly argues in favor of a natural lifestyle, both bodily and spiritually. This is why Chaucer does not chastise Alison, although she is vulgar, cruel and adulterous, since she proves wise enough to live her life in a healthy and natural manner.

This bohemian lifestyle characterises the Wife of Bath as well, since she too enjoys her human condition on the basis of her own gender-specific

instincts and needs: excessive sexuality and corporeality, vulgar verbal outbursts, material exploitation of all her husbands and an ostentatious and extravagant attitude. She also symbolizes all the cunning tricks that a woman of the Middle Ages needed to resort to in order to survive amidst the heteronormative patriarchal dominance that prevailed in those times: “Blessed be God that I have wedded five! / Welcome the sixth whenever that he shall” (142). This is why Chaucer repeatedly presents her in a favorable light, never accusing or even making fun of her, despite her unorthodox behavior.

It is becoming evident that Chaucer advocates a natural *modus vivendi* and an existential philosophy situated as close as possible to Nature, to one’s own *soma* and *spiritus*, and to one’s deepest psychological and spiritual roots, even if this implies a certain amount of vulgarity, excessive (female) sexuality, female dominance in marriage or an easygoing attitude on moral issues. Chaucer’s auctorial voice militates for the principle of naturalness as the philosophical foundation of a complete and fulfilling existence.

According to this *Weltanschauung*, a natural lifestyle also presupposes marrying ‘naturally’, that is, according to one’s feelings and desires. One need not force or bend the spontaneous laws of attraction: “Men shoulde wedden after their estate, / For youth and eld are often at debate” (89). This is the Miller’s firm argument at the opening of his *Tale*, yet it in fact hides Chaucer’s similar conviction. Consequently, the poet does not blame Alison for cheating on her jealous old husband. According to Chaucer’s semi-veiled argumentation, a young, vivacious damsel like Alison should follow her heart’s desires: it is no surprise that she fancies a handsome man who is closer to her in age. Thus, in not doing anything abominable but merely following the dictates of nature,

Alison is not sinful in any way. She is only surviving in an encrypted, patriarchal society. The medieval patriarchal system is one further element that Chaucer is arguing against and he therefore promotes the *avant-garde* Alison.

The Wife of Bath's socio-marital situation is quite different from Alison's. Since she has been married five times, her last husband, the one whom she values most, was half her age, that is, only twenty years old. Despite the age difference they were quite happy together and she has even outlived him. One might therefore inquire why the idea of same-age relationships does not apply in her case.

One reason might be the fact that the Wife of Bath is a more complex character than Alison and is able to transcend the above-mentioned relationship model. Although no longer young, she thinks, feels and acts as if she were a young lass. Although she was twice her last husband's age she was as fresh and voluptuous as a young woman, thus completely fulfilling her young husband's desires: "I was a lusty one, / And fair, and rich, and young, and well begone / For certes I am all venerian / In feeling, and my heart is martian; / Venus me gave my lust and liquorishness, / And Mars gave me my sturdy hardiness" (153). This is why Chaucer does not criticise her; far from it, he praises her.

Women's Domination in Marriage

As stated above, the common denominator for these two female characters is their natural lifestyle. Nevertheless one may detect an additional factor in the case of the Wife of Bath. Her guiding principle in life is female domination in marriage ("mastery") and she has acted accordingly in all five of her marriages. This also becomes the central theme of her *Tale*: what women

desire most in marriage, namely “Women desire to have the sovereignty / As well over their husband as their love / And for to be in mastery him above” (162).

Adopting a feminist position, Chaucer never criticises or reprimands her but instead portrays her as a good-humored, lively, shrewd wife who was intelligent enough to get the maximum from each of her husbands and who knows how to enjoy marriage and life in general. Chaucer seems to be in agreement with this philosophy of life, since he never castigates any of his female personages. This can be taken as yet another argument for the view that the three pieces under discussion are feminist literature in disguise.

What stops us in our tracks here is that Chaucer was himself a married man. Why does he argue in favor of his own gender’s oppression in marriage? It is by no means easy to reply to this question and to find an explanation for Chaucer’s support for female domination in marriage. He was married to his wife, Philippa, for twenty-one years, until she predeceased him. No marital or sexual scandals are recorded in any documents in connection with their marriage, except for one possible sexual assault episode in 1380 involving Chaucer (Benson 1987:xxi). Therefore, although fourteenth-century marriages were hardly ever founded on love, one may still presume that Chaucer had at least a peaceful marriage, free of scandals and violence. This is at odds with the ideal of female dominance within the married couple that he promotes in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Of course, the apparent lack of specific sexual scandals in Chaucer’s life could be politically influenced, since he was a diplomat and a prominent member of the state apparatus. Any possible blemish in his biography would

have automatically blemished the image of his country (which he represented abroad in his role of ambassador) and the king's image as well. Chaucer worked directly for His Majesty as a tax collector and customs official.

Women Placed above Men

Another detail that indicates that these three pieces in *The Canterbury Tales* are feminist literature is the fact that the knight in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* inflicts the most horrible offence upon womankind: he commits a rape. The royal court feels such abhorrence that the king sentences the knight to death. Paradoxically, it is the representatives of the trauma-suffering gender who save him on three different occasions: first, the queen herself persuades the king to grant the knight a last chance; second, the old woman provides him with the right answer and thus saves his life; finally, the same old woman turns into a beautiful young wife, making the knight (now her wedded husband) a happily married man till his old age.

This *Tale* presents the most courteous praise Chaucer could ever have brought to womanhood: in this episode he presents ladies as being superior to men in terms of clemency, wisdom, willpower and in their power to bring about changes in their social and marital life. This is why the aforementioned feminist compliment/argument once again suggests Chaucer's idea of female superiority over men in marriage and in decision-making. As Benson argues, the old woman is able to perform a double transformation and improvement: firstly, she herself changes from an ugly old woman into a charming young lady, thus symbolizing that a woman "is mistress of her own destiny, able to *effect* her own transformation at will" (Benson 1987:11). Secondly, not only does she

alter her own physical appearance, but she holds the power to bring about transformation on the other gender too, turning her violent rapist husband into a meek and gentle man. By acknowledging her power, Chaucer acknowledges the female power to influence and to effect changes in general, thus once again praising the opposite gender.

A further argument in favor of Chaucer's feminist auctorial position is the fact that he even presents the knight as a weaker person than his wife. Although the knight is the medieval symbol of physical, moral and spiritual strength he proves incapable of making a decision when confronted by his wife as to whether he would prefer her to be young and possibly adulterous or aged yet faithful. He lacks the moral strength to make the decision and in a humble and humiliated tone he implores his wife to choose on his behalf. Furthermore, he imposes no conditions on his acceptance of her choice, whatever that choice may be. In other words, he accepts her "mastery". As a reward, the old lady makes the right choice, thus gaining her "mastery". The two of them commence a fairy tale-like love relationship and live happily ever after.

Consequently, Chaucer is implicitly advancing one further feminist argument: if the woman governs in marriage and prevails over her husband, their marriage will be a happy union. Following the poet's argumentation, the reader may conclude that the author is in favor of this female dominance, even if it means the undermining of his own gender's freedom in marriage.

The Canterbury Tales prove to be a consistent discourse in praise of the fair sex, since in Chaucer's opinion women live their lives closer to their natural instincts and are wiser within marital life. What is nevertheless puzzling is that women's natural *modus vivendi* often implies mercilessness, vulgarity

and opportunism, yet the poet seems to promote these unorthodox examples. If Chaucer was a leading political, cultural and social figure in the whole of Western Europe (Spain, Italy, France), why would he have chosen to influence his contemporary society in a negative way by promoting such questionable characters?

The second riddle that surprises the reader is the fact that Chaucer was not only a politician but a tax collector and a customs official as well. One would never expect a representative of the state apparatus to support the idea of hedonism and of an easygoing life style. Thirdly, *The Canterbury Tales* was written in the Late Middle Ages, a period during which women were considered to be the lawful possessions of their husbands, so ideas such as hedonism or female “mastery” were considered deeply heretical. Yet Chaucer argues in favor of them, thus contradicting the cultural and social principles of his time.

Conclusions

A possible answer to these above-mentioned riddles is the fact that Geoffrey Chaucer proves to be a revolutionary and almost a heretical writer, arguing against the patriarchal etiquette of his age. He brilliantly succeeds in portraying these anti-canonical female characters in such a way that the reader himself adopts a positive attitude towards them, despite their questionable morality. A number of questions arise in the postmodern reader’s mind: do we admire these female characters because of their existential wisdom and their enviable healthy humor? In an epoch of deep patriarchal dominance they manage to find viable ways to enjoy life to the utmost, with any existential worries fading into abstraction.

Or, on the other hand, do we appreciate them on account of their frankness and freshness? They prove to be the most zestful defenders of life, vitality and their female right to enjoy life in an age when this was considered almost impossible or indeed immoral.

One last rhetorical question derives from the relationship between the contemporary reader and Chaucer's female personages: do women of the twenty-first century have the same existential wisdom to survive in their postmodern vise and enjoy life and maintain their marriages / relationships? Do they manage to maintain the fragile balance of inner and outer happiness under the double or threefold burden of the contemporary vise of marriage – motherhood – career?

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**WOMEN WHO HAVE FEAR OF UNCLE SILAS: A STYLISTIC
APPROACH**

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***Abstract:** The present paper attempts to categorize the different types of feminine characters who interact in one way or another with Silas Ruthyn. Emphasis will be placed upon the stylistic marks that appear in the Sheridan Le Fanu novel in which the mauvais sujet is dealt with.*

***Keywords:** fear, literary stylistics, Uncle Silas, women*

1.Introduction

Perhaps the first true Victorian neo-Gothic novel, *Uncle Silas* was written by the Anglo-Irish writer Joseph Sheridan LeFanu, a member of the same Anglo-Irish ascendancy that produced many other impressive personalities. The novel has a very traditional plot and was praised above all for its air of tension.

Beautiful Maud belongs to a heroine-prototype that appears in a very large number of works. The heiress promises her exacting and aristocratic father that she will restore the family's honour. She is entangled in an odd relationship with her uncle, a relationship that can be termed magnetic to "everything strangest and most powerful" (Bowen 1950:3) in Le Fanu's imagination and temperament. According to Elizabeth Bowen, "Accretion is a major factor in art. Le Fanu could not be rid of the niece and uncle till he had built around them a comprehensive book." (Bowen 1950:3) In fact, Uncle Silas appears in the novel at quite a late point. The author first chooses only to hint at him. Then the reader is presented with a portrait of him painted when he was young – a portrait that was to create a deep impression upon his naïve young niece – and only later does Maud meet him in person. Le Fanu uses this strategy in order to create tension and enrich the atmosphere required in the adventures of a Gothic heroine.

As is usual in Le Fanu, the victimized protagonists are female. The writer uses Ann Radcliffe's Gothic frame, which favours the "feminine romance" in which a girl is carried away from home by force. Nevertheless, Le Fanu departs from Radcliffe's typology by choosing to place the villain in the family. This time the danger comes from within the family, and thus Le Fanu "renders the gates that are supposed to protect the female victim from the outside ineffectual, as he enters them willingly, and finds danger within." (Ogawa 2007:19)

2. Women Characters in *Uncle Silas*

The characters in *Uncle Silas*, the story of a Gothic heroine whose life is in danger, may be categorized as either life-dealing or death-dealing, depending on whose side they are on. The feminine characters revolve around either Maud or Silas – they are the two polarizing centres - and it is in connection with their interests that they play a part in the economy of the novel. Maud’s satellites are Cousin Monica and, later in the novel, the gypsy enchantress, Milly, and Meg Hawkes. The only feminine character linked with Silas is Madame de la Rougierre. There are also two other less important characters – two servants: Mary Quince, Maud’s companion, and Old Wyatt (or Old L’Amour as Milly nicknames her), Silas’s faithful servant. The only feminine character who gains a mention in the novel but who has no connection with Maud’s fate is Silas’s dead wife. The explanation of her presence in the novel is to be found in Le Fanu’s interest in being accepted and read by an English audience. Silas’s low-class wife is a presence designed to please the English reader. Monica Knollys represents her to Maud as having been coarse and vulgar: “not a bit unworldly, but very vicious [...] She was very beautiful, curiously beautiful, for a person of her station [...] – elegantly beautiful, but perfectly low and stupid” (Le Fanu 1864:148). Le Fanu chose to undermine his own Irish peerage in some passages in the novel. He even opted for a setting in England. Nevertheless, he developed the text’s directly and structurally Irish features through “its emphasis on sexual corruption and its preoccupation with Maud’s femininity” (Howes 1992:168).

Uncertainty in Anglo-Irish discourses was connected with representations of gender and sexuality. Given the circumstances of the Irish having to be assimilated to the English model of good citizens and of the

imperial discourses that characterized such assimilation as a progress from barbarism to civilization, it was normal for specters to haunt the colonial and especially the Anglo-Irish imagination. Colonial discourses were used to allegorize Anglo-Irish relations in a family romance and expressed “fear of such a romance between Saxon and Celt on a literal level” (Howes 1992:170). This contemporary assimilationist trend was marked by some central ambivalences that appear more evidently in Anglo-Irish literature, as demonstrated by Matthew Arnold’s *On the Study of Celtic Literature*. Arnold connects the Celts to femininity, marked by nervousness, inconsistency, and lack of balance:

no doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine ‘idiosyncrasy’ he has an affinity to [quoted in Howes 1992:347]

As contemporary theories on the racial differences between Saxon and Celt represented this as, in part, a general difference, it is only natural that Anglo-Irish texts should have interrogated the prevailing political structures and issues through representations of romance, sexuality and gender. While not choosing an Irish setting, Le Fanu prefers to introduce the sexual corruption of Silas’s unfortunate marriage to a lower-class Celt. Maud is placed at the centre of this conflictual issue: a great part of the plot revolves around her gradual discovery of her uncle’s real nature. Her incomplete “relation to and ignorance of her heritage are part of her gendered unfitness for the task entrusted to her.” (Howes 1992:180) Her father pities her, considering her to be too young.

Nevertheless, he decides to perpetuate her ignorance about the sacrifice he is demanding of her. Maud's femininity renders her potentially inadequate to be an agent of traditional and genealogical continuity. She even seems to hold the same opinion as her father, commenting, after a number of years, that she was "but a hysterical girl". She views herself as possessing a "peculiar temperament" and her narrative constantly brings to the fore her weakness of character and the precarious state of her nerves. The adjective "nervous" is used so many times with reference to Maud that we are led to think she is hysterical. Marjorie Howes emphasises the fact that "the self-accusatory narrative of a self-confessed hysteric has precisely the structure of the Anglo-Irish Gothic." (Howes 1992:181) At the very beginning of the novel, Maud describes herself as a girl "of a little more than seventeen, looking, I believe, younger still; slight and rather tall, with a great deal of golden hair, dark-eyed, and with a *countenance rather sensitive and melancholy*" (Le Fanu 1864:5). To this first description of herself one may add a considerable number of subsequent descriptions, all of them contributing to the portrait of the Gothic heroine *par excellence*. Her sensitivity and melancholy are surely shaped in accordance with a thoroughly Gothic atmosphere, full of gloom and mystery: "great gusts were rattling at the windows, and a wailing and thundering among our tall trees and ivied chimneys – a *very dark night*, and a very cheerful fire blazing, a pleasant mixture of good round coal and spluttering dry wood, in a genuine old fireplace, in a *somber old room*." (Le Fanu 1864:5), "It is a long, narrow room, with two tall, slim windows at the far end, now draped in *dark curtains*. *Dusky* it was with but one candle" (Le Fanu 1864:9). The lexical sets of gloom, brooding atmosphere, fear and suspense appear with great frequency

throughout the novel: *very dark night, somber old room* (p. 5), *dark curtains, dusky* (p. 9), “the scene grew *more sad and lonely*” (p. 36) and so on.

Marjorie Howes rightly considers that the Anglo-Irish Gothic’s preoccupation with “unreliable, alienated, and empty centers of political power, and its focus on internal sexual corruption, find their corollary in Maud’s emphasis on her helplessness, self-doubt, and emotional instability” (Howes 1992:181), both of these features invoking the contemporary definitions of femininity that linked it to nervous weakness and disease. The general impression is that this nervousness is somehow imposed by circumstances and especially by her *gouvernante* and, of course, by the atmosphere of her home: “I had more than an apprehension of her temper and fear of possibly abused authority. The *large-featured, smirking phantom*, saluting me *so oddly* in the moonlight, retained ever after its *peculiar and unpleasant hold upon my nerves.*” (p. 21); “Madame was on an unusually large scale, a circumstance which made some of her traits more startling, and altogether rendered her in her strange way, more awful in the eyes of a *nervous child*, I may say, such as I was.” (pp. 22-23); “She was by no means a pleasant *gouvernante* for a *nervous girl* of my years.” (p. 23); “These strange occurrences helped, I think, just then to *make me nervous*, and prepared the way for the odd sort of ascendancy which, through my sense of the mysterious and supernatural, that repulsive Frenchwoman was gradually, and it seemed without effort, establishing over me.” (p. 15); “Out went Madame’s candle, and at the same moment, with a scream, I walked in the dark – still fancying myself in the library; and for an hour after I continued in a *hysterical state.*” (p. 34); “‘I’ll stay here,’ I said, a little angry – for I was *angry as well as nervous*; and through my fear was that

indignation at her extravagances which mimicked lunacy so unpleasantly, and were, I knew, designed to frighten me.” (p. 37). All the circumstances of her becoming angry seem to have been dictated by Madame de la Rougierre, who behaves so strangely: *large-featured, smirking phantom, saluting me so oddly, peculiar and unpleasant hold upon my nerves, unusually large scale, her strange way, by no means a pleasant gouvernante, the odd sort of ascendancy, mimicked lunacy, strange occurrences*. [+Odd] is the semantic trait that governs Madame de la Rougierre’s behaviour. More than this, she appears no more woman than man, with her strange mixture of features that border upon monstrosity: “was that apparition which had *impressed me so unpleasantly* to take the command of me, to sit alone with me, and haunt me perpetually with *her sinister looks and shrilly gabble?*”(p. 21), “*She eats like a wolf*, she does, the great raw-boned hannimal ... you *never saw such a sight*. The great long nose and hollow cheeks of her, and *oogh! Such a mouth!* I felt a’most like little Red Riding-Hood” (Mary Quince’s description), “She was tall, masculine, a *little ghastly* perhaps, and draped in *purple silk*, with a lace cap, and great bands of *black hair*, too thick and black, perhaps, to correspond quite naturally with her *bleached and sallow* skin, her hollow jaws, and the fine but *grim wrinkles* traced about her brows and eyelids” (p. 22). The characterization made by Mary Quince stresses her beast-like behaviour – *she eats like a wolf* – a comparison very common in Gothic, drawing attention to her abnormality. The colours that appear in the physical description of her – red, black and white (*purple silk, black hair, bleached and sallow skin*) – are in accordance with Mary Quince’s perception of her as a nightmarish wolf-like Gothic presence. Mary Quince’s exclamation “*oogh! Such a mouth!*” completes the portrait of this strange

woman, adding, through its element of inter-textuality, further symbolic meanings of Madame de la Rougierre's presence in the house. With such a *gouvernante* and such gloomy surroundings it is natural that another semantic trait appearing in the descriptions of Maud's life should be [+Fear]: *peculiar and unpleasant hold upon my nerves, designed to frighten me, with a scream, I walked in, made some of her traits more startling*, [+Dread]: "I was frightened – I was wounded – burst into tears" (p. 149) Later in the novel, Maud will define herself as follows: "I think I had the mental attributes of courage; but then I was but a *hysterical girl*" (p. 108). Her definition must be read in connection with the background to her experiences: "*Feverish and frightened* I felt that night. It was sympathy, I fancy, with the weather. The *sun had set stormily*. Though the *air was still*, the *sky looked wild and storm-swept*. The *crowding clouds*, slanting in the attitude of flight, reflected their own sacred aspect upon my spirits. *My grief darkened* with a wild presaging of danger, and a sense of the supernatural fell upon me. It was the saddest and most woeful evening that had come since my beloved father's death." (p. 121). The author uses inversion (*feverish and frightened* I felt that night), epithets (*sun had set stormily*, *air was still*, *sky looked wild and storm-swept*, *crowding clouds*, *wild presaging of danger*), metaphors (*my grief darkened*), and accumulation (*the saddest and most woeful evening*) in order to create the appropriate atmosphere for a Gothic heroine.

Although *Uncle Silas* has been described as a sexless novel, the most dangerous element in Maud's femininity is her sexual vulnerability. She views her femininity as a set of very probably dangerous sexual weaknesses and instabilities. Her assertion that if a woman is considered to be the weaker sex

she should therefore act as such may be illustrative of the Anglo-Irish assimilationist ideology mentioned above. Maud's femininity is an element of internal corruption within her, a link with the barbarous, and she needs to undergo a process of observation and regulation. Milly is the best example of the unregulated and uneducated female character: her education is meant to make her less unreliable and less potentially disruptive. Uncle Silas defines Milly as a "very finished Miss Hoyden" and considers that her wildness of character is due to "that line of circumvallation which has, ever since [her] birth, intercepted all civilization on its way to Bartram" (p. 240). Maud is the element of civilisation that is meant to transform Milly, thus reinforcing the novel's sense of "female social and sexual identity as something that must be carefully constructed to avoid chaos" (Howes 1992:183).

Choosing a different angle of view, a realist one, the entire evolution of this Gothic heroine may be conceived as a struggle towards the ultimate solution: Maud's integration into civilized society. According to Claire Kahane, at the core of the Gothic novel lies hidden the "spectral presence of a dead-undead mother, archaic and all-encompassing, a ghost signifying the problematics of femininity which the heroine must confront". (Kahane 1985: 336). The function of mother may be ascribed to Cousin Monica, a very warm and friendly presence who always gives Maud good advice. If we adopt this perspective, according to which the central mystery of the Gothic has to do with the problems of femininity and motherhood, Maud's leaving the decay represented by Knowl stands for her confrontation with the problematics of femininity. She leaves Knowl to confront her nervousness and her hysterical tendencies. Dangers, in the shape of Captain Oakely and Dudley Ruthyn, will

inevitably appear. In the end Maud proves to be victorious and happily marries Lord Ilbury, subsequently bearing him a son. In this way she achieves a socially acceptable femininity and becomes integrated into civilized society. Through her advantageous marriage – a proof of her successful management of sexual threats – and through her role in civilizing Milly, she demonstrates her affiliation with the Anglo-Irish tradition represented by her father. On the other hand, her unstable cast of mind situates her on the border of barbarous instability, corruption and danger. As Marjorie Howes states, the novel's "preoccupation with Maud's femininity, its covert association of dangerous femininity with a specifically Irish corruption, its emphasis on the process of constructing a more stable female character through education and civilization, and its representation of sexual misalliance as the exemplary betrayal of tradition, all constitute its distinct Anglo-Irishness and subtly distinguish it from the English sensational thrillers of the period with which it competed." (p. 186)

In this context Madame de la Rougierre, through her French origins, is intended to represent a corrupting Continental influence, thus once more emphasizing the danger of assimilation. We witness a circular chain of "education": Maud is trying to civilize her barbaric cousin, while at the same time being the subject of education by the French governess, who is totally subservient to Silas Ruthyn. Duplicitous, grotesque, alcoholic, foreign and gender-ambivalent, Madame de la Rougierre is crucial to Maud's story and to the fate of her family: this is for Maud precisely the period of transition from girlhood, dominated by the father, to womanhood, dominated by the husband. As Elizabeth Bowen stresses when referring to the governess and the master in *Uncle Silas*, "As a woman, she can intrude on the girl at all points [...] While

the uncle gains monstrousness by distance, the governess gains in monstrousness by closeness” (in Mangum 1997:215).

Madame de la Rougierre proves to be a character of nightmare rather than of education: she is a witch, a self-proclaimed “Madame le Morgue – Mrs Deadhouse”. We never discover where Austin Ruthyn found her, yet the novel will later disclose that she is in league with Silas in his attempts to lay hands on Austin’s will.

Obsessed with death, Madame frequently talks to Maud of ghosts and loves solitary graveyards. She threatens to introduce Maud to her friends “Monsieur Cadavre and Monsieur Squelette”. Her threats alternate with pleasant words and promises and her gloom is punctuated by bursts of wild, probably drunken, hilarity. A veritable Gothic character, the *gouvernante* is an ogress figure, spreading horror around her: “I did not know well what to make of this woman, *whom I feared with a vein of superstitious dread. I hated being alone with her after dusk in the school-room*” (p. 26); “Her eyes were turned in the direction of the stairs, from which only she apprehended surprise. Her great mouth was open, and her eyes absolutely goggled with eagerness. She was *devouring* all that was passing there. I drew back into the shadow with a kind of disgust and horror. She was transformed into a great gaping reptile. I felt that I could have thrown something at her; but a kind of fear made me recede again towards my room.” (p. 28) Maud’s description assigns her *gouvernante* to the animal realm: this time she is like a reptile. Animality is rendered through the description of her mouth – *her mouth was open* – and of her eyes – *absolutely goggled with eagerness*. The verb “devouring” makes the scene perfect, inducing the idea of a fierce predatory animal. Another scene presents her as a representative of the

animal kingdom once again – this time under the guise of a bird of prey: “She looked steadily in my face and *very wickedly*. I gazed at her as with dazzled eyes - I suppose as the feathered prey do at the owl that glares on them by night. I neither moved back nor forward, but stared at her quite helplessly.” (p. 79) The expression of Madame’s eyes dominates the scene. In fact this is the description of two pairs of eyes, one pair dominating the other, as shown by the antonymic pair “looked steadily [...] and very wickedly” and “gazed at her with dazzled eyes”. All the time Madame de la Rougierre dominates Maud by looking at her in such a way that the young heroine grows more and more frightened: “The large sinister face looked on me for a second with its latent sneer”, “she said quietly, and eyeing me with a *sinister smile*” (p. 101), “Madame’s *evil smile*, nevertheless, from time to time, would sail across my vision with a *silent menace*, and my spirits sank”(p. 102) [+Evil] (*evil smile*, *silent menace*, *very wickedly* and [+Monstrous animality] (*sinister smile*, *devouring*) are perhaps the most representative semantic traits that dominate the descriptions of Madame in the novel.

Le Fanu’s style is “translucent, at once simple and subtle” (Bowen 1950:3) and is ideal for transitions of the alternation type: surprising events occur one after the other, proving Le Fanu’s genius for the unexpected, both in mood and in event. Maud exemplifies such transitions: before coming to Bartram-Haugh she was extremely tense and full of apprehension. Once she has arrived there, Bartram-Haugh appears a site of freedom and delight when compared to Knowl. In her uncle’s house Maud has company of her own age and enjoys the opposite of the somber and repressive atmosphere of her home.

Every chapter brings something surprising, always filtered through Maud's feelings.

The absolute opposite of Madame de la Rougierre, Cousin Monica is portrayed as a friendly and likeable person. Her function is one of lightening the gloom Maud lives in. [+Gloom] and [+Dread] are semantic features present in the description of Maud's home. Maud herself notices a change: "and indeed, just then those black-panelled and pictured walls, and that quaint, misshapen room, seemed to have changed their stern and awful character for something wonderfully pleasanter to me" (p. 44) The young heroine begins to realize that there is more to life than she has previously seen or imagined.

Monica seems to assume the role of a mother figure. However, her advice is not very well supported by arguments – she knows things she does not want to tell her cousin. This technique of holding back information enhances the tension and suspense, especially since Maud's life depends on uncovering some horrid secret.

3. Conclusion

If we consider the entire range of feminine characters in the novel, Maud stands out as a character who exemplifies the position of women prior to the Married Women's Property Act (1872) and the movement towards emancipation. What distinguishes her is the fact that she is strong in spite of her appearance of intimidated heiress.

Through his disposition of characters, Le Fanu "shows himself, as a novelist, admirably professional, in the sense that few of his contemporaries were" (Bowen 1950:13). We may observe that not a single character is

superfluous, not one fails to play his or her part in the plot. They are all very well integrated into the atmosphere, some of them creating a picturesque effect (due either to their physical appearance or to their language). Both through his characters and also through his skill in rendering a Gothic atmosphere and Gothic subject-matter in a way that was highly appreciated, Sheridan Le Fanu, in *Uncle Silas*, proved that he was in advance of his time, not behind it, as the work is “not the last, belated Gothic romance, but the first (or among the first) of the psychological thrillers” (Elizabeth Bowen), and since it possesses, as terror-writing, a voluptuousness that has never again been achieved.

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THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN MANJU
KAPUR'S *DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS*

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Abstract: *This paper attempts an analysis of Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters from the perspective of mother-daughter relationships. Starting from the assumption that the mother plays a crucial part in socialising children into traditional gender roles, I will focus on family relations and women's quest for identity in an Indian society set against the backdrop of Partition.*

Keywords: *daughter, identity, mother, space.*

Introduction

When approaching Manju Kapur's prose for the first time, the reader is impressed by the transparent, unthreatening titles of her books (*Difficult Daughters*, *Home*, *A Married Woman*, *The Immigrant*), their linear plots and lucid dialogues. At a closer look, one notices that the stillness of her prose conceals an acute understanding of human relationships and a subtle analysis of traditional Indian society. This style of writing makes itself felt from the very beginning. Thus, in her first, much-acclaimed novel *Difficult*

Daughters (1998), Manju Kapur presents a saga of three generations of women – Kasturi (the mother of Virmati), Virmati (the main female protagonist) and Ida (the daughter of Virmati) – who try to find their own space and shape their own identity in the context of various intricate systems of male domination. The arena in which all forces are deployed is the apparently secure space of the home. The narrator of the events is Ida, who tells the story of her mother as she has learnt it from her relatives, the places she has visited and the discoveries she herself has made. As the title suggests, the novel is about daughters and, by implication, about their mothers, and we may thus identify its main theme as the mother-daughter relationship. Mother and daughter extend the feminine consciousness, and we can say, with Jung, that “every mother contains her daughter in herself and every daughter her mother, and that every woman extends backwards into her mother and forward into her daughter” (2006:170). In what follows, we shall discuss the symbolic mother-daughter attachment, emphasising the determining role that it plays in the construction of feminine identity and in the female quest for independence and self-discovery.

The “Murder” of the Mother

In *Difficult Daughters*, motherhood is treated both as a female experience and as the psychological root of identity formation. The spectre of motherhood, with its psychological and political implications, echoes the Western literary thinking of the 1970s, in which the bearing and rearing of children are regarded as the chief cause of women’s relegation to the domestic sphere. Motherhood prevents women’s participation in public and political activities, and at the same time renders women totally dependent on a controlling male figure. Moreover, the mother “was attacked for the part

she played in socializing children into traditional gender roles, thus perpetuating the positions of male dominance and female subordination” (Palmer 1989: 96). According to the psychoanalytic perspective on identity formation as formulated by Jacques Lacan, the psychological development of the child is marked by two stages: the Imaginary and the Symbolic. During the Imaginary phase, the infant lives in a state of bliss, as part of the mother, unable to differentiate between self and other, and, most significantly, unable to speak. The child’s movement into subjectivity begins with his/her initiation into language. By participating in society’s main signifying system, in language, the child is inscribed into the Symbolic Order or the Law of the Father. K. K. Ruthven points out that:

The price to be paid for acquiring a speaking position in the Symbolic, and mastery of the pronominal system which multiplies distinctions between self and other, is repression of desire for that lost unity with the mother. (1990:63)

Hence the feminists’ conclusion that culture and civilization rest upon the murder of the mother. The rejection of maternal foundations in the subject’s development leads to a repudiation of the feminine in general.

Manju Kapur’s novel opens with an assertion by Ida which establishes the framework for her journey into the past: “The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother” (2010:1). From the very beginning, the mother is rejected, and the novel symbolically begins with Virmati’s death and cremation. Separation from the mother is seen as a necessary loss, reminding one of the feminist belief that the “murder” of the mother is an obligatory step in the erasure of a myth that privileges the maternal over the feminine (Irigaray 1985:30), a myth that carries all the cultural constraints imposed on women. As Angela Carter pointed out in *The Sadeian Woman*:

“the mother is a horrid warning to her daughter: ‘As I am, so you will be’. Mother seeks to ensure the continuance of her own repression.” (1983:124) Ida’s writing represents a psychoanalytic exercise, a personal catharsis designed to liberate her from her obsession with her mother. She writes in order to stop being haunted by her, as she herself acknowledges at the end of the novel:

This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be. Do not haunt me anymore. (Kapur 2010:280)

Writing fiction is a process of personal unburdening and the written word brings freedom from the despair of feeling. Ida cannot remember a time when things between her and her mother were right; their relationship was a *difficult* one, and now, after her mother’s death, she feels the need to uncover the older woman’s past in order to understand her and thus to make sense of her own existence in the light of her maternal inheritance. “Without her, I am lost” (Kapur 2010:4), confesses Ida, thus voicing her need to fill an existential gap and come to terms with the memory of her mother. Ida is writing in search of wholeness; for her, writing becomes a conceptual and linguistic act of creation of self.

When Ida starts enquiring about Virmati, her aunts and uncles remember their large family, which consisted of 11 children, of whom Virmati was the eldest. Their mother, Kasturi, “blessed” with so many offspring, found childbirth not a victory but a sign and a reminder of women’s entrapment in the human limit of their own bodies. For Kasturi, a room of one’s own is a place to have a baby. God may have favoured her, as her in-laws keep telling her, but all she feels is an extreme tiredness that

brings her to the verge of serious illness. Pregnant for the eleventh time, she feels that she will die if she has one more child:

By the time Virmati was sixteen, Kasturi could bear childbirth no more. For the eleventh time it had started, the heaviness in her belly, morning and evening nausea, bile in her throat while eating, hair falling out in clumps, giddiness when she got up suddenly. How trapped could nature make a woman? She turned to God, so bountiful with his gifts, and prayed ferociously for the miracle of a miscarriage. Her sandhya started and ended with this plea, that somehow she should drop the child she was carrying and never conceive again. (Kapur 2010:7)

Grossly swollen, heavy and unbalanced, Kasturi's body displays an overwhelming human misery that works to demystify cultural ideas about motherhood as a source of continuous bliss. One hears much about the beauty of a woman with child, but Kapur, by depicting this grotesque image of Kasturi's curved back, falling-out hair and bleeding teeth, attempts to debunk these old myths regarding motherhood.

Being the eldest daughter, Virmati becomes a second mother for her ten siblings, who look to her for every little thing. Consequently, at a tender age, the girl is so exposed to all the hardships of bearing and rearing children, to all the work involved in running a house, that she herself becomes as tired and harassed as her mother. Yet Virmati yearns for her mother's attention and is possessive about each moment spent with her:

At times Virmati yearned for affection, for some sign that she was special. However, when she put her head next to the youngest baby, feeding in the mother's arms, Kasturi would get irritated and push her away: 'Have you seen to their food – milk – clothes – studies?' (Kapur 2010:6)

After the birth of her eleventh child, Kasturi feels so sick that the doctor recommends that she should move away from the unhealthy bazaar of her home and benefit from the fresh air of the mountains. The family rent a house in Dalhousie and Kasturi moves to this hill station with her eldest and youngest daughters. It is here that Virmati meets her cousin, Shakuntala, a “new” woman who plants the seeds of personal aspiration in Virmati. Shakuntala is the black sheep of her family because she refuses to marry and chooses instead to become a teacher in Lahore. She explains to her bewildered cousin “how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are, fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else.” (Kapur 2010: 16) For the first time Virmati realises that it is possible to be something other than a wife and decides to take seriously the process of learning, since higher education is the only way to be on one’s own. She needs to study in order to avoid the fate of her mother, forever trapped by housekeeping and the rearing of children.

Virmati comes from a tradition-soaked family in Amritsar, where the marriage of a daughter is considered a “sacred duty – or sacred burden” (Kapur 2010: 152). Marriage appears as the only possible destiny for women, who are trained in how to keep house from the time they can walk. They are taught to respect tradition and to believe themselves to be doomed if they fail to marry. In Kapur’s novel, tradition reinforces the patriarchal relations at work in a male-dominated society. Tradition is built on communication and relationships, which are maintained by using women as objects of exchange through the institution of marriage (Lévi-Strauss 1977: 24). Starting from Lévi-Strauss’s theory, Judith Butler argues that the bride-as-gift “functions as a relational term between groups of men; she does not

have an identity, and neither does she exchange one identity for another. She *reflects* masculine identity precisely through being the site of its absence” (1989:39). In other words, the bride is just a link between different “patriarchal clans”, a link which serves to reinforce men’s bonds with each other.

The role that the woman plays in the consolidation of relations between clans is crucial in Indian society, where marriages are mostly arranged. Once her FA exams are over, much pressure is put on Virmati to marry the man chosen by her parents, a canal engineer from a respectable family. She must waste no time in doing so, because Indumati, her younger sister, is waiting her turn to marry. However, Virmati’s marriage has to be postponed because the fiancé’s father dies and there needs to be a mourning period. The girl takes advantage of the situation and urges her parents to let her study for a BA at Arya Sabha College. By this time, the unexpected has happened and Virmati has fallen in love with a neighbour, Professor Harish Chandra, an Indian with a British degree who has come to Amritsar together with his mother, wife and child to teach at Arya Sabha College. The Professor is much attracted by his student’s “offering eyes” and his desire to possess her soon extends to Virmati’s heart and mind. Married to an illiterate woman, Ganga, with whom he cannot have any intellectual exchange of ideas, Harish appreciates the rare gift of knowledge in a woman and would be very glad to have the company of an educated wife.

At this point, it is interesting to observe that from now on Virmati has no real choice regarding the course of events. But for the Professor’s intrusion in her life, she would probably have stopped studying and married in accordance with her family’s wishes. At this point, however, she rejects her fiancé and demands the right to go on studying, because the Professor,

although a married man, insists that she should break off her engagement. On the surface of things, her discourse places her in a position of power from where she can voice her desires like a truly independent woman, but in fact this discourse is not her creation, but the Professor's. She does not feel any of the strength that independence and self-assertion should bring; instead she feels guilty, fraudulent, a deceiver of everyone's expectations.

Virmati's refusal to marry comes as a shock to her parents, who blame it all on the girl's studies. Kasturi too "knew the value of education, it had got her her husband, and had filled her hours with the pleasure of reading" (Kapur 2010:60), but at no point had she questioned the patriarchal assumption that her happiness lay in marriage. She used to gratify her passion for reading at night, while during the day she would learn all the necessary things that a girl had to know in order to make a good wife. The proper education for a woman is in the home, where any mother ensures her daughter's happiness by teaching her how to please her future in-laws:

How?

Let me count the ways.

With all the breads she could make, puris with spicy gram inside, luchis big as plates, kulchas, white and long, tandoori rotis, layers of flaky flour, paranthas, crisp and stuffed. With morrabas, never soggy, and dripping juicy sweet... With thread spun, with cloth woven, with durries, small stitched carpets, and phulkaris, with pyjama kurtas, shirts, and salwar kameezes. (Kapur 2010:62-63)

Without realising it, Kasturi becomes the voice of patriarchy when she fiercely orders her daughter to conform to her parents' wishes: "Remember you are going to be married next month, if I have to swallow poison to make you do it!" (Kapur 2010:60) Torn between the irreconcilable demands of her family and the Professor, Virmati feels split into "two

socially unacceptable pieces” (Kapur 2010:55). She lacks a sense of stable identity, she lacks the strength to openly assert what she wants, and consequently, unable to resolve her domestic situation, she tries to commit suicide by drowning herself. At this stage, death appears to be the only means of defence that could prevent her from “cracking”. In the event, she is saved by two men who see her heading for the canal, and her survival unleashes the family’s terrible judgement, since her illicit love affair with the Professor has meanwhile been discovered: “United, the family talked. United, they raged and grieved, united they questioned.” (Kapur 2010:86) The only argument Virmati can bring in her defence is her desire to study rather than to marry, a statement which sounds weak and unconvincing even to herself. Eventually, the *difficult daughter* is locked in a room and arrangements are made for Indu to marry Virmati’s fiancé.

Away from Home, Away from the Centre

Virmati’s confinement to the narrow, restrictive space of a room echoes an older feminist preoccupation with spatiality as a powerful tool in shaping and maintaining gender identities and relations. Apart from gender inscriptions, space implies the reality of physical borders, of margins, and, since space is a social construct, the borders become ideological, constrictive barriers, or, as Lefebvre puts it “the ultimate foundation of social space is *prohibition*” (2002:35). At the same time, borders may be read as distance from the centre, thus highlighting the “inferiority” of peripheral existence, as well as the tension of living on the threshold. In Kapur’s novel, Virmati finds herself on the margins of society after she has refused to marry. She is a disgrace to her own family, to the heart of which she will never again have access. Yet it is this very marginality which gives

her the freedom she so much yearns for, since from now on she has nothing else to lose. Let down by the Professor, who is expecting a second child by Ganga, Virmati decides to go to study in Lahore in order to become a teacher. It is only away from home, i.e. the centre, that she can seek her true independence. This time her parents do not oppose her decision and Virmati goes to a college in Lahore, accompanied by her bitter mother, who repeats her old reproaches over and over again: “A woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings”, or “God has put you on earth to punish me” (Kapur 2010:111).

In Virmati’s time, Lahore was the most revered place on earth for all Punjabis and the place where bright students with high aspirations went to study. And this young woman loves being there and studying there. This cosmopolitan metropolis offers her, for the first time, the promise of independence, but it all remains no more than a promise because the Professor follows her and her state of inner confusion returns. Although she objects to being limited to the roles culturally assigned to women, Virmati still presents a contradiction, for she cries “freedom” while yet hugging the chains of the symbolic order to her when she seeks happiness in a man. She does not realise the futility of this attempt, the impossibility of achieving wholeness through romantic love. The Professor periodically comes from Amritsar to visit her and arranges secret meetings in the house of Syed Husain, a friend of his. Their love is soon consummated, although Virmati feels uneasy when she thinks of her family and of his existing wife and children. Away from home, Virmati discovers her sexuality, but this new awareness of her femininity is fraught with anxiety and a feeling of guilt. For Virmati it is only the institution of marriage that can “legitimise” her immoral and sinful sexual drives. Therefore she insists that Harish should

marry her – “Marry me and make it clear to everybody” (Kapur 2010 125) – but he postpones their wedding, being himself helplessly caught in the patriarchal system of power relations constructed by his family. For him, Virmati is a precious love object whom he does not feel the need to bring home.

Virmati begins to realise her foolishness in believing that the myth of romantic love and union with one single man is the key to happiness and wholeness. In loving Harish, she annihilates her own self by denying those aspects of her femininity and those ideas which do not resonate with his masculine desires. Virmati’s new-found awareness is strengthened by her encounter with Swarna Lata, her roommate. Like Shakuntala, Swarna is a “new” woman to whom Virmati looks up in admiration. She has come to Lahore to study for an MA and has become politically active, fighting for women’s rights, slogan shouting, speechmaking and so on. Seeing Swarna so involved in other people’s lives and waiting for no man, Virmati starts to doubt her own freedom:

Am I free, thought Virmati. I came here to be free, but I am not like these women. They are using their minds, organising, participating in conferences, politically active, while my time is spent being in love. Wasting it. Well, not wasting time, no, of course not, but then how come I never have a moment for anything else? Swarna does. And she has a ‘friend’, who lives in the city. Thank God Hari lives in Amritsar. Otherwise I would be completely engulfed. But isn’t that what I want? What’ll happen when we marry? (Kapur 2010: 142)

Sadly enough, the only time when Virmati thinks of herself as an independent woman is when she has an abortion: “Yes, she was independent. Her body had gone through knives and abortion, what could happen to her now that she could not bear?” (Kapur 2010:175) Yet she

chooses to take this measure not out of a conviction that motherhood is a social setback for women, but out of the shame that a baby would bring on her as an unmarried woman. While the Professor is away with his family, Viru goes through the physical and psychological ordeal of the abortion alone, attended only by Swarna, who has arranged the operation. One generation later, Ida will also have an abortion when her husband – a successful, respected academic just like the Professor – insists that she do so. Mother and daughter thus share the same secret experience, but with different outcomes: whereas Ida's abortion leads to a divorce, Virmati's only strengthens her bond with the Professor: "She was his for life, whether he ever married her or not. Her body was marked by him, she could never look elsewhere, never entertain another choice." (Kapur 2010:177)

Faced with the prospect of losing Virmati, the Professor finally decides to bring home a second wife. Manju Kapur presents the journeys of both mother and daughter to their new homes, both brides with fear in their hearts. Virmati is sure that her parents will never forgive her and that the process of rejection is now completed. Her mother literally beats her and throws her out of the house for the shame she has brought to their family. She is rejected just as completely by Harish's family: his mother, Ganga, and the children treat her with open hostility, regarding her as a shameless Punjabi witch who has stolen Harish. Shame becomes the epitome of her entire existence. In the train on the way to her new house, Virmati can still dream of a blissful marriage which will finally bring a recognisable pattern to her life. At the end of her first day as a married woman the illusion has already evaporated and she confesses to her equally unhappy husband: "I should never have married you... and it's too late now. I've never seen it so clearly. It's not fair." (Kapur 2010:212)

After her marriage, Virmati starts thinking differently about space, divides it up in her mind, makes clear what is hers and what is not. She and Harish are only allowed a dressing-room, the rest of the house being occupied by Ganga and her children. "If Virmati had the bed, Ganga was going to have the house" (Kapur 2010:230), and the first wife protects her space fiercely. Virmati is never allowed into the kitchen and is the last person to have access to the bathroom. This division of space, so unlike the fluid areas of her maternal home, reflects Virmati's split consciousness.

Deprived of a house and hence of any sense of stable ground, Virmati grows passive, silent and withdrawn, her state being worsened by the deaths of her father and grandfather and a miscarriage. At this point, her husband decides to send her back to Lahore to do an MA in philosophy in the hope that Virmati will return to her old self. Although she hates philosophy, Virmati accepts the Professor's offer, since studying represents, once again, her only means of escape. While Ganga wonders "what woman would want to exchange a home for a classroom" (Kapur 2010:248), Virmati is secretly relieved when she leaves for Lahore, where she will remain for two years, from 1944 to 1946. These were the years when political unrest started in Punjab, forcing people "to accept Partition and suffering along with Independence" (Kapur 2010:268). The killing started, and the birth of the new nation was to be a very bloody one. Kapur presents the horrors of Partition through the various accounts given by her characters, witnesses to incredible scenes of bloodshed, looting, rape and arson. The fragmented world mirrors Virmati's equally fragmented consciousness. The social and political disintegration described becomes an extension of Virmati's own ego on the verge of dissolution.

In the midst of this social and political turmoil, Harish sends his mother and Ganga, along with the children, to his home town, fearing for their safety. He stays in the empty house in Amritsar to wait for his second wife to return. Virmati can finally start her life as a housewife in a space that from now on will belong only to her, since Ganga never returns. Virmati sweeps out of the house all the things that had belonged to Ganga, symbolically clearing the place for herself. Possessing her own house, she is now gradually finding a sense of stable identity: “Virmati had never had so much space around her. Maybe this was really what she had fought for all along, space to be. She conceived.” (Kapur 2010:274) A baby girl is born, and her birth coincides with the birth of the country.

After Independence, Harish is offered the principalship of one of the new colleges of Delhi University and the couple move to Delhi. The end of the novel is narrated in the first person by Ida, who recalls her mother as a strict woman with whom she had a difficult relationship. Without realising it, Virmati has taken Kasturi’s place, demanding her daughter obey and please her family. The consequences are by now familiar: Ida grows up with a fragmented individuality and tries, just like her mother, “to bridge the contradictions in her life by marrying a man who was also an academic” (Kapur 2010:279). After her divorce, Ida is left husbandless and childless, doomed, just like her mother, to live on the margins of society.

Conclusion

The conclusion we reach after reading Kapur’s novel is that Virmati’s struggle for independence did not transform her into a “new”, free woman, even though she managed to marry the man she loved. The heroine’s anticlimactic achievement appears as the logical consequence of

her initial goal. Since her life revolved around a male figure, Virmati remained enslaved to the patriarchal myth of matrimonial union and romantic fulfilment, which promises women an illusory wholeness. What emerged out of her marriage was a sense of emotional emptiness, silent disappointments and self-deception. She was a woman who had the courage to defy her own family for many years, but was unable to do the same with her husband. Ida likes to believe that her mother, constantly humiliated by her husband's family, "must have refused. That she could have said, I'm my own mistress. I will relate to you with dignity or not at all." (Kapur 2010: 255) The words must have been at the back of her mind, but by then, Virmati had already become trapped in the patriarchal network of power which regulates women's behaviour in society and ensured that "her voice remained soft when she spoke" (Kapur 2010:256). By then, she herself had become a patriarchal figure, thus symbolically replacing the mother whom she had fought, yet painfully loved, all her life.

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FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE

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***Abstract:** The paper deals with the concept of family seen both as a system and as a unit. It shows how family functions and the structure of family. The paper also draws attention to the separation between home and work which makes substantial differences to the daily lives of both men and women. This means that there is a clear distinction between working time and leisure time, and there is a much clearer distinction between public and private life.*

***Keywords:** education, family, oikos, polis*

Introduction

It is possible to observe family life or even to be part of family life and yet to be limited in one's understanding of it, because our vision is limited. Active involvement in family life may be the very reason we fail to *understand*

it from a wider perspective. When talking about the issue of family, Jack and Judith Balswisch approach it by taking into account two theoretical perspectives. The first is called family-systems theory, while the second is family development theory. The former theory views family life as the interactions of all family members acting as a unit. The latter views the family as developing over time.

When discussing the first theory, the authors talk about individualism. This made people focus on the individual's needs and perspectives, rather than on relationships and groups. Within contemporary research, the balance between individual rights and family rights has been tilted in favour of individual rights. Nevertheless, there now seems to be a tendency to shift the focus from the individual to the wider family system.

The authors present the family-systems perspective to us as a holistic approach that sees the family as a whole. A system is defined as an identifiable whole which is composed of interrelated individual parts. In order for the system to be understood, one must begin by identifying the boundary around it. In Western cultures this is drawn around the husband and wife and their children. In other cultures, it also includes their relatives. In the newly established family there are two individuals, the husband and the wife, each with an identifiable position and role within the family. Once children come into the family, the system becomes more complex as each new member occupies a given position in the system as he/she is assigned a role to play in it. In fact, in a family which includes children we may talk about subsystems.

The second theory shows us the typical family's progression through various stages of life. The family is dynamic rather than static. The authors state

that within each stage there are certain key developmental tasks that the family must accomplish in order to progress to the next stage. To the extent that both the family as a unit and individual family members master their respective tasks, the family is prepared to move on to the next stage of development. A family is said to have moved from one stage to the next when a major transition takes place. The first stage would be the premarital one, because of the importance of differentiation from the family into which a person was born. This process of differentiation actually begins in adolescence and should be completed during the engagement period. The most obvious transition in the lifecycle is marriage. When two people marry, a new family begins in the form of a dyad. The major developmental task involves the husband's and wife's adjustments to each other in their new roles as married rather than single persons. In this stage the newly formed family must start by setting up a new household, dividing up household chores, establishing work and career roles, developing friendships, planning social events and so on.

The next stage is when children are born into the family, followed by their childhood and adolescence. In this stage children are differentiating from the family. Then comes the stage when children choose their careers and marriage partners. is when the last child leaves home and the parents have to learn to accept years of aloneness and the aging process(Jack O. and Judith K. Balswich 1997:35-43)

The Polis versus the Oikos

Interest has been shown in studying the family ever since early times. The modern family, belonging to the private sphere, should not be debated

without taking into account the public sphere as well. The Greeks made a clear distinction between the polis on the one hand and the oikos or family on the other.

In the *Republic*, Plato understands and accepts this distinction between public and private. As Plato's ideal Republic was to set out to eliminate the private sphere altogether, he needed to find a role for the women who had previously filled the role of wives in the private sphere. Plato considers that men and women should be trained equally for the role of a ruler. Plato's *Republic* is a form of discourse which emerged from a setting that not only excluded women but included relationships between dominant men. Rather than consigning women to particular social outcomes based on chronological categories, Plato insists that one may find within the category of women gifted individuals who possess all the qualities necessary to become a guardian. Such unique women can undertake the same training as their male counterparts, for if these women are available for the same tasks as men, they must also be taught the same things. Plato does not seem to encourage a social order in which individuals are evaluated and placed according to some *a priori* assessment of their higher or lower potential; the fact that people are born into a social class or biological sex does not in itself amount to evidence that a member of one particular class has a higher or lower nature than anyone else. Plato requires that all considerations of sex, race, age, class, tradition and history be stripped away in order for people to be fitted into their appropriate social slots, performing functions to which they are suited. Should a male or female possess an aptitude for a particular occupation, for the female to enter that occupation along with a similarly qualified man constitutes no violation of wisdom.

So Plato would educate women in the same way as men, for otherwise they will lack that common purpose without which the state is doomed to be but half a state. Plato's motive for equal education of the sexes was not some mere consideration of social justice or equality or individual rights, but a means to his overriding end: social harmony and unity. (Elshtain 1997:24-37).

Aristotle sees women as completely within the *oikos* or household; he denies woman any possibility of a public voice or role and recommends female self-transformation over time. He constructed this arrangement under the terms of a set of teleological presumptions and an explanatory theory flowing from those presumptions that was to have major consequences for women, men and politics. For Aristotle, each separate thing is predetermined; it is designed to fulfill its essence. He assumes that one can determine what a thing, person, or institution is in terms of its functionalist framework; each thing's purpose is to fulfill functions it alone can fulfill. Although familiar with Plato's argument that women's nature cannot be assigned a public dimension, Aristotle remains unmoved. Although he is often contrasted with Plato and seen as a defender of diversity and a friend of pluralism, he is categorically inflexible on some issues. Woman's nature and her consequent function is one of these. Women, children and slaves did not and could not partake in the full unfolding of goodness and reason. There is an essential difference between greater (free male) and lesser (unfree female) persons, although these two categories of persons are in relationships of dominance and subordination. Aristotle justifies this relationship by finding a common interest between the naturally ruling element and the element that is naturally ruled.

The household constituted a nonpublic sphere within which the female was subsumed and which therefore defined her. The good at which the household aimed was a lesser good than that which was the end of both. The wife-mother achieved only the limited goodness of the naturally ruled, a goodness different from that of the naturally ruling. Public persons, by definition, were responsible, rational and free. They acted both in private life and in the life of the polis. As exclusively private persons, not fully rational, women lived out their lives in the realm of necessity, a life deemed inferior in its essence and purpose to political life but a functional prerequisite for the realm of freedom. (Elsthain 1997:41-47).

Within the family and in certain social contexts women exercised real power. They also wielded compensatory or supplementary powers. Law extends certain protections to women but it also limits their actions. The Germanic tribes who settled in the Roman Empire brought with them a variety of legal systems. These laws are very strict when it comes to women's rights and obligations. In *A History of Women*, Suzanne Fonay Wemple discusses the diversity of laws from late Antiquity to the Carolingian period. She demonstrates how the main cells of society related to one another. It is very important to understand this, as it will lead to an understanding of the relations between the sexes, individuals and the public sphere. Within Medieval Europe, marriage was seen as a transition between childhood and adult life and it became a sacrament of the Church between the 11th and the 12th centuries.

The status of women in the Middle Ages can be regarded in different ways depending on the emphasis that is laid on its legal, economic and demographic aspects. Suzanne Fonay Wemple asserts that women's position

improved considerably under the Roman Empire. She gives a brief description of the Roman Empire, regarding which she states that it began to decline when its social and economic systems began to break down. The civil wars of the 3rd century and attacks from outside accelerated the process on account of the increase in economic troubles in the countryside and the cities. Little by little, the Empire became a dictatorship, having ceased to be a community of city states. In the 3rd century, the Empire was divided in half. The military and civil commands were separated, and the army was now made up of men of Germanic origin. In the 4th century, Constantine embraced Christianity, gave great importance to the religion of the Empire and reconsidered Augustus's marriage laws while allowing unmarried women to have control over their possessions and property.

Within this historical background of the Roman Empire there was a growing custom in many marriages for the goods of the woman not to be transferred to her husband. This represented a step towards female emancipation. When women attained their majority, they could control their own property and marry whenever they wanted, but their freedom of action continued to be restricted when it was a case of getting a divorce. Although Christianity did not end sexual discrimination in the late Roman Empire, it offered women the opportunity to regard themselves as independent persons and not as someone's daughter, wife or mother. In line with the Acts of the Apostles, women were enabled to develop self-esteem as human beings who possessed the same potential for perfection as men.

In terms of education, some women, and not only monks, could enjoy this during the Middle Ages. Suzanne Fonay Wemple mentions three such highly

educated women. One was Amalasuntha, daughter of Theodosius the Great, the Ostrogothic king of Italy; the second was Eucheris, who was married to the governor of Marseilles and the third was Dhuoda who wrote *Liber Manualis* that reflects her love for her husband and four sons.

Women who wanted to enjoy intellectual life had great opportunities for education. Religious communities provided a suitable environment and a quiet atmosphere where women could work and pray. In serving God and each other in humility, they could participate in the liturgy and find an outlet for their administrative and intellectual talents. Some women worked as librarians, scribes or teachers. Books and teachers were needed to educate children.. The oppression of women in the Middle Ages was somewhat abated. (Duby and Perrot 1992:170-200).

Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq describes women's status in the 11th and 12th centuries, the time when the church gave marriage its modern form. Marriage became a sacrament, but until the 12th century the content of that sacrament had been vague. There was a need for clarification so that marriage could be included on the official list of sacraments promulgated by the church in the year 1215. Of the seven sacraments, marriage was the only one mentioned in law: the first man and the first woman had been joined in marriage. Marriage was the foundation of all of human society and it transformed the binary relation between men and God into a tertiary relation: God, man and woman.

Life at home was influenced by one's legal and economic status and social rank. Women's dowries and settlements were also very important. In rural areas, women had great responsibilities and authority that contributed in a

significant way to the family's productivity. Women were in charge of storing the harvest, of growing vegetables and of maintaining the hearth. Thus, women were autonomous, but they were still not considered to be men's equals. On account of the fact that the whole of their dowries and half of all property acquired after marriage belonged to them, they could participate in all their husbands' real estate transactions. L'Hermite Leclercq states that despite our lack of information concerning family life in the period, there was certainly a revival of urban life and women doing the same work in the city as men were paid less during the period that concerns us (Duby and Perrot 1992: 202–231).

Finally, I shall refer to the period of the late Middle Ages. In Europe, medieval society was generally masculine in character. Its culture reflected the dominance and power struggles of men. Nevertheless, there was one great figure of that time who was concerned with women's issues. Christine de Pizan is a remarkable woman who lived at a time when women were smothered by male prerogative. She is represented in glowing terms by Reghina Dascăl in her outstanding *Christine de Pizan Essays*. She lived between 1364 and 1431, and throughout her life she advocated women's rights, fighting against misogyny at a time when it was not a common thing to do so. Professor Dascăl asserts:

For a woman to write for a wide audience and to deal specifically with the subject of women was extremely rare in that century. Despite the complex nature of the society of those days, its female half was identified according to a value system and a hierarchy set up by the male half. Christine de Pizan dealt with the subject many times (Dascăl 2008:19).

Christine de Pizan even taught the reader how texts should be read so as to derive moral edification and spiritual truth from them. She defended women's right to take an equal part in intellectual work. She herself succeeded in becoming what is now called a career woman. Sappho in Ancient Greece was the first woman to publish under her own name, followed by Christine de Pizan. Christine was an intelligent and enterprising woman who made a living by her pen, something that was almost unknown for a woman in that historical period (Dascăl 2008:20-23).

Conclusion

Everybody finds herself/himself oscillating between the two spheres that I have discussed throughout my paper. I do not intend to set one above the other; on the contrary, I consider them both of outstanding importance for everyday life. In order for somebody to cross the boundaries of the private sphere, it is necessary that he/she should take into consideration the issue of education, by means of which we can develop our activities. Fortunately, much progress has now been made as regards women's access to civic society. The old barriers are falling one after the other and women are no longer restricted in their choice of a profession, nor are they denied opportunities of advancement in any field they may select. Therefore, the part they play in public life depends entirely on themselves.

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**ANIMAL METAPHORS AND SEMANTIC DEROGATION – DO
WOMEN THINK DIFFERENTLY FROM MEN?**

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***Abstract:** From a Cognitive Linguistics standpoint the paper looks at how Serbian university students of both sexes apply 20 animal names to women and their physical or mental traits. The paper aims to show (1) what animal names are used as positive or negative metaphors for women; (2) whether the same animal imagery is used by both sexes in semantic derogation of women; and (3) whether male students exhibit a higher degree of semantic derogation of women compared to female students.*

***Key words:** animal metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, semantic derogation, Serbian.*

1. Introduction

As research has already convincingly shown, animal metaphors are common in many languages (for Serbian see e.g. Halupka-Rešetar & Radić

2003; Prodanović-Stankić 2004; for other languages see e.g. Talebinejad & Dastjerdi 2005; Hsieh 2006; Silaški & Đurović 2010; etc.) and the mechanism of zoosemy seems to be responsible for an amazing array of terms pertaining to human characteristics. In terms of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, as developed and elaborated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), this proves that “the domain of animals is an extremely productive source domain” (Kövecses 2002:17). Moreover, animal imagery is used in many languages as one of the tools of constructing social identity and as “one of the main mechanisms that contribute to the diffusion and ingraining of folk beliefs” (López Rodríguez 2009:78). This author (2009:94) also claims that

[a]nimal metaphors not only have a cognitive basis, but are also culturally motivated, that is, they reflect the attitudes and beliefs held by a particular community towards certain animal species, and, therefore, may vary from culture to culture, in time and space.

Nesi (1994:274) also points out that

[i]n each culture, certain animal terms are strongly linked with certain attributes. and there is communal agreement about what these attributes are. This does not mean that such metaphors are ‘dead’: on the contrary, they form a very vital part of the language. and are frequently used to powerful effect.

That is why an investigation of the use of animal metaphoric imagery in a particular culture and language may produce important insights into the prevailing cultural model in that society. Dealing with the issue of the connection between metaphor and culture, Deignan (2003:257) develops the following hypothesis:

if members of a particular culture hold a particular attitude toward a particular animal, then that animal might be used to stand metaphorically for a particular quality in their language.

Therefore, not only is it possible to establish what attributes each animal connotes in a particular culture or whether these animal metaphors are mainly used positively or negatively, but also, as is our intention in this paper, whether men and women differ as regards their use of animal metaphors and whether they use them for the purpose of semantic derogation.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this paper will be that of Conceptual Metaphor Theory as developed and propounded by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who clearly point out that metaphor is not only a textual decoration, a simple figure of speech, or a device of the poetic imagination, as was once widely believed, but far more than this – it is an important cognitive tool which we use in our daily thinking. According to the proponents of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, conceptual metaphor refers to the understanding of one, usually abstract and less structured, concept, described as the *target* conceptual domain, in terms of another, more physical and more easily comprehensible concept, called the *source* conceptual domain, i.e. it consists of a set of mappings or correspondences between the linked source and target domains. Metaphors shape the way we think and in this regard may be viewed as an important instrument used when we categorise the world and make sense of abstract, mostly intangible and difficult-to-understand concepts. They reflect our conceptual structure, which means that they occur in speech because our *mind* is metaphorical in

nature (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff & Turner 1989, Kövecses 2002, etc.). In other words, researching what we *say* may help us to establish what we actually *think*.

In this paper, therefore, an attempt will be made to ascertain, from a Cognitive Linguistics standpoint, how Serbian university students of both sexes apply twenty animal names to women and their physical or mental traits. The paper aims to show the following: (1) what animal names are used as positive or negative metaphors for women; (2) whether the same animal imagery is used by both sexes in semantic derogation of women; and (3) whether male students exhibit a higher degree of semantic derogation of women compared to female students. To answer these questions, a specifically designed questionnaire was used, the results of which will be discussed in the sections to follow. As metaphors in general are rarely free from evaluative stance, the paper will hopefully show to what extent semantic derogation is manifested in the Serbian language by means of animal metaphor, as well as whether this is predominantly employed by men referring to women, or, alternatively, whether women adopt and perpetuate the same evaluations of female physical and mental traits as do men.

3. Animal Metaphors and Semantic Derogation

As Kövecses (2002:124) claims, “[m]uch of human behaviour seems to be metaphorically understood in terms of animal behaviour”. In an attempt to explain how the animal-related words acquired their metaphorical meanings, thus forming the HUMAN BEHAVIOUR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR metaphor, Kövecses (2002:125) states the following:

The only way these meanings can have emerged is that humans attributed human characteristics to animals and then reapplied these characteristics to humans. That is, animals were personified first, and then the “human-based animal characteristics” were used to understand human behaviour. But it is not only human behaviour that is metaphorically understood in terms of animal behaviour; people themselves are also often described as animals of some kind.

Thus, the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS structures our thoughts about human behaviour and its relevant aspects, meaning that “anthropomorphization of animal attributes and behaviour is almost always an input condition for the metaphorical applications of animal names” (Talebinejad & Dastjerdi 2005:145). Animal names are used to describe people, to assign them various desirable or undesirable animal properties, to address them with either abuse or affection, etc., thus demonstrating how certain aspects of animals and their instinctual attributes and behaviour patterns are mapped onto human beings. Such ANIMAL metaphors are metonymy-based, i.e. *typical properties* of an animal stand for that animal. Thus, in the process of metaphorisation only the most salient properties of animals (via metonymy motivated by the TYPICAL OVER NON-TYPICAL cognitive principle [Radden & Kövecses 1999:49]) are mapped onto people as a target domain.

Studies of animal metaphors have so far mainly focused on animal names used for the purposes of semantic derogation, and particularly on the differences between the animal names used to describe men and those used for women. A number of authors point out that “most, but certainly not all, animal-related metaphors capture the negative characteristics of human beings” (Talebinejad & Dastjerdi 2005:137), which “makes them suitable candidates for becoming derogatory terms” (López Rodríguez 2009:93).

Semantic derogation, the term which “implies both pejoration and polarization” (Fontecha & Catalán 2003:772), becomes especially challenging if it is used “in the context of gender and language” (Fontecha & Catalán 2003:772). To be specific, semantic derogation is usually related to androcentrism in language, because

[a]s western society has been (and still is) mostly governed by men, the patterns and norms of behaviour have been dictated by them. As a consequence, the attributes assigned to each of the sexes in the gender metaphor are highly androcentric since men are taken as the norm of reference. (Fontecha & Catalán 2003:772).

Moreover, research has shown that in English, for example, “a higher number of derogatory images is used in metaphors for describing women in comparison to those used for describing men (Holmes 1992, quoted in Fontecha & Catalán 2003:773). The question that still remains, however, is the following: if a language manifests semantic derogation of women by means of animal metaphoric imagery, who actually uses these metaphors? Is it men who use animal metaphors to refer derisively and disparagingly to women, or is it also women who, by using animal metaphoric imagery to refer to other women, actually perpetuate the derogation and objectification of women? In the text which follows we will discuss the case of Serbian.

4. The Questionnaire

An attempt will be made here to establish the extent to which men differ from women with regard to the use of animal metaphors for the purpose of semantic derogation. A purpose-designed questionnaire was used to gather

information regarding the use of animal names to refer to women by male and female respondents. The questionnaire contained 20 animal names, of which 13 were the names of domestic animals (*mačka* ‘cat’, *patka* ‘duck’, *svinja* ‘pig’, *krmača* ‘sow’, *kokoška* ‘hen’, *koza* ‘she goat’, *kuja* ‘bitch’, *ovca* ‘sheep’, *kobila* ‘mare’, *krava* ‘cow’, *guska* ‘goose’, *ćurka* ‘turkey’, *mazga* ‘mule’), and 7 the names of wild animals (*lisica* ‘fox’, *riba* ‘fish’, *tigrica* ‘tigress’, *zmija* ‘snake’, *slonica* ‘elephant’, *žirafa* ‘giraffe’, and *lavica* ‘lioness’). Although already attested in literature as playing a major role in the semantic derogation of women by drawing on the animal realm (e.g. López Rodríguez 2007), diminutives (e.g. the names of the young of animals) were excluded from the analysis. After some general questions regarding their gender and age, respondents were asked to do the following: firstly, to circle the names of those animals which they would use to refer to a woman, either positively or negatively; and secondly, to give the characteristics (physical and/or mental) of a female person that they would refer to by using a selected animal name. Thirty male and thirty female respondents, all aged 21-23, filled in the same questionnaire. They are all students at the Faculty of Economics, University of Belgrade.

Table 1 below shows what animal names, in what percentages, as well as whether in a positive, negative or neutral way, were used by male and female respondents respectively to refer to a woman.

ANIMAL NAME	% female respondents	evaluation by female respondents	% male respondents	evaluation by male respondents
1. MAČKA ‘CAT’	68%	+/-	90%	+/-
2. PATKA ‘DUCK’	3%	-	3%	-
3. SVINJA ‘PIG’	29%	-	13%	-
4. KRMAČA ‘SOW’	26%	-	47%	-

5. KOKOŠKA 'HEN'	48%	-	67%	-
6. KOZA 'SHE GOAT'	48%	-	23%	-
7. KUJA 'BITCH'	3%	-	20%	-
8. OVCA 'SHEEP'	26%	-	37%	-
9. KOBILA 'MARE'	13%	-	0%	/
10. KRAVA 'COW'	39%	-	30%	-
11. LISICA 'FOX'	55%	+/-	50%	+/-
12. RIBA 'FISH'	55%	+/-	70%	+
13. TIGRICA 'TIGRESS'	19%	+/-	37%	+
14. GUSKA 'GOOSE'	19%	-	40%	-
15. ZMIJA 'SNAKE'	77%	-	60%	-
16. ČURKA 'TURKEY'	39%	-	53%	-
17. SLONICA 'SHE ELEPHANT'	3%	-	0%	/
18. MAZGA 'MULE'	26%	-	7%	-
19. ŽIRAFA 'GIRAFFE'	26%	NEUTRAL	20%	NEUTRAL
20. LAVICA 'LIONESS'	64%	+/-	57%	+

In the section which follows we will elaborate on the questions posed at the beginning of the paper regarding the differences between how men and women use animal names to refer to a woman.

5. Results and Discussion

Firstly, as far as the extent of usage of animal names is concerned, as can be seen from Table 1, female respondents would use the names of *all* the listed animals to refer to a woman, whereas male respondents would use all the listed names except two: *kobila* 'mare' and *slonica* 'she elephant'. Both of the animal names which men would never use to refer to a woman are used by female respondents to refer to a woman's physical appearance, namely to indicate fatness and obesity.

Secondly, as far as the endowment of animal metaphors with positive or negative connotations is concerned, our analysis shows that female respondents would *not* use any of the offered animal names to refer *only positively* to a woman, whereas animal names which men would definitely use to refer to a woman in a positive way are the following: *riba* ‘fish’, *tigrica* ‘tigress’ and *lavica* ‘lioness’ (all names of wild animals). The first two of these animal names (*riba* ‘fish’ and *tigrica* ‘tigress’) are exclusively related to a woman’s physical appearance, illustrated by a number of adjectives male respondents gave when asked to provide physical and/or mental characteristics of women that they would refer to by using a particular animal name. All of them belong to the semantic field [GOOD LOOKS], such as *attractive*, *pretty*, *sexy*, *seductive*. *Tigrica* ‘tigress’ is additionally used to refer to the way a woman behaves during sexual intercourse, as illustrated by the adjectives *voluptuous*, *lewd*, *lustful*, *passionate*, etc.

Lavica ‘lioness’ was selected as the term which would be used by male respondents to refer to a *strong*, *ambitious*, *persistent*, *self-confident*, and *self-sacrificing* woman, devoted to her husband and children. *Mačka* ‘cat’ obviously imparts an extremely positive evaluation as it would be used by as many as 90% of men to refer in a positive manner to an attractive and pretty woman (with such corresponding adjectives as *attractive*, *good-looking*, *seductive*, *pretty*, etc.). However, in addition to this positive use, several male respondents also indicated that they would use this animal name to refer negatively to a *dangerous*, *calculating* and *self-seeking* woman. The only animal name which would be used in a neutral manner by both men and women and which is apparently void of any evaluative stance (at least when discussed in a decontextualised manner) is *žirafa* ‘giraffe’

(used to refer to a tall woman, but not conveying any specific, either positive or negative, evaluation).

As far as negative animal metaphors are concerned, 14 animal names would be used in a negative manner by female respondents, while men would use 12 animal names for the imparting of a negative evaluation. With the exception of two animal names which men would never use to refer to a woman either in a positive or negative manner (*kobila* ‘mare’ and *slonica* ‘she elephant’), both men and women would use the same animal names to refer negatively to a woman.

Let us first consider the male choices. Five animal names would be used by approximately 50-60% of male respondents to refer negatively to a woman: *krmača* ‘sow’ (47%), *kokoška* ‘hen’ (67%), *guska* ‘goose’ (40%), *zmija* ‘snake’ (60%) and *ćurka* ‘turkey’ (53%). Out of these five terms, *krmača* ‘sow’ is used by men to refer to two apparently highly undesirable and unpopular attributes of women according to men (*obesity* and *untidiness*), as demonstrated by the provided adjectives *fat* and *sloppy*.

Kokoška ‘hen’, *guska* ‘goose’ and *ćurka* ‘turkey’ (names of domesticated, farmyard animals) are all used to describe a *stupid*, *unintelligent* woman, while *kokoška* ‘hen’ additionally connotes being *garrulous* and *chatty*, with *ćurka* ‘turkey’ being applied to a woman characterised by naivete and being easily deceived, as illustrated by the adjectives *gullible* and *credulous*. Finally, *zmija* ‘snake’ would be used by 60% of male respondents to refer exclusively negatively to a woman who is described with a whole array of adjectives such as *cunning*, *shrewd*, *dangerous*, *malicious*, *mean*, *deceitful*, *intelligent*, *astute*, *egotistic*, *selfish*, *self-centred*, *two-faced* and *greedy*, all referring to a woman’s mental attributes and character traits.

Although the same animal names are used in a negative fashion both by men and by women, women's choice of negative animal metaphors exhibits several major differences when compared to the choice of male respondents. These differences manifest themselves firstly in the percentages of the use of certain animal metaphors and secondly in the attributes which female respondents attach to a woman they refer to by using a certain animal name. Thus, *kuja* 'bitch' is used by men to refer to a playful woman who enjoys and readily engages in promiscuous sex, whereas women would use *kuja* 'bitch' to refer to a *shallow*, *conceited*, or *frivolous* woman. *Svinja* 'pig' would be used by women to refer to a fat woman, whereas men use *svinja* 'pig' metaphorically to describe an *untidy* and *sloppy* woman. *Tigrica* 'tigress', according to female respondents, metaphorically describes a *beautiful* and *attractive*, yet *dangerous* and *conceited* woman, whereas men would use the same animal name for a *sexy*, *salacious*, *lascivious* and *lustful* woman.

Several conclusions may be drawn from our small-scale analysis. First of all, a substantial majority of animal names are used by both male and female respondents to convey negative evaluations – for the purpose of semantic derogation – as opposed to those used to recall positive characteristics of women (14 animal names out of the total of 20). This implies that Serbian exhibits a particular tendency towards downgrading a specific social group that is regarded as inferior or marginal (López Rodríguez 2009:94). This choice of animal names used to refer to a woman seems not to be “arbitrary, but, on the contrary, may shed some light onto the expectations and beliefs society holds about males and females” (Nilsen 1994). The fact is, however, that there is no significant difference between

men and women in the degree of their use for semantic derogation of animal metaphors denoting women.

In addition, the names of large farmyard animals (*krava* 'cow', *krmača* 'sow' and *svinja* 'pig') usually imply fatness and ugliness as well as untidiness, whereas the names of birds belonging to a farmyard (*ćurka* 'turkey', *kokoška* 'hen', *guska* 'goose', with the exception of *patka* 'duck' evoking clumsiness) connote stupidity, naivete, carelessness, ignorance and indifference in women. The names of wild animals, on the other hand, such as *lavica* 'lioness' and *tigrica* 'tigress', imply sexually active and physically attractive women who are eager and glad to have sexual intercourse, which is usually interpreted as loose morals. A general conclusion which may be drawn from the results obtained from our questionnaire is the following: men and women use the same animal metaphors for the purpose of derogation. While they do sometimes use them to negatively evaluate different female characteristics, they still use them in semantic derogation.

6. Conclusion

The results of our small-scale study of animal metaphors as used by men and women to refer to women in Serbian should be taken as tentative, primarily due to the fact that further, more extensive and more thorough studies with different and wider sets of respondents are needed in order to arrive at conclusions which may then be generalised. Nevertheless, our results may indicate that women tend to follow linguistic patterns set by men, thus maintaining and perpetuating the metaphorical language of the group which holds a privileged position in society. This is why it is of the utmost importance to make women aware of the fact that they, by adopting the linguistic expression of their place in society as indicated by animal

metaphors, and thus supporting “linguistic discrimination” (Fontecha & Catalan 2003:772), are also perpetuating a certain way of thinking, not only a certain way of talking, since metaphors reflect the way we think. This in turn requires far-reaching changes not only in the verbal manifestation of thinking, but in the mindsets of both men and women who use animal metaphors for the purpose of semantic derogation and, indirectly, the construction of gender identity.

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**GENDER AND POLITICS AS THE DOMINANT FACTORS IN
THE PERCEPTIONS OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION**

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***Abstract:** The paper presents an analysis of research focusing on the attitudes of students at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia toward multiculturalism and on the intersection of the gender aspect and students' political affiliation. The results show that both gender and political affiliation shape student attitudes since more female students and those who identify themselves with the democratic block support multicultural education in comparison with those who identify themselves with the nationalist block.*

***Keywords:** education, gender, multiculturalism, politics, students.*

1.Introduction

This paper presents a case study conducted at the University of Novi Sad to examine student attitudes towards multiculturalism (particularly in the educational process), with a special focus on the gender aspect and on intersections with the same students' opinions about ethnic tolerance and their stereotypes regarding ethnic communities in Serbia. Comparative analysis of the data collected in the previous study showed that the gender aspect is one of the factors that determine students' attitudes toward multicultural education and influence their opinions of ethnic minorities. For example, female students showed more confidence that multicultural education had shaped their perception of minorities (Izgarjan, Markov, Prodanović-Stankić 2012:263). In this paper we would like to present the results of the second phase of the research and examine the correlation between the students' gender and their political affiliation, i.e. the factors that proved to be decisive in shaping their attitudes toward ethnic minorities and the importance of multicultural education. Our statistical analysis was based on percentage share within the structures of the categories in the questionnaire while the calculations were carried out using the Minitab program package.

We decided to analyze the elements of multicultural education at the institutions of higher learning in Vojvodina because no research has so far been done to address this issue, despite the high ethnic diversity of its student body (particularly at the University of Novi Sad). Many argue that the introduction of the elements of multiculturalism into diverse ethnic communities is of special importance since it is "an attempt to foster an appreciation for cultural diversity, with the overall goal of developing within students a sense of esteem for

different cultures. Holders of this perspective argue that knowledge of differences in world views, as shaped by culture, can enhance one's ability to interact with individuals and groups of diverse cultural backgrounds" (Seltzer 1995:125). Multicultural education progressed from dealing only with the issues of the curriculum "to a theoretical framework for (1) valuing demographic diversity as an enriching social context; (2) promoting a multicultural curriculum as a whole-school knowledge base; (3) promoting instructional strategies that structure heterogeneous, learner-centered, and critical processes; (4) promoting collaborative and unifying relationships among all the participants, not necessarily as service providers and clients, in the education enterprise; and (5) demanding personal commitments to these principles [...]. In keeping with this mandate for inclusiveness and social critique, transformational scholars and critical theorists argue that knowledge is not neutral but is influenced by human interests. Curricula do reflect the power and social relationships within a society" (Hidalgo *et al.* 2013), inevitably linking politics and education. While the concept of multiculturalism has met with support from those educators who promote cultural diversity, it has also aroused opposition from those who think that it gives students a false image of reality and the balance of power in society by introducing elements of the culture, history and traditions of ethnic minorities. Given the fact that from the beginning of the history of multicultural education, the broadening of the curriculum to include different voices was perceived not only as an educational but also as a political issue, we cannot afford to ignore the political agenda involved. Thus Mattai, commenting upon education in the United States, contends that in "most cases, attempts to introduce multiculturalism into the

curriculum appear to be political responses, and efforts to infuse the American educational curriculum with multiculturalism largely partisan activities engaging only those few who are committed to effecting significant educational and societal changes” (quoted in Seltzer 1995:124). Consequently, the reason why the second phase of the research focused on analysis of the impact of students’ political affiliation on their perception of multicultural education and ethnic minorities was our awareness of the fact that the political agenda has always been a part of multicultural education in Serbia (and elsewhere). Our research was based on the premise that in order to make multicultural education part of the system of higher learning in Serbia, we must first assess the attitudes of students as primary beneficiaries of such implementation. Further research will need to examine the attitudes of university staff and members of the community in general, since without wider support and understanding of multicultural educational processes we cannot hope to achieve revision not only of curricula but also of perceptions of such education and its objectives.

1.1.Sample

The full sample consisted of 533 students, 53.1 of whom were female and 46.91 male, which corresponds to the slightly higher number of female students at the University of Novi Sad in general. As can be seen in Chart 2, the national affiliation of the students who comprised the sample matches the national and ethnic composition of the student body at the University of Novi Sad. The majority of the students belong to the Serbian nationality (76.62%), followed by those belonging to the Hungarian (9.52%), Romani (5.59), Slovak (3.03), Ruthenian (1.73), Romanian (1.43), Croatian (0.87) and Montenegrin

(0.87) communities. The political affiliation of the students encompasses all major political groups (Democrats 31.71%, Nationalists 6.94% and Socialists 4.5%). The large number of students (56.85%) who did not identify themselves with any particular political group can be attributed to the general apathy in Serbia regarding the activities of political parties as well as to a major regrouping of political parties in the past four years.

2. Previous Exposure of the Students to Multicultural Education

We asked the students to give us their estimate of the degree of their exposure to multicultural education. When we take into account the differences between male and female students we can see that slightly more male than female students (44.4% compared with 39.93%) think that they have been sufficiently exposed to multicultural education (Chart 4). However, more female (53.71) than male (48.8%) students think that they have been partially exposed. This is in line with the results of our previous study, which demonstrated that female students appear to be more dissatisfied with their exposure to multicultural education while male students appear to be more satisfied with the multicultural education they have received (Izgarjan, Markov, Prodanović-Stankić 2012:259).

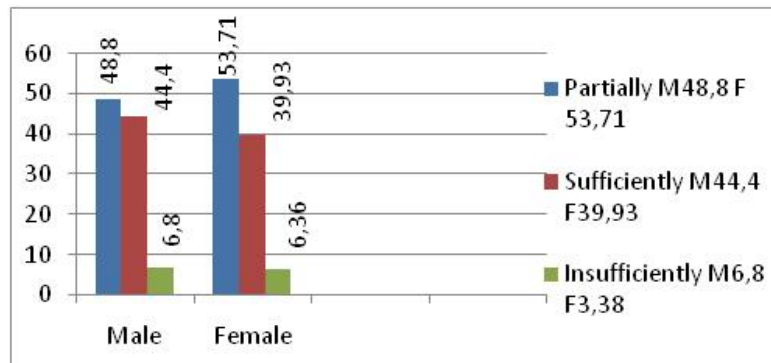


Chart 4

Answers to this question from within different political groups show a significant difference in the students' perceptions (Chart 5). It is predominantly those students who identify themselves with nationalist parties (62.16%) who think that they have been sufficiently exposed to multicultural education, while 32.43% think that they have been partially exposed and only 5.42% think that they have been insufficiently exposed. Given the intolerance of nationalist parties toward ethnic minorities we may assume that students affiliated with such parties perceive their exposure to multicultural education as greater than it objectively is. We can also assume that students affiliated with nationalist parties do not value multicultural education, with the result that they consider sufficient any amount they receive. By contrast with them, half of the students affiliated with the democratic group (52.07%) think that they have been partially exposed and 42.01% that they have been sufficiently exposed, so the difference between nationalists and democrats is around 20%. Since ethnic tolerance and equality is an important aspect of the ideology of the democratic parties in Serbia, the students affiliated with these parties perceive elements of

multicultural education in the curricula as valuable. We also see here that over half of all politically unaffiliated students (54.13%) think that they have been sufficiently exposed and 39.27% that they have been partially exposed, so we can assume that their politically independent position enables them to have a more realistic picture of the extent of multicultural education at the University of Novi Sad. Students affiliated with the socialist group think that they have been sufficiently or partially exposed in almost the same percentage (45.13% to 41.67%), so we may conclude that there are no major differences between students affiliated with the democratic and socialist groups and those who are politically unaffiliated, while the differences between these students and students affiliated with the nationalist parties are considerable. The difference between democrats and undecided is 2% while the difference between undecided and socialists is around 5%. Other research also supports these findings. Cockrell *et al.* found that resistance to multicultural education, based on the two principles of individualism and monoculturalism, was most prevalent among white male students (Cockrell 1999:359) while Seltzer *et al.* state that white conservative males were more likely to see problems with multicultural education than women (1995:135).

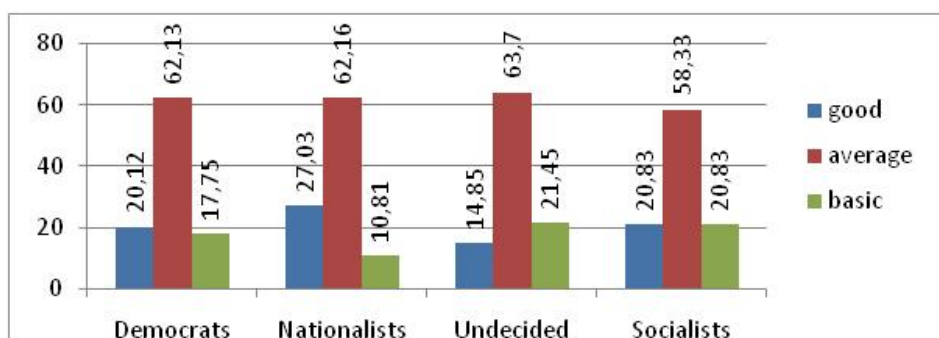


Chart 5.

When we take into account intersections of the gender aspect and political affiliation within each political group (Chart 6), major differences are noticeable within the nationalist group, where 70.59% of women think that they have been partially exposed in comparison to 55% of men. 29.41% of female nationalists in comparison to 35% of male ones think that they have been sufficiently exposed and none of these females think that they have been insufficiently exposed, while 10% of male nationalists think this. In the democratic group more female (56.93%) than male (46.99%) students think that they have been partially exposed but the differences are not so pronounced. The same is true in the case of socialists and unaffiliated students. We may conclude that within the political groups the differences between male and female students are negligible except within the nationalist group (nationalists 16%, democrats 5%, undecided 3%; socialists 2%).

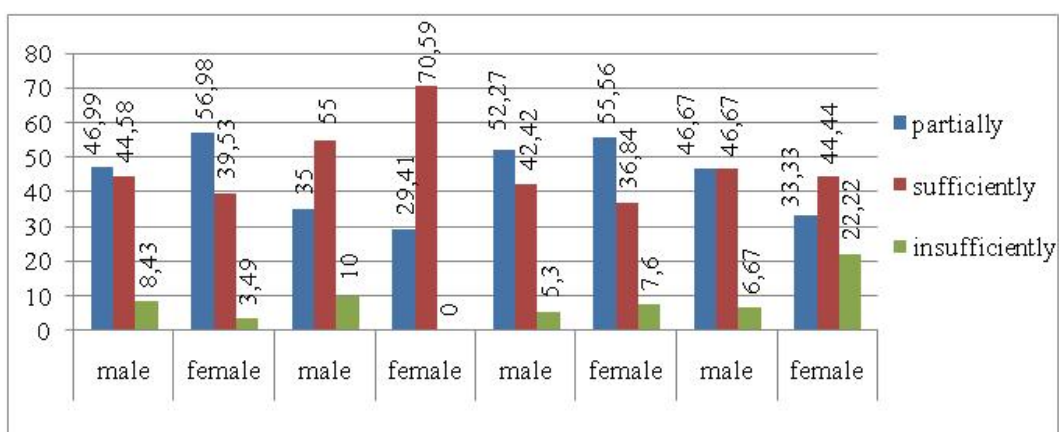


Chart 6

However, the greatest difference can be observed when we compare women's answers across the different political groups, which we think is particularly interesting. Thus there is a 31.06% difference between female democrats and female nationalists who answered that they had been sufficiently exposed to multicultural education and a 27.57% difference between those who answered that they had been partially exposed. The differences between their male counterparts are not so noticeable - 12% for partial exposure and 10.42% for sufficient. There are virtually no differences between female democrats and unaffiliated women in their answers to this question and only a 5% difference between female democrats and female socialists. There is an even smaller difference between their male counterparts: for male democrats and undecided men the difference is 5% and for male democrats and male socialists the difference is less than 1%.

Our interpretation of these results is that female students affiliated with the nationalist party want to prove their allegiance to the party and therefore reflect hard-core opinions. This can be more fully understood when we take into account the history of the nationalist block in Serbia. There were virtually no women in this block when it was formed, and in subsequent years although women formed part of the membership they did not occupy any leading positions. These parties were very patriarchal and perceived women primarily as wives and mothers. More importantly, women from the nationalist parties in Serbia never participated in the struggle to win more political power for all women and to ensure their participation in government, unlike women in the

democratic block, who lobbied very actively for the law which specified that parliament must be 30% female (Blagojević 1997:20, Mladenović 2002:20). It was the passing of this law, among other factors, which pressured nationalist parties into appointing more women to leading positions, and these were always women who had already proved their unswerving allegiance to the party and shown rigid adherence to the party line. Female members of the nationalist party have, in fact, become notorious for their inappropriate behaviour in the Serbian Parliament (swearing at their opponents, throwing shoes and spitting water at them, wearing T-shirts with party slogans on them etc). This party history and the position of women within the party can explain the difference between these female students and the other students in the sample as well as the difference between them and their male nationalist counterparts. In Serbia, men generally tend to occupy more important positions both within the parties and in governmental and economic spheres so they do not need to prove their loyalty or to show their insecurity in the way that women do.

2.1. The Impact of Multicultural Education on Students' Knowledge of Ethnic Minorities

There are no significant differences between men and women within the whole sample as to the issue of the impact of multicultural education on students' knowledge of ethnic minorities. There is only a 3% difference between men and women who think that their level of knowledge is good (Chart 7).

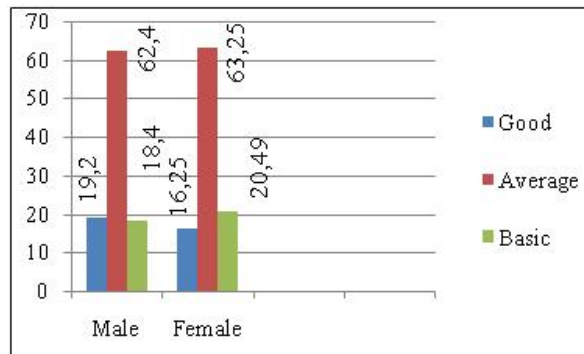


Chart 7

While the differences between political parties reflected in answers to this question are negligible as well, we can see that the trends are similar to those in the previous example. More nationalists perceive their knowledge as good (27.03) and the difference between them and other groups is around 10% (Chart 8). Fewer nationalists than members of any other group perceive their knowledge as basic, the difference again being around 10%. The variations among democrats, socialists and unaffiliated students are very small (below 5%). The positive perception of their knowledge of ethnic minorities among students affiliated with the nationalist group can be attributed to their complacent attitude toward ethnic minorities and the absence of any feeling that they need to learn more about them (Cockrell 1999:356-58; Seltzer *et al.* 1995:128). The disparities among democrats, socialists and the undecided are not so sharply contrasted. Democrats and undecided students differ by only 2.57% and undecided and socialists by 5.37%.

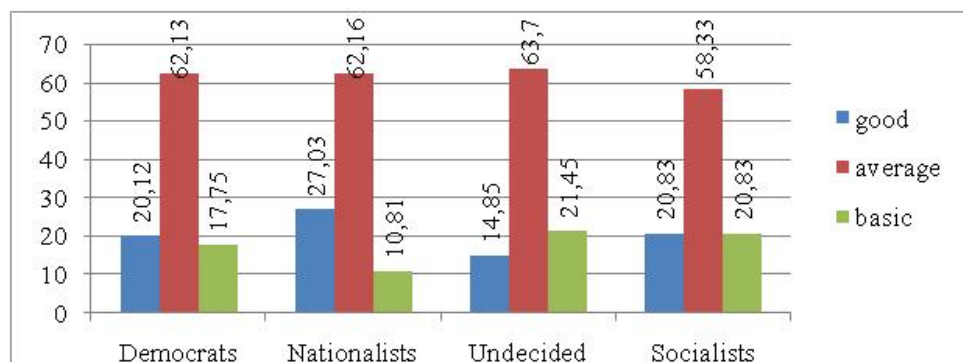


Chart 8

Analysis of the correlation between gender and political affiliation among men and women from different political blocks reveals major differences between female nationalists and socialists (29.41%) (Chart 9). Thus no female socialists think that their knowledge of ethnic minorities is good, compared with 29.41% of nationalist women who think it is. Similarly 33.33% of female socialists think their knowledge is basic, a sharp contrast with the 5.88% of female nationalists who hold this view. The difference between the democratic and nationalist groups of women is 13.89% while the difference between democrats and undecided is 7.48% for good knowledge and 2% for average and basic. This significant disparity between female socialists and nationalists and the generally critical attitude of female socialists toward their knowledge of minorities can be explained by the values of the Socialist party in Serbia. It has traditionally been identified with former Yugoslavia, in which ethnic tolerance was promoted. Even today the Socialist party perceives this period of history and former Yugoslavia as exemplary, and this can account for the desire of female socialists to learn more about ethnic minorities and can explain why

they perceive their knowledge as only average or basic. Unlike them, female nationalists do not have any such desires or aspirations. The attitudes shown by female socialists, which are more in line with the party ideology in this respect than those of their male counterparts, can be attributed to the more traditional attitudes of women within the party in general and the need to give “desirable” answers.

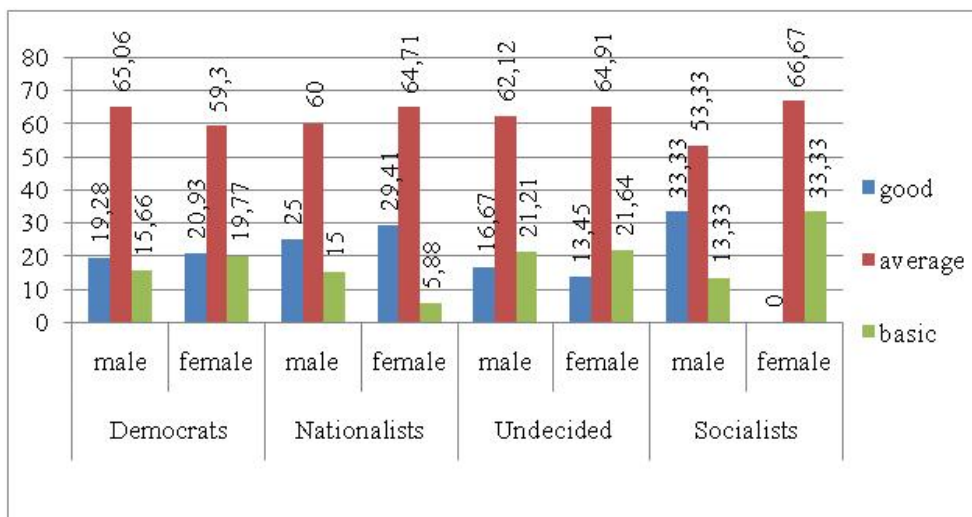


Chart 9

Disparities among men who belong to different parties are not so noticeable. Unlike in the case of their female counterparts, the difference between male nationalists and male socialists who think their knowledge of ethnic minorities is good is 8%, average 7%, and basic 1.67%. The same can be said for male democrats and socialists with a difference of 12%. There is a much smaller difference (3%) between male democrats and unaffiliated male students. Interestingly, even between male democrats and male nationalists the difference

is 5% for average knowledge and there is no difference between those who think that they have basic knowledge. The differences between men and women are again not very pronounced: 4.11% between male and female democrats, 6.5% between male and female nationalists, 9.12% between male and female nationalists and 13.34% between male and female socialists.

2.2. Elements of Multiculturalism in the Curriculum

When asked whether multicultural education should be included in the curriculum 61.48% of women answered positively, leading us to conclude that women, more than men, favor the presence of the elements of multicultural education (the difference being 8.68%) (Chart 10). Previous research corroborates the finding that women tend to be more supportive of multicultural education and to perceive the need for its inclusion in the curriculum (Kehrberg 1990; Cockrell 1999:358; Izgarjan, Markov, Prodanović-Stankić, 2012:263-264).

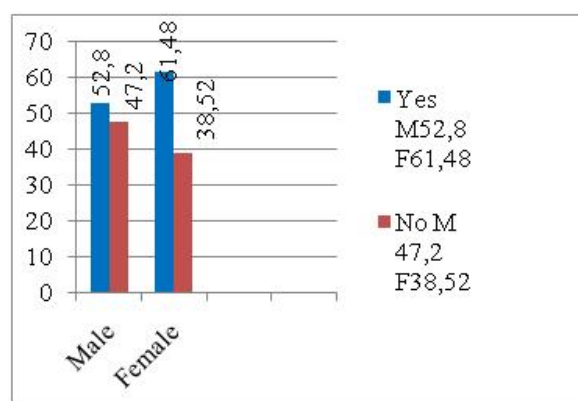


Chart 10

We can clearly see in Chart 11 that the students are more polarized in answering the question regarding the presence of the elements of multicultural education in curricula than in their answers to other questions. This can be explained by their vested interest in education and the shaping of the curriculum. Hence students affiliated with the nationalist party do not support the inclusion of multicultural education, which is in accordance with their party line: 75.68% think that there should not be elements of multicultural education while 24.32% think that there should be. There is a sharp divergence between them and students affiliated with the democratic group, of whom 68.64% support the inclusion of multicultural elements and 31.36% do not. Socialists and undecided students do not differ greatly from the democrats. 54.79% of the undecided and 62.5% from the socialist block think there should be multicultural elements and 45.21% and 37.5% respectively think there should not. Here the difference between the students from the nationalist block and those from other parties is most pronounced, the difference between nationalists and democrats being 44.32%, nationalists and undecided 30.47% and nationalists and socialists 38.18%. By comparison, the difference between socialists and undecided is 7.71%, democrats and undecided 13.85% and democrats and socialists 6.14%. This pattern of dissimilarity and division along party lines points to the fact that in Serbia in the past decade, the democratic and socialist blocks have begun to share the same body of voters, which has resulted in their having overlapping political ideologies and practices. In the previous two mandates the democratic and socialist block formed the majority in the parliament and the government.

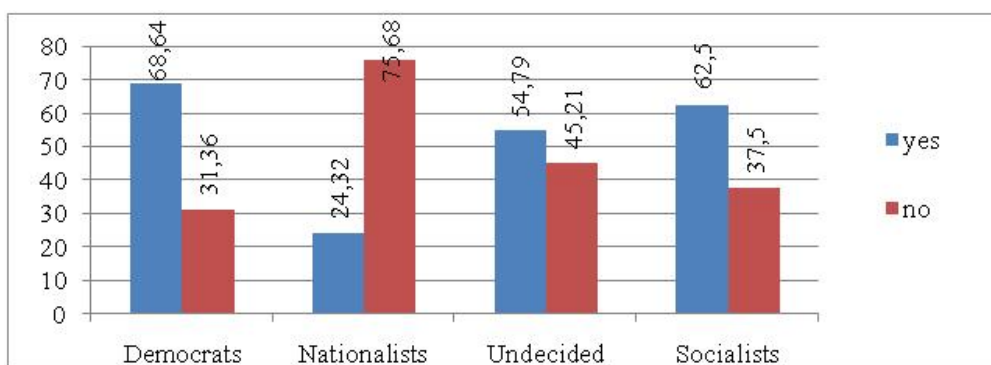


Chart 11

There is less opposition between men and women in each party group which can be attributed to party ideology (Chart 12). There is an 11.77% difference between male and female democrats, which can be explained by this party group's greater flexibility, one of 6.67% between socialist men and women, and one of 8.48% between undecided male and female students. The difference of only 1.47% between male and female nationalists reflects rigidity in this party block and greater allegiance to the party. Interestingly, again the greatest disparity can be found among women. While 74.42% of female democrats support the inclusion of multicultural elements, 76.47% of female nationalists do not, the difference being 50.89%. Here the difference between men is also more pronounced than was the case with previous questions (the disparity ranges from 38% between nationalists and democrats to 25% between nationalists and undecided). Male democrats and male nationalists differ by 37.65% in their answers. The divergence between female nationalists and

socialists is 43.14% while for their male counterparts it is 35%. The difference between female nationalists and undecided female students is exactly the same, 35%, and for male students from the same groups it is 25%. In comparison with this, the differences between women and men from the democratic and socialist block and those who are undecided are not as substantial. Democratic and undecided women differ by 15.94% and their male counterparts by 12.65%. Democratic and socialist women differ by 7.75% and men by 2.65%.

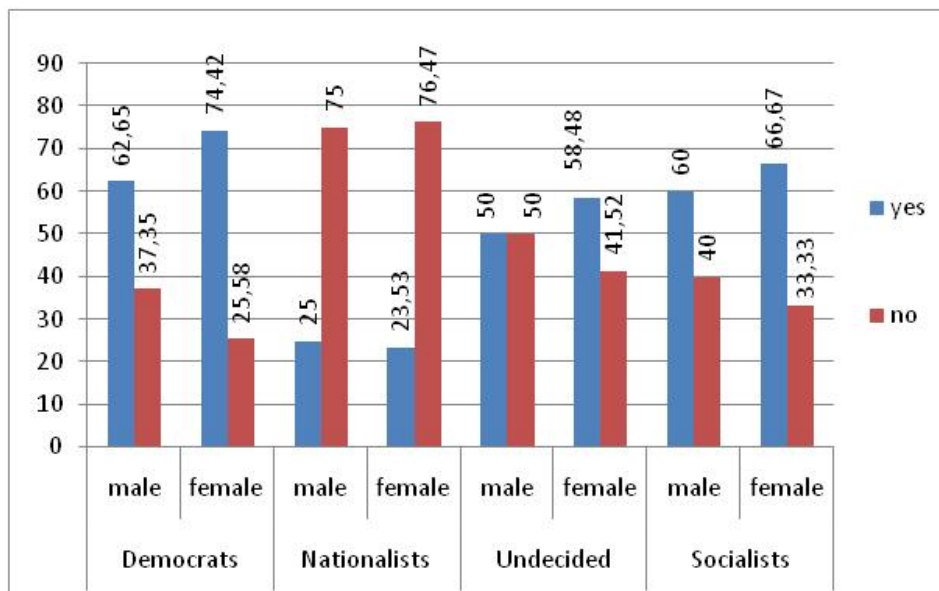


Chart 12

At the same time, the differences between women and men from the democratic and socialist block and those who are undecided are not so prominent (12%). Male democrats and male nationalists differ by 37.65% in their answers. The divergence between female nationalists and socialists is 43.14% and for their male counterparts it is 35%. The difference between

female nationalists and undecided female students is 34.95% and for male students from the same groups it is 25%. By contrast, once more it is women and men from the democratic and socialist blocks and those who are undecided who do not differ substantially. Democratic and undecided women differ by 15.94% and their male counterparts by 12.65%. Democratic and socialist women differ by 7.75% and men by 2.65%. Thus, we see that women affiliated with the nationalist party are again more decisive in their negative attitudes toward multicultural education, but this time they are closely followed by their male counterparts. Unlike them, the students from other party groups and those who are undecided have realized the need for multicultural education and would like to see it included in their courses. This reflects their support for equality and for the rights of ethnic minorities.

2.3. Influence of Multicultural Education on Ethnic Tolerance

Women tend to place a higher value on the influence of multicultural education (Chart 13). 86.57% of women think that they have become more tolerant thanks to multicultural education in comparison to 76.4% of men, while 23.6% of men think that multicultural education did not have any effect on their degree of tolerance in comparison to 13.43% of women. The difference between the genders is 10.17%. Similarly, Cockrell *et al.* found that after attending a course on multicultural education, only women changed their position in the direction of a more positive perception of multicultural education while men retained their former belief in monocultural education (Cockrell *et al.*, 1999:386).

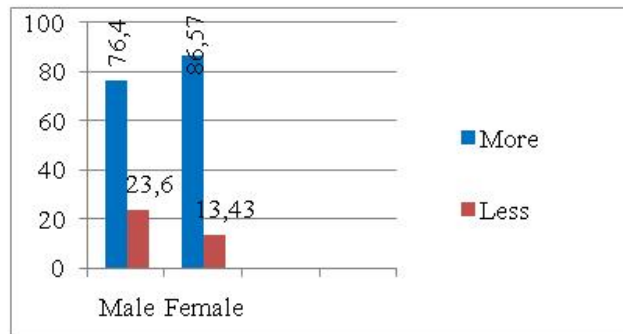


Chart 13

Analysis of the results in relation to party affiliation confirms our previous findings (Chart 14). There is a major difference of 29.3% between nationalists and democrats, with the democrats favouring the influence of multicultural education and nationalists perceiving it negatively. Democrats, socialists and the undecided form a united block in their positive opinion about multicultural education and their divergence from the nationalist position, with differences between them not exceeding 7%.

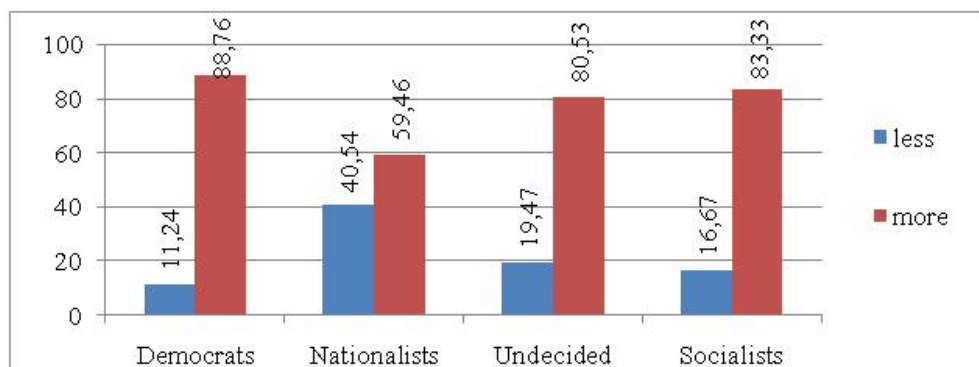


Chart 14

The differences between men and women who belong to the same party group are not very pronounced (Chart 15). Among democrats the difference is 6.32%, among the undecided 12.48 %, among socialists 8.89% and interestingly the greatest difference is that among nationalists: 20.59%. Here we have much more significant differences between men from different party blocks. Thus the difference between male democrats and nationalists is 35.54%, nationalists and undecided men 23.48% and nationalists and socialists 36.67%. The disparity between male students from the democratic and the socialist group is negligible.

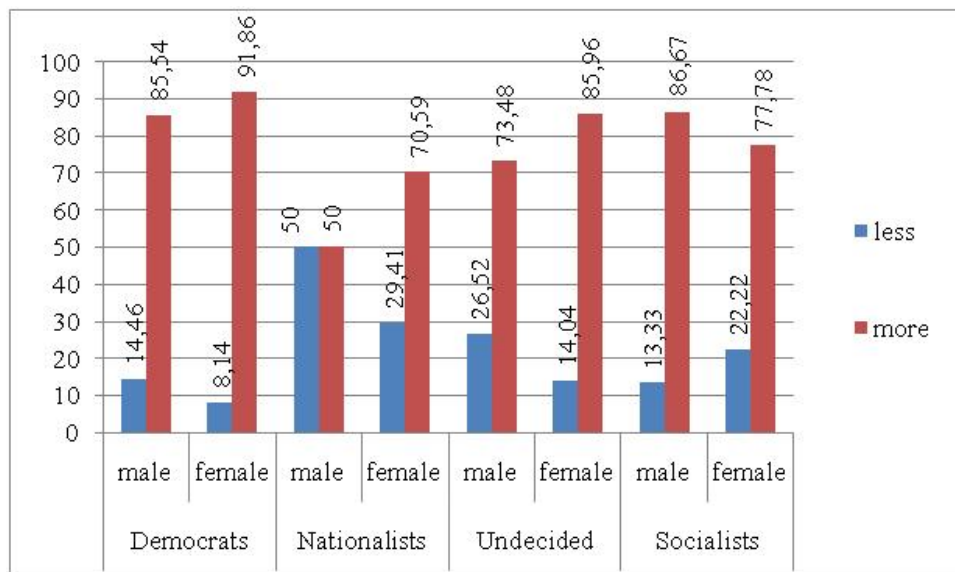


Chart 15

Another novelty here is the less noticeable difference among women. Female democrats differ from female nationalists by 21.27%, female

nationalists and undecided female students by 15.37%. We can see a slightly higher divergence between female students affiliated with the democratic and socialist blocks, 14.08%, while there is less difference between female democrats and undecided women, 5.9%, and socialists and undecided women, 8.18%. Interestingly there is also a much smaller difference between female nationalists and socialists than is usually the case: 7.19%.

More marked differences between men and women from the same party (particularly nationalists) and smaller differences between women from different party blocks can be explained by the general tendency of women to be more tolerant and supportive of ethnic minorities. This is usually ascribed to the marginalized position both women and ethnic minorities share in patriarchal societies. This also explains the greater disparity among men from different parties. We can also assume that men are less tolerant of ethnic minorities since in the Balkans men are perceived as warriors and in Serbia it is particularly among men that the memories of recent civil war and ethnic conflicts are unfortunately still fresh. In comparison, more women in Serbia from all walks of life were actively involved in peace movements (Blagojević 1997:23).

2.4. The Students' Perception of Serbia

Obviously, the leading party/coalition has a decisive role in the creation of educational policy. Therefore, it matters a great deal how the generations of students who are presently at university perceive their political affiliation, because they, by their votes, will determine the future course not only of political parties but of the whole of society. The regrouping of parties on the Serbian political scene, which is reflected in the students' answers regarding

their perception of Serbia, points to the fact that this alignment will most probably have an impact on educational policy, including on the inclusion or non-inclusion of multicultural education. This is why we considered it relevant to examine the students' perception of their country. Party affiliation was a stronger predictor here than the gender aspect. There is very little difference between male and female students in their perception of Serbia (Chart 16). 3% more female students have a positive view while 3% more male students have a negative view.

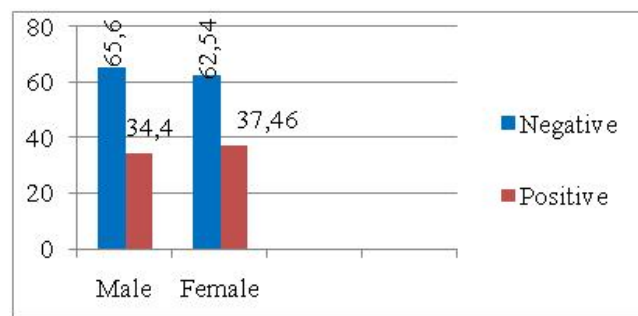


Chart 16

Polarization in relation to the students' perception of Serbia is evident not so much in terms of democrats, socialists and undecided versus nationalists as in the comparison between democrats and undecided on the one hand and socialists on the other (Chart 17). This rift in this otherwise quite uniform block can be attributed to the history of socialist and nationalist groups in Serbia and more importantly to their slow but sure progress, reflected in their larger share of voting support. The rise of both parties is remarkable given their problematic past and their participation in the civil war and in Milosevic's

regime. The socialists in particular, who struggled under the heavy burden of responsibility for the downfall of the Milosevic dictatorship, severe economic crises, the loss of Kosovo and defeat at the polls, have managed to completely reverse their ideology and party image. They have presented themselves as the moderate party of the centre, entered coalitions with the democratic groups and gained popularity. Similarly, the nationalist group has reversed its image as the party responsible for ethnic intolerance and ethnic cleansing during the civil war and presented itself as a group supporting both Serbian national interests and entrance into the EU. These stances obviously worked, since after the last elections the socialists and nationalists formed the government. Unlike them, the democrats did not fulfil the expectations of their electorate since they did not alleviate the effects of the economic crises, did not solve the problem of Kosovo's secession and did not achieve entrance into the EU. These political differences are clearly reflected in the answers given by the students.

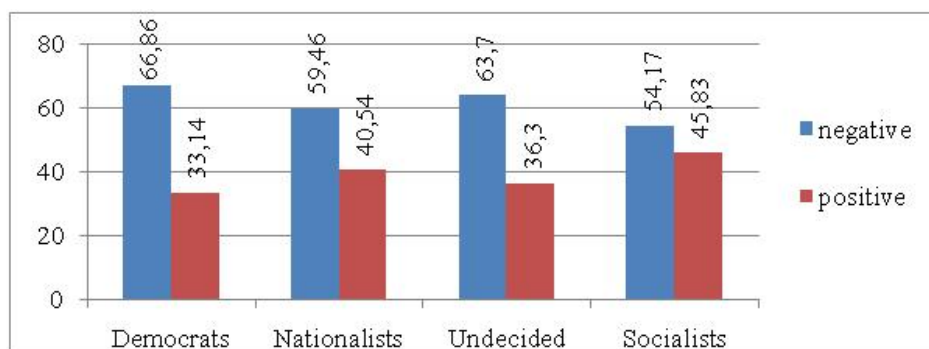


Chart 17.

Thus 45.83% of students affiliated with the socialists and 40.54% of nationalists have positive views of Serbia and the difference between them is

only 5.29%. By contrast, only 33.14% of those affiliated with the democratic block and 36.3% of the undecided are positive. The difference between democrats and socialists is 12.69% and that between the undecided and socialists 9.53%. Smaller differences between nationalists and democrats (7.4%) and nationalists and the undecided (4.2%) can be explained by the gradual shift of the democratic party towards the centre following the example of the nationalist and socialist blocks.

The intersection of gender and political affiliation in this case reflects the above-mentioned differences between the political groups (Chart 18). Consequently, the greatest difference is between male democrats and socialists (14.14%) and female democrats and socialists (10.72%). We do however see more of a difference between male socialists and undecided male students (14.95%) than between their female counterparts (5.26%). Likewise, there is less difference between female nationalists and undecided (9.15%) and their male counterparts (12.42%). The same goes for male nationalists and male democrats (12.47%) and female ones respectively (1.57%).

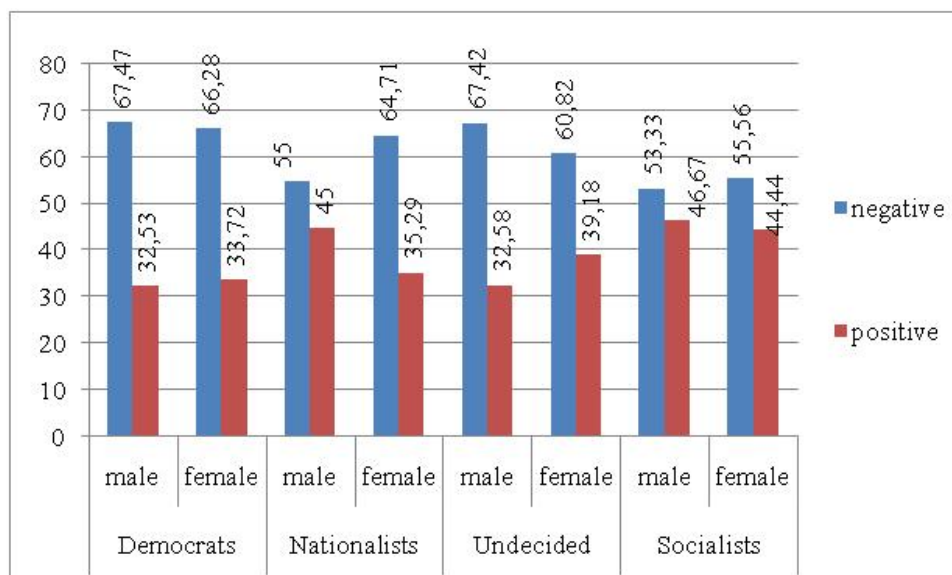


Chart 18

3. Conclusions

The results of our research confirm our hypothesis that gender and political affiliation have an influence on shaping the attitudes of students at the University of Novi Sad towards ethnic minorities in Serbia and the importance of multicultural education. Students at the University of Novi Sad, especially women, students who affiliate themselves with the democratic and socialist parties and unaffiliated students, have a positive opinion of multicultural education, which is an important factor in the diverse cultural context of Vojvodina. By contrast, students affiliated with the nationalist group have a negative attitude to this kind of education. Thus it can be said that democrats, socialists and the politically unaffiliated form a united block in their positive opinion about multicultural education while the nationalist group with its

negative attitude to this kind of education forms the opposing block. There are greater differences in attitude among women who belong to different political groups than among men, particularly between female democrats and female nationalists. The reason for this, the greatest difference seen among women in our sample, can be traced back to the history of the political groups with which they affiliate themselves. Nationalist parties have only recently started to give women leading positions within the party and government. Party discipline and loyalty thus became for women a prerequisite for advancing through the ranks and this adherence to party ideology can clearly be seen in their answers. On the other hand, women who belong to the democratic block have a long history of ideological diversity within their party and are accordingly less uniform in their opinions. More importantly, women had leading roles in the democratic block in Serbia from the beginning and occupied prominent positions in the government because of their struggle for women's rights. It is no wonder, then, that the opinions of women from these two blocks are so diametrically opposite, and this is also evident in their attitudes toward multicultural education. These differences are also more noticeable than differences among men and women who belong to the same party. The greater disparity seen between men and women who belong to the democratic block in comparison with those who align themselves with nationalist ideology can be explained by flexibility and rigidity within the two parties respectively. We can therefore say that one of the more characteristic and noteworthy findings of our research was the conclusion that the gender aspect is more apparent in the differences between women than between either different men or men and women. The differences between men from different party blocks were statistically less significant, which can be

explained by their safer positions within the party hierarchy and the absence of a need to prove their loyalty to party ideology. In the students' perception of Serbia we can also see an intersection of gender and political affiliation which reflects the differences among political groups. This confirms the relevance of the intersection of gender and political affiliation (which was one of the goals of our research). We believe that this research is relevant for creators of educational programs and policies in Serbia. It also points the way for future research, since this was the first piece of research carried out in Serbia to examine the attitudes of students towards multicultural education and ethnic minorities. Similar research needs to be carried out at different levels of the education system in Serbia (primary and high schools) among both students and educators. Moreover, our results, which confirm our hypothesis that both gender and the political affiliation of the students shape their attitudes, have led us to conclude firstly that we need to analyze the influence of the same factors on the opinions of educators and secondly that we should investigate how other variables such as ethnicity, class and religion (to name just a few of the most significant ones) affect their perception of multicultural education. Given that Serbia has before it a serious task of revising its educational system to make it more inclusive and accessible to students with special needs, such studies are indispensable in order to make us more aware of the views of those who are responsible for putting these educational programs into practice. Abundant research shows that if educators, particularly pre-service teachers, are not acquainted with the benefits of inclusive and multicultural education, they become the most serious impediment to its successful implementation (Izgarjan and Prodanović-Stankić 2012:165; Cockrell 1999:352; Abrams and Gibson

2007:150). We hope that this study will prove one of the steps towards that goal.

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