

# *Cultural Intertexts*

Year 3  
Volume 6/ 2016

## *Cultural Intertexts*

Journal of Literature, Cultural Studies and Linguistics published under the aegis of:

- ▽ Faculty of Letters – Department of English
- ▽ Research Centre *Interface Research of the Original and Translated Text. Cognitive and Communicational Dimensions of the Message*
- ▽ Doctoral School of Socio-Humanities

## *Editing Team*

Editor-in-Chief:

**Michaela PRAISLER** (Michaela.Praisler@ugal.ro)

Editorial Board

**Oana-Celia GHEORGHIU** (Oana.Gheorghiu@ugal.ro)

**Irina RAȚĂ** (Irina.Rata@ugal.ro)

Editorial Secretary

**Lidia NECULA** (Lidia.Necula@ugal.ro)

ISSN-L 2393-0624

ISSN 2393-0624

E-ISSN 2393-1078

Full content available at [cultural-intertexts.com](http://cultural-intertexts.com)

© 2015 Casa Cărții de Știință

Cluj- Napoca, B-dul Eroilor 6-8

[www.casacartii.ro](http://www.casacartii.ro)

[editura@casacartii.ro](mailto:editura@casacartii.ro)

## SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Professor Ioana MOHOR-IVAN, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați  
Professor Vladislava GORDIC PETKOVIC, University of Novi Sad, Serbia  
Professor Anca DOBRINESCU, "Petrol și Gaze" University of Ploiești  
Associate Professor Ruxanda BONTILĂ, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați  
Associate Professor Steluța STAN, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați  
Associate Professor Gabriela COLIPCĂ-CIOBANU, "Dunărea de Jos" University  
of Galați  
Associate Professor Isabela MERILĂ, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați  
Senior Lecturer Cătălina NECULAI, Coventry University, UK  
Senior Lecturer Nicoleta CINPOEȘ, University of Worcester, UK

**\* The contributors are solely responsible for the scientific accuracy of their articles.**

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This volume of *Cultural Intertexts* – a Journal of Literature, Cultural Studies and Linguistics – includes articles by doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, presented at the fourth edition of the International Scientific Conference organized by the Doctoral Schools of “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati (2-3 June 2016), section 6: “Cultural Spaces: Retrospective and Prospective Views” (official site: <http://www.cssd-udjg.ugal.ro/>).

Contributions by specialists from the host and partner universities, as well as by independent scholars and researchers, complement the collection and broaden the scope of investigation in the area of interest covered.

Using illustrative samples of high and popular culture (novels, plays, memoirs, artistic and documentary films, translations, TV series, advertisements, news bulletins), the articles focus on genre crossovers and intercultural mediation, on literary and non-literary representations of history, politics, religion, society. They compare, interrogate, destabilize, transform or re-read the corpora selected, in view of highlighting textual and contextual dialogue, the constant contamination by and contaminating of the global cultural intertext.

The editors express their gratitude to the members of the scientific committee, who have dedicated time and effort to reviewing the papers submitted and to making the publication of this volume possible.

Michaela Praisler

## LITERATURE AS WORLD INTERTEXT(S)

<b>Patricia Rose BOYD</b>	7
It's Rock'n'Roll, Man! Competing Visions of History in Reviews of HBO's Vinyl	
<b>Gabriela Iulia COLIPĂ-CIOBANU</b>	25
Shakespeare in Contemporary Romanian Advertising	
<b>Shawni DUNNE</b>	47
Grow, Learn, Suffer: Human Experience as a Community of Pain	
<b>Mihaela Alina IFRIM</b>	59
The 'Politics' of Gender and the Manipulation of Meaning in Sarah Ruhl's <i>Orlando</i>	
<b>Andreea IONESCU</b>	68
Shakesploitation and Shlockspeare in Film Adaptations	
<b>Monirul ISLAM</b>	79
Wounds Sustained, Wounds Nurtured: Rituals of Violence at Wagah	
<b>Melissa MOUCHREF</b>	88
Representations of Indigenous Feminism and Social Change	
<b>Ioana MOHOR-IVAN</b>	102
Envisaging a Post-Colonial Theatre: W. B. Yeats and the Cuchulain Cycle of Plays	
<b>Alexandru PRAISLER</b>	112
Disempowering the Translator as Intercultural Mediator. The Age of the New Media	
<b>Alina PINTILII</b>	124
The Father's Image in Julia Kavanagh's <i>Queen Mab</i>	



## “‘It’s Rock and Roll, Man’”

### Competing Visions of History in Reviews of HBO’s *Vinyl*

Patricia Rose BOYD\*

#### Abstract

*In this article, the author analyses the ways in which competing views of history shape cultural interpretations of television’s representations of past events and people. Drawing on Memory Studies to critique and highlight the limits of more conservative, traditional definitions of what history is, the article argues that history is not a “fixed” truth but is, instead, constructed through the retellings of the past. If history is positioned as a singular “truth,” we miss opportunities to understand the ways in which particular historical representations index cultural issues that relate both to the time period being represented as well as the current cultural moment. Through an analysis of the critics’ reviews of HBO’s historical drama Vinyl, the article highlights the benefits of a new view of history and the impact of this view on our understandings of histories’ significances.*

**Keywords:** *Memory Studies, historical representations, critical media, television series*

In his review of the first season of HBO’s new historical drama *Vinyl*, Sullivan (2016 web) argues that “the first thing any rock critic thinks when approaching cinematic rock is veracity: Does this seem real? Does it rock?” He responds to his own question with a resounding “Yes”: “The answer, quite simply, is that Vinyl rocks, right from the get-go. You can feel the texture, the visceral rawness” (Sullivan 2016: web). However, an overwhelming number of media critics do not agree with Sullivan’s assessment, arguing that the show is “bloated,” “unrealistic,” and more an office drama than a story about the history of rock and roll during the 1970s in New York City. In fact, Farber (2016) writes that “the HBO series seems less like a cherished piece of vintage vinyl than like an 8-track tape, *destined for the dustbin of history*” (web). Critiquing the inauthenticity of the historical representations in the series, Farber and other critics contend that *Vinyl* fails to capture the “truth” of a particular historical moment. Some

---

\*Associate Professor, PhD. Arizona State University, USA, Patricia.Boyd@asu.edu

critics even provide a list of the changes that they recommend for the second season in order to achieve the veracity that Sullivan claims the show already has, including a reduction of the amount of cocaine the lead character consumes to the development of richer, more in-depth roles for women and black jazz/blues musicians in the series.

The suggestions for revising the second season made sense earlier in 2016, when HBO announced that it was renewing *Vinyl* for the second season. This announcement came shortly after the airing of the pilot, even though the viewership for it was low (750,000 viewers) compared to other historical dramas like HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* (4.81 million viewers of the pilot) and AMC's *Mad Men* (1.65 million viewers of the pilot) and the initial reviewers of the series were negative. Based on this announcement, it seemed that Alexander's (2016) claims about HBO stand true: "HBO doesn't care about ratings. It doesn't have to. HBO cares about three things: awards, critical acclaim, and above all else, fostering exclusive relationships with some of the biggest talent in history. So, no, HBO doesn't care that people don't care about *Vinyl*" (web). The series has a good pedigree, too, with Terence Winter as head writer (who was also the head writer for the critically acclaimed *Boardwalk Empire*) along with Mick Jagger and Martin Scorsese as executive producers, and given that the series was initially renewed seems to suggest that HBO was okay with lower ratings because, despite them, it continued to commit large amounts of money to the show (\$100 million). However, new HBO director of programming, Casey Bloys, clearly re-evaluated the predominantly critical reviews of *Vinyl* because in late June 2016, he announced that *Vinyl* was, in fact, being cancelled. Bloys offered the following statement to explain the cancellation: "After careful consideration, we have decided not to proceed with a second season of *Vinyl*. Obviously, this was not an easy decision. We have enormous respect for the creative team and cast for their hard work and passion on this project" (Andreeva "Vinyl Cancelled"). Outgoing programming director Michael Lombardo explained that "'*Vinyl* didn't launch in the way we were hoping it would; it's disappointing, but it happens'" (Andreeva "Vinyl Cancelled" 2016). It seems as if HBO does, indeed, care about the things – like ratings and critics – that Alexander says it's not interested in.

Why was *Vinyl* cancelled? And what does this cancellation indicate about current cultural expectations of historical representations in dramas like *Vinyl*? The easy answer is that Bloys wanted to redirect the money allocated to *Vinyl*'s second season and apply it to other projects that would help him quickly make his mark on HBO's programming. However, if we

carefully analyse the negative reviews published throughout the run of Season 1, we see a pattern across them that highlights another crucial answer: The cancellation of the show highlights the conflicting interpretations of what counts as effective representations of the past. In Memory Studies theories, authenticity and “realism” are not necessarily the criteria or goals advocated; instead, “for anyone interested in history on film the chief importance of these works may lie less in their accuracy of detail...than in the way they choose to represent the past” (Rosenstone 1988: 1183). Further, as Hoskins (2004: 335) argues, “the process of remembering is not about retrieval (as the common myth would have it), as there is no ‘fixed’ moment to recall. Rather, to form a memory requires a (re)construction of an event, person, or place, which is ultimately contingent on (or rather, in) the present. Memory is infused with time. ‘Here and now’ is inextricably part of what constitutes the ‘there and then’ rather than the converse being the dominant case”. Instead of embracing these views of history, though, popular critics of *Vinyl* largely rely on the idea of history as “truth” and, as a result of that view, judged the series precisely because it did not capture that “truth.” The critics’ response to and interpretation of *Vinyl* had a distinct impact on its continuation –or lack thereof. It seems that the critics’ views of the series were significant in guiding the network’s decision to cancel the show. Although this view is critiqued by Memory Studies scholars, the cancelling of the series is evidence that in dominant popular culture, the interpretation of history as “truth” holds more weight than the view of history as selectively and interpretively constructed in the present moment to reflect the anxieties and issues that are common to the past and current culture alike. Therefore, no matter how progressive scholars of history and Memory Studies may be, the dominant view of history and the way historical representations are judged is seen primarily through the lens of authenticity “truth.” What we miss if we use such lens as a predominant one, though, is a critical engagement with the historical representations of an exciting, transformative time period. If we use the criteria of “truth” to evaluate the series, we judge it to be inauthentic and not worthy of continuation; if we use Memory Studies criteria, though, we see the ways in which current audiences use the history represented in the historical dramas.

In this article, then, I analyse the dominant views of history in our current popular culture through an analysis of the critics’ reviews of *Vinyl*. I then illustrate the limits of this guiding view of history and recommend that we use Memory Studies theories about history to produce alternate

readings of the series, ones that highlight how *Vinyl* indexes our current anxieties about the music business. Finally, I raise the question of whether the theorists' critiques can have an impact on the dominant "story" of history in our culture.

### **HBO's Vinyl:**

"Transcendence, music, sex, drugs, capitalism, and the American soul – that's the stuff of which HBO's *Vinyl* is made," claims Zurawick (2016: web). *Vinyl* follows Richie Finestra (Bobby Cannavale) as he tries to remake his record company, American Century Records, into a fresh, forward-looking one that, at the same time, recalls a passion for music that is inspired by past great musicians like Bo Diddley and Howlin' Wolf. As Richie enthuses at one point in the series "It's all about the songs, guys. Can you hum it? Will you remember it tomorrow? Does it make you want to call the radio station and find out who the band they just played was? Think back. Think back to the first time you heard a song that made the hairs on the back of your neck stand up." In another point in the series, Richie expresses a similar theme: "Rock & roll, man. Like the first time you heard it. It's fast, it's dirty, it smashes you over the head." As Andreeva ("Vinyl Show Runner" 2016: web) describes him, Richie is "really on a quest to make good his desire to find something new and do something that makes an impact on his business. When we meet him in the pilot, he's so anesthetized to music, he doesn't even go to clubs anymore. But then that electricity he feels at the Dolls show and the way he comes out of the pilot is the thing that fuels him for the rest of the series." Throughout the episodes, Richie struggles between economic forces that shape the music business and this passion for the music itself. The pilot episode, in fact, illustrates this tension. When the show opens, Richie and his partners are preparing to sell American Century Records because it has grown stale and is not making very much money. Like the company, Richie's relationship to music (and his life, more generally) has gone stale as well. During a scene where Mercer Center collapses during a New York Dolls concert, Richie has a musical – and spiritual – revelation, and he is once again infused with the passion for music that originally encouraged him to join the music business. Literally rising from the rubble of the Mercer Center, blown away by the music of the New York Dolls, Richie begins a quest for translating that passion into a successful business again, and, in the process, steps back into the conflicts between art and commerce

that are a key theme woven throughout the show. Richie is ever hopeful, insisting to all who will listen that music's passion will win out.

This drive is a central force of the show. *Vinyl* is set in the music scene of 1973 New York City, a time which is represented as a culture being in transition. The writers and producers have "constructed a series set at the nexus of vast musical change, where rock and roll was evolving not only with the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, and David Bowie, but also embracing glam rock, punk rock, and hip hop. As a series, it had a lot of fertile ground to cover" (Goodman 2016: web). Twenty years in the making, *Vinyl* is the brain child of Mick Jagger (whose son, James Jagger, plays the lead singer of the Nasty Bits, the fictional band Richie signs) and Martin Scorsese, both of whom lived through the show's time period and events. As Jagger explains in an interview, "'I thought 1973 a perfect moment in time,' Jagger says. 'New York was very dangerous, gritty, but also very musically exciting. It is a sweet spot for early proto-punk, rock'n'roll, R&B, and disco was on the brink of being discovered'" (Polay 2016: web). Like the music scene, Richie is also at a turning point in his career and at a point of transition in his life. "Richie is at a crossroads, personally and professionally, and so is the music industry. That parallel is one of the best storytelling strengths of the series" (Gilbert 2016: web).

Surrounding Richie is a cast of characters who work for him, are married to him, and/or want to bring him "down" for a crime he commits early in the series. He meets iconic figures from that era, both "real" characters played by actors like Elvis Presley, Robert Plant, Stephen Stills, Mama Cass, and Andy Warhol along with "fictional" characters like Hannibal (a sort of Sly Stone character) and the Nasty Bits (the punk band he grooms for the new label, Alibi). His relationships with his family, friends, and co-workers are strained throughout the series as he punches his business partner and best friend Zak (Ray Romano), gets left by his wife Devon (Olivia Wilde) who moves to the artsy Chelsea Hotel, and is on the "outs" with many of those he works with. These relationships illustrate the tensions that Richie faces/has created in his life, and the series illustrates how he works through these challenges, all within the context of historical representations of a vibrant music scene.

### **Critics' Views: Traditional Definitions of History**

Sullivan's (2016) quote that this article began - "Does this seem real? Does it rock?" (web) - reflects the heart of the traditional conceptions about history. How "real" gets defined is contextual, but for many critics of

*Vinyl*, “real” seems to be based on a judgment of whether or not the history represented in *Vinyl* is “true.” This view of the “truth,” though, suggests that there is a singular historical truth that just needs to be accurately captured and represented in historical dramas like *Vinyl*. Zelizer (1995: 217) points out that these more traditional views “presumed that memories were at some point authentic, credible recountings of events of the past”. Further, Hoskins (2004: 340) argues that a central aspect of traditional views of history is “the preservation of the past”, a view that argues there is a singular past that needs to be preserved through accurate historical representations. This view of history leads critics to use the criterion of authenticity as one of the main evaluative frameworks when analyzing historical dramas. Drawing on living history museum theories, Handler and Saxton (1988: 243) argue that, for those who embrace more traditional views of what counts as history, “an authentic piece of living history is one that exactly simulates or re-creates a particular place, scene, or event from the past”. The goal of “authentic history,” then, is to “replicate rather than interpret the past” (Handler and Saxton 1988: 243).

How impactful is this traditional view of history? Based on an analysis of the critics’ reviews of *Vinyl*, it is clear that our culture’s dominant perceptions about historical representations is still located in these traditional views of history as a “singular” truth of a fixed moment in time. When we analyse how critics evaluate *Vinyl*, we see the ways in which history is privileged as a “real” thing whose representation should be judged on the basis of how authentically the historical drama presents the “reality” of the past. Reviewers who value the show as well as those who critique it use this view of history to evaluate and analyse the show. While authenticity was used as a common lens through which to analyse all aspects of the show – characters, plotline, setting, etc. – one of the most significant topics considered in reviews was the music. In the next section, I focus closely on the ways that the music included in the show is critiqued through this lens, showing the ways in which this view of history gets taken up and enacted in our current cultural moment in popular media.

### *Music Reviews: Accuracy of Representation*

Given that *Vinyl* focuses on the music business in 1973 NYC, it is not surprising that many reviews of the series particularly scrutinize how music is included throughout the series. Some critics praise the authenticity of the music, arguing that the series captures the dynamism of the time period in which there was a range of exciting music being

introduced to the music scene. For instance, Hinckley (2016), argues that the show provides viewers an “immersion into the music of the 1970s – not the irritating top-40 pop that has given the decade its bad reputation, but the music that was bubbling under the surface. Punk, rap, R&B, the more creative early disco” (web). Thus, Hinckley emphasizes that the musical choices are authentic to the time period. Other critics also praise the types of music that are included in the show. Phull (2016) writes

Pay close attention and you can hear excerpts of super-obscure but meticulously chosen music woven into almost every scene, including Detroit Punks Death, Influential British psych outfit the Pink Fairies, and R & B Chanteuse Sylvia Robinson... These are the kind of names that would flummox even the most studied (and lonely) record store clerks. Music supervisors Randall Poster and Meghan Currier are clearly create-diggers of the highest order and have taken care to make *Vinyl* an immersive, multi-faceted music experience. (web)

Phull (2016) suggests that *Vinyl*, in this way, serves an education purpose, teaching about music through a historical narrative in a way that expands viewers’ knowledge of the music during that time period and, by implication, does so in an authentic way (web).

But other reviewers argue that the series is based on the false premise that NYC in 1973 was where the music business was hopping, i.e. where significant innovations were being created. Morava (2016) argues that “the New York music scene in the 70s is not necessarily dead, but arguably fading and more important events are happening elsewhere. No disrespect to the New York Dolls, Lou Reed, the Velvet Underground, but that’s not a revolution. KISS, Steely Dan, Television, and Blondie are awesome, but not comparable to what’s happening in London, Detroit, Chicago, and LA at the time” (web). Farber (2016) offers a similar critique about the anachronisms in the series, arguing that “a far more problematic stretch involves one of the series’ pivotal characters – Kip Stevens, front man of the Nasty Bits, played by Mick Jagger’s kid James Jagger. Bizarrely, this full-on 1977-style British punk has been transposed to New York four years earlier” (web). Others argue that Richie’s insights into the next, new thing is suspicious. Paskin (2016) writes that “Richie is a kind of musical Zelig; there is no sound lost on him. He gets the blues, he understood the Velvet Underground and Led Zeppelin, he’s hip to the power of punk, he hears hits in ABBA, and he is even alive to nascent hip-hop. There is something phony about the flawlessness of Richie’s miracle ear and its proclivity for legends. He doesn’t just have taste; thanks to the show’s

writers, he has the benefits of hindsight” (web). Thus, Richie’s “ear” for music is seen as suspect because of its lack of authenticity. Others argue that *Vinyl* pays too much attention to past musicians and less to the up-and-coming music that is part of the 1973 music scene. Instead of focusing primarily on the newer music that is cropping up in 1973, “at its heart, *Vinyl* loves Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis and Buddy Holly way more... *Vinyl* needs to stop winking at the future and make us believe that Richie would actually like the fictionalized punk band, the Nasty Bits” (Goodman 2016: web).

While their main arguments about *Vinyl* are competing, what both groups share, is that they use authenticity as a primary criterion to evaluate the series’ effectiveness.

#### *Music Reviews: Effects of Using Impersonators to Represent the “Real”*

Another aspect of the music scene that critics focus on in their reviews of *Vinyl* are the performances by real bands and musicians who are played by actors. For instance, Led Zeppelin (particularly Robert Plant and the band’s manager, Peter Grant), David Bowie, and Elvis are all woven throughout the story lines in *Vinyl* episodes. There is mixed reaction to this production strategy, all of them sharing the concept of “authenticity” as a central marker of what works and what doesn’t in the representations. A few critics have valued the fictional representations of real musicians: “The period specifics might even be the best reason to watch the show. If you get a kick out of seeing actors interpret Robert Plant, or Howlin’ Wolf, or Robert Goulay, or KoolHerc, then many kicks you shall have” (Kornhaber 2016: web). The inclusion of such historical representations are valued because through them, viewers are taught about the “truth” of the time period. As Kornhaber (2016) writes “Perhaps the best thing about the cosplaying aspect of *Vinyl* is its reminder that the diverse proper nouns that people think of as ‘the 70s’ really did exist at the same time, often in dialogue with each other. Bruce Lee, Andy Warhol, and Richard Nixon all made an impression on a nation listening to ABBA, Black Sabbath, and Grand Funk Railroad” (web). Plus, these representations add to the entertainment value of the series. As Matthews (2016) intones, “The show is never more entertaining than when it drops in actors playing younger version rock stars and other boldface names from the era – Robert Plant, Lou Reed, Andy Warhol and more. The effect is like time travel” (web).

While the majority of critics who commented on the representation of real musicians praised their inclusion in the series, the reasons they give

for their praise is because of the verisimilitude of their presentations. So, these critics, too, are using “veracity,” “authenticity,” and “history as truth” as the lens through which to evaluate historical representations.

*Music Reviews: Authenticity of Setting and Context of Dream-like Sequences*

In addition to performances by historical representations of real bands and musicians, *Vinyl* also includes dream-like sequences – hypnotic interludes that focus on the “greats” that led to the rock and roll music scene that the series is depicting. For instance, at Richie’s surprise birthday party, the camera pans from what is actually happening at the current moment to a mythical scene of Bo Diddley playing a guitar similar to the one that Devon buys Richie for his birthday. In another scene, an almost celestial Karen Carpenter rides along in Devon’s car as she daydreams about her life before her marriage and her children. Carpenter is singing “Yesterday Once More,” reflecting Devon’s state of mind. In other scenes, Howlin’ Wolf performs “Smokestack Lightning” on a fire escape and Jerry Lee Lewis plays “Breathless” on an almost celestial piano. A few critics find this strategy effective. For instance, Edwards (2016) points out the uniqueness of these visuals: “Where most series would be content to play the song on the soundtrack to evoke both a mood and a time in Richie’s life when life was simpler, *Vinyl* stages a performance. It’s not just story telling for an A.D.H.D. audience; it’s a power move” (web). Despite it being a “power move,” the critics’ feedback on these scenes is almost overwhelmingly negative. For instance, Long (2016) argues that the show feels inauthentic because of the feverish, almost mystical scenes in the show: “Rock star impersonators of all stripes keep popping up in bizarre places. Suddenly Bo Diddley is playing by a swimming pool, or Karen Carpenter is sitting in a car as a character drives along. What?” (web) Others argue that the scenes interrupt the flow of the shows: “The frequent fantasy cutaways to late musical legends performing songs vaguely relevant to the characters’ state of mind – these things are already obvious from what we’ve just seen and stop the show dead in its tracks every time. Musically, they could just as easily be slipped into the soundtrack instead of unconvincingly staged by lookalikes in some celestial nightclub” (Collins 2016: web). Also, if the purpose is to create an experience of listening to that kind of music, the scenes do not achieve that either, according to critics. As Collins (2016) explains, “A good song can transport you to another place, but is that place ever an empty room with a lone, blindingly backlit performer? When you really connect to a song, it draws you in, weaves its way into your brain,

and becomes a part of who you are. It doesn't leave you in the audience while the singer does their stuff" (web). So, because the dream-like sequences are not necessarily "realistic" and since they interrupt the flow of the story line of the "true" history, critics largely deem them to be problematic for a truthful representation of this time period.

In the next section, I explore alternative approaches to evaluating historical dramas. Drawing on Memory Studies theories, I illustrate what gets lost when authenticity is the primary criterion used to review historical dramas and point to the benefits of embracing a different view of history and its production.

### **Alternative Approaches: Memory Studies and *Vinyl* Analysis**

#### *Memory Studies:*

A rethinking of the way to interpret representations in historical dramas is needed because of the limits of the framework provided by the more traditional interpretations of those texts and history more generally. The traditional view, which emphasizes "truth" and authenticity, oversimplifies the process of memory making and fails to take into account the purpose served by particular historical representations. Instead of judging series like *Vinyl* through the lens of authenticity, we should consider drawing on Memory Studies theorists who ask important, large-scale questions like *what is history?* and *to what use is history put by both producers and consumers of these historical dramas?* As Kansteiner shows, what Memory Studies theorists are interested in is finding out "what stories about the past matter to whom and how they have been distributed" (2002: 195). How people's versions of histories are constructed and for whom along with how these historical representations get used by consumers of them is a central focus for Memory Studies theorists. They argue that authenticity is a limited criterion to use in evaluating the effectiveness of historical representations. Nieger et al (2005: 4) state that "collective memory cannot be considered as evidence of the authenticity of a shared past; rather, collective memory is a version of the past, selected to be remembered by a given community (or more precisely agents in it) in order to advance its goals and serve its self-perception". When a historical event is represented in the current moment, it is brought back into our culture's consciousness, not as a "fixed" singular truth but as one (and sometimes multiple competing ones) that is constructed through the lens of present aims, values, and goals. As Garde-Hansen (2009: 2) insists, "another, perhaps more useful, way of characterizing memory is to consider that every time it is remade in the

present it becomes ‘active’”. Each time we retrieve a memory, she argues, “we do so in a later, temporal position – a new context. Moreover, every time we represent an aspect of the past to ourselves, we inevitably change it” (Garde-Hansen 2009: 2). So, the very act of representing a historical event actually constructs new views of that history, rather than simply capturing the “fixed” past. Quite often, the representations of the past index current anxieties and issues. Edgerton (2000: 9-10) argues that “more popular uses of memory have less to do with accuracy per se, than using the past as a kind of communal, mythic response to current controversies, issues, and challenges. The proponents of memory studies, therefore, are more concerned with how and why a remembered version is being constructed at a particular time... than whether a specific rendition of the past is historically correct and reliable above all else”. The use of the historical representations, then, are crucial to our understanding of how histories are working in the current moment. As Zelizer (1995: 218) argues, “the study of collective memory, then, is much more than the unidimensional study of the past. It presents a graphing of the past as it is used for present aims, a vision in bold relief of the past as it is woven into the present and the future”.

These views offer a different way of conceptualizing history and our uses of it, focusing more on the “how” and “why” and less on the “what.” Approaching historical dramas like *Vinyl* through a Memory Studies lens, then, will highlight different aspects of the series that are overlooked when authenticity is the sole criterion used to evaluate it. Through this lens, we can see the ways that the historical stories presented in series like *Vinyl* provide us with insight about what stories matter in our current moment – both in terms of memory makers’ conceptions as well as in the consumers’ reception of particular representations. In the next section, I use these theories to analyse a common anxiety/issue that is indexed by *Vinyl* – the tension between art and commerce. Doing so provides us with insights not only into the historical moment of the NYC music scene in 1973 but also our culture’s ongoing engagements with this tension. As will be made clear, this sort of analysis challenges the traditional views of authenticity and truth as the main framework through which to evaluate historical representations.

#### *One Theme, Rather than a Comprehensive Story:*

If critics want *Vinyl* to provide a comprehensive “truth” about the 1973 NYC music scene, then they will be disappointed – as many of the critics

were. But if we adopt a Memory Studies view, we begin to see the strategies that the producers used to convey a core theme that runs throughout *Vinyl*'s multiple story lines – art versus commerce. This key theme gets taken up in multiple ways in the series, ascribing to an idea put forth by Peter Davis--60 Minutes' producer – that a historical drama or documentary should focus on one theme—and focus on it deeply – rather than trying to represent the “whole” (Joplin 1988: 1213) because, as Memory Studies theorists argue, the “whole” is a constructed myth that serves to oversimplify the process of memory making. *Vinyl* itself focuses on the way the tension between art and commerce gets played out. Reading the series through this dominant theme illustrates a different kind of significance for telling stories of the past; it shows that when we tell a past story, we are activating the past in new ways and exploring issues of how the “there and then” is shaped by the “here and now.”

The theme of art versus commerce is dominant in the *Vinyl*'s representation of the music business. Kip, the lead singer of the Nasty Bits, struggles with maintaining what he sees as his and the band's integrity while still desiring to be a success and make money. He rails against the need for him to create a biography of himself, to fire the lead guitarist of the original band, and gets frustrated with the photo shoots that the band must participate in. A key moment in the series that shows this tension is when Julie Silver (Max Casella), A & R Director, makes the band play a revamped Kinks tune rather than playing their own song during their audition for Richie. When it becomes clear that the song is not working to capture the raw passion of the band, Kip and the band start playing their original song and, as a result of this switch back to their original music, capture Richie's ear. Thus, the representation of the Nasty Bits emphasizes the tensions between art and commerce from the perspective of the artist. In this instance, art and commerce are reconciled. The Nasty Bits can be successful without fully “selling out” to “the man.”

On the other hand, Lester Grimes' (AtoEssandoh) story illustrates what tragedy can happen when someone refuses to sell out and art and commerce are not reconciled. When Richie first got into the music business, Lester was his first client, but when a company wanted to buy Richie out, they insisted that they keep Lester on. While Richie valued Lester's blues music, the new owners of the company did not and requested that he change his name and sing pop songs, rather than sticking to the blues that was his passion. When Lester refused to sing the songs the company wanted him to, it hired mobsters to crush Lester's voice box so that he

could never sing again. Lester sinks into despair and when we see him in 1973, he is a superintendent of a sad, run-down building. Richie serendipitously meets back up with Lester and tries to find a way to make up for what happened to Lester. As a result, Richie wants Lester to sell old tapes of his recordings, but Lester burns the tapes right in front of Richie, out of anger over what Richie has done to his career as well as out of a resistance to Richie's desire to commodify Lester's music. In an interview, Essandoh explains Lester's character in this way:

I think that Lester, sort of archetypally, represents the pure musician, especially the African-American musician back then, especially the blues guys. There were a lot of them that were taken advantage of, and the music was essentially stolen from them. I think part of my thinking in this character was representing a little bit of that because I think Lester is not a business guy. He doesn't know any of that stuff. He just – as he says in the pilot—he just wants to play the blues. He's just that pure of a musician. (Cobb 2016: web)

In the quote, Essandoh paints an image of an “authentic” musician who does not “sell out,” but who was “sold out.” His character in the show represents the dark “truth” of the music business in a way that highlights exploitation and violence. When asked in an interview how “truthful” he felt his character's representation was, Essandoh responded that he feels *Vinyl*'s representation of the exploitation is “pretty accurate for what I know of how people behaved back then. It still happens today. The music industry, like every industry, has a problem with exploiting artists. Right now people are not getting paid for having billions of streams on, let's say, Spotify or so forth” (Cobb 2016: web). Interestingly enough, by the end of the show, Lester has taken on the role of the Nasty Bits' manager, locating himself squarely in the music business that he resisted so vehemently in the 50's. As Essandoh explains, when Lester gets involved in the music business, “he looks at himself as a sell-out, but it's actually a good business move to do something like that. Because, unfortunately, whether you like it or not, art has to be mixed with commerce if you want to eat” (Cobb 2016: web). Thus, Lester's story highlights the complexities of the “selling out” and the ever shifting balance of power that has characterized the music business for decades. While the “truth” of the history of African-American musicians is important because it raises awareness of exploitation and deceit, it is also important to study the contradictions in Lester's story in order to understand that there isn't one true history of those musicians or their plight/situations. The art versus commerce issue is definitely woven

throughout his story, but Lester's actions never fully resolve the issue, instead showing the complexity of the problem.

This theme of art versus commerce is a common anxiety even today. According to many music critics, we are once again in a transitional time period where the issue of art versus commodity is becoming a central concern because of the way that a myriad of technological changes in the music industry is making it harder for artists to financially survive only through selling albums. Because of streaming music and fans' changing listening habits, many artists are looking for other ways to make a living so that they can continue to make their music. McMartin (2005) explains the tension in the current moment in the following way:

Even if someone writes their own material or brings in songwriters, there is always an inclination to come up with something catchy, new, and relevant that has the possibility of becoming a hit. You cannot blame an artist wanting to make a living from creating music and wanting to spread their music to as many people as possible. That's every artist's goal but sometimes during the pursuit of success, the music is compromised (web).

One area where this tension is currently being played out is in corporate advertising. Analysing the impact of musicians allowing advertisers to use their songs, Parkinson (2014) muses: "So, is it now completely acceptable for bands to market their songs to advertising companies? It might be the case that with declining record sales and the increase in online streaming, there is little money to be made from music these days... Artists are having to find new ways to earn a crust – most of their income now comes from touring, merchandise, and, yes, advertising. It may well be that artists are simply doing what they need to in order to survive" (web). She determines that there is a change in the air, with artists who refuse to use their music in advertisements and other corporate endeavours being "no longer the default position" (Parkinson 2014: web). But, as Richards (2015) argues, the new generation of younger listeners do not necessarily see these practices as "selling out." "Completely aware that yesterday's music industry is now rubble, younger listeners no longer feel that the integrity of the experience has been violated when their most beloved artists pitch products or sell their songs for TV commercials. When music can no longer sell itself, it scrambles to help sell other stuff" (Richards 2015: web). For example, "Drake has made it his job to sell more Drake – through rapping, through singing, through Nike, through Sprite" (Parkinson 2016: web). But if this "selling out" means that an artist's music is more widely available and that the artist continues to make music, many in the younger generation are

okay with these practices. Brownstein (2009) points out that “because as music fans – as consumers – there is nothing more appealing than something that is boundless. Therefore, we don’t really care what an artist’s intention is as long as his or her product is accessible to us. And corporations and their commercials are often the ones bringing songs to us, curating our experience and means of exposure or giving our favourite musicians the most money, so that they can continue making the music we love” (web).

Other rock and roll critics, however, argue that this commodification of music ruins the music: “if advertising becomes a prime venue to discover and experience music, how long before too much music starts sounding too timid and too dull? Will the fear of losing an endorsement or licensing deal make tomorrow’s artists less adventurous? (More so than back in the day when artists were competing for record contracts instead?)” (Richards 2016: web). Artists rail against the new tendency as well, with Adele stating that “I don’t want my name anywhere near another brand. I don’t wanna be tainted, or haunted, and I don’t wanna sell out in any way. I think it’s shameful” (Parkinson 2014: web). And McGovern (2012) argues that savvy listeners will not tolerate this newer trend well: “Ultimately, when an artist’s music is shoved in the faces of principled music fans with standards and appears as a product as opposed to an individual piece of art, fans will reject the music. While the implications of selling out may have changed in the new millennium, the traditional meaning of the accusation still holds. When a band begins to sound more accessible and marketable at the expense of artistic integrity, those dedicated fans will be ready to scream ‘sell out’” (web). The issue of art versus commerce continues to be a tricky one, but “one thing’s for sure, the relationship between commerce and music is strengthening” (Parkinson 2014: web).

Clearly, these are similar anxieties that are reflected in *Vinyl*’s representation of the music business, except that *Vinyl* takes it to a more dangerous position, where violence is actually done to artists who refuse to sell out and the mob is at the heart of the music business. These plot lines may have been included to add to the dramatic feel of the show, and/or they can reflect the largesse of the problem of art versus commerce. But what is clear is that the theme of art versus commerce is clearly a current-moment anxiety and is open to as much debate as it was in the ‘70s – as represented in *Vinyl*.

## Conclusion

So, why is it important to study a show like *Vinyl* through the lens of Memory Studies? Analysing the reception of the show helps us see the ways that particular views of history shape not only how we interpret historical dramas but also how we approach history in general. If we see history as a fixed “truth,” then there’s really no reason for us to actually engage with history making. According to traditional views, history is already made and it is the task of producers to present the “correct” history. Memory Studies theorists, though, encourage us to rethink our positioning towards history. From their view, history is a constructed rendition in the current moment, pointing as much to current issues as to those in the past. Looking at the uses to which histories are put help us understand the significance of recalling and re-engaging with particular histories and their particular representations. Memory Studies helps us see that the past is layered onto the present and when we re-activate a past event, we are doing so through a contemporary lens. Studying the series through this view of history helps us see how the history of 1973 NYC music scene is being represented rather than viewing *Vinyl* as providing a textbook definition of what that history was. Memory Studies approaches allow us to examine an issue that was historically and currently impacting the music business in significant ways. So, instead of expecting historical dramas like *Vinyl* (or any representation of a history) to provide “the” story, what an analysis of *Vinyl* does is show how the series tells “a” story – an invested story, a perspectival story – but definitely not “the” story because, as Memory Studies theorists show, believing that there is a singular story to tell is fictional. Although “we have come to expect conventional history, not innovative approaches to looking at the past,” (Joplin), *Vinyl* actually approaches history through an innovative lens. And if we use Memory Studies to study it, we can see the power of that lens – not only for interpretations of historical dramas, but also for our uses of/engagements with histories in general.

## References

- Alexander, J. (2016) HBO *Doesn't Care that People Aren't Watching Vinyl and Here's Why: They Don't Need Our Views*. Polygon.com. February 19, 2016
- Andreeva, N. (2016) *Vinyl Cancelled: HBO Scraps Plans for Revamped Season 2*. Deadline.com June 22, 2016
- Andreeva, N. (2016) *Vinyl Show Runner Terence Winter Exits HBO Series*. deadline.com April 8, 2016

- AtoEssandoh Interview: Vinyl's Lester Grimes Talks Music. (2016). denofgeek.com. No date
- Brownstein, C. (2009) *Risk Management: Can an Artists Sell Out When There Are No Boundaries?* npr.org. November 11, 2009
- Collins, S. (2016) *Vinyl Recap: Funny Business*. Rollingstone.com. March 6, 2016
- Edgerton, G. (2000) *Television as Historian: An Introduction*. Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television. 30:1, 7-12
- Farber, J. (2016) *HBO's Vinyl: Destined for the Dustbin of History* Yahoo.com/reviews. February 9, 2016.
- Garde-Hansen. (2009) *Introduction*. Save As: Digital Memories. Ed. J. Garde-Hansen et al. New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-25
- Gilbert, M. (2016) *This Is What Happens When You Mix Scorsese and Jagger*. *www.bostonglobe.com* . February 11, 2016
- Goodman, T. (2016) *Critic's Notebook: Can HBO's Vinyl Be Saved?* Billboard.com. April 18, 2016
- Grainge, P. (2000) *Nostalgia and Style in Retro America: Moods, Modes, and Media Recycling*. *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 23:1, 27-34
- Handler R. and Saxton, W. (1988) *Dissimulation: Reflexivity, Narrative, and the Quest for Authenticity in Living History*. Cultural Anthropology 3:3, 242-260
- Hinckley, D. (2016) *Talking with Randall Poster: The Man Behind the Music of HBO's Vinyl*. Tvworthwatching.com. April 17, 2016
- Hoskins, A. (2004) *Television and the Collapse of Memory*. Time and Society 13:1, 109-127
- Joplin, R.B. (1988) *The Filmmaker as Historian*. The American Historical Review 93:5, 1210-1227
- Kansteiner, W. (2002) *Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies*. History and Theory 41, 179-197
- Kobb, K. (2016) *Why Is It So Hard to Make a Good Show about Rock and Roll?* decider.com. June 29, 2016
- Kornhaber, S. (2016) *Vinyl: Forrest Gump but for Classic Rock*. Theatlantic.com February 12, 2016
- Matthews, L. (2016) *HBO's Vinyl: As Wild and Dangerous as Rock & Roll Itself*. Tvguide.com February 12, 2016
- McGovern, J. (2012) *Facing the Music: Does Success Equal "Selling Out"?* highbrowmagazine.com. March 12, 2012
- McMartin. (2005) *The Art of Selling Out: Compromising the Music*. Antimusic.com/lowdown/050integrity.5html
- Morava, M. (2016) *5 Reasons HBO's Vinyl Is Unwatchable*. Hollywoodintoto.com. March 22, 2016
- Neiger, M. et al (2005) *Editor's Introduction*. On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age. Ed. M. Neiger et al. New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-27

- Parkinson, H.J. (2014) *Is Selling Music to Advertisers Still Considered Selling Out?* theguardian.com. May 22, 2014
- Paskin, W. (2016) *Martin Scorsese's Vinyl Is More Like a Great Party than a Great TV Show.* Slate.com. February 9, 2016
- Phull, H. (2016) *Why HBO's Vinyl Is the Best Music Show on TV.* Nypost.com. April 14, 2016
- Polay, M. (2016) *Bobby Cannavale and Olivia Wilde Star in HBO's New Drama Vinyl.* Newsweek.com
- Richards, C. (2015) *Is It Even Still Possible to Sell Out?* washingtonpost.com. July 9, 2015
- Rosenstone, R. (1988) *History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History into Film.* The American Historical Review 93:5, 1173-1185
- Sullivan, J. (2016) *Mick Jagger and Martin Scorsese – HBO's Vinyl Rocks with Veracity and Grit.* Artery.wbur.org. February 11, 2016
- Zelizer, B. (1995) *Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies.* Critical Studies in Mass Communication. 12, 214-239
- Zurawick, D. (2016) *HBO's Vinyl Hits TV High with Martin Scorsese.* Baltimoresun.com February 12, 2016

# Shakespeare in Contemporary Romanian Advertising

Gabriela Iuliana COLIPCĂ-CIOBANU\*

## Abstract

*Shakespeare's presence in the Romanian culture has been mainly ensured, for a long time, by translations and theatrical performances. Yet, nowadays, in a context in which reading the classics (or, in general, reading literature) in print seems to be losing ground to digital media and the theatre, as an institution, is subject to a major crisis, relying only on these 'highbrow' forms of cultural appropriation of Shakespeare's works is no longer enough to preserve the interest in Shakespeare as a literary icon and a cultural phenomenon; other forms of intertextual encounter with Shakespeare that belong to popular culture may, hopefully, contribute to propagating the 'Shakespeare myth' among mass Romanian audiences. Focusing on one particular product of contemporary popular culture, namely TV advertising, the paper explores the few Shakespeare-related TV commercials aired on various Romanian TV channels during the first decades of the new millennium, to see to what extent the re-contextualisation of Shakespearean words, images, characters or themes in these cultural products may function as an effective means to reinforce Shakespeare's cultural authority in the Romanian collective consciousness.*

**Keywords:** Shakespearean drama, adaptation, intertextuality, television commercials, consumerism

Shakespeare has not been a 'stranger' to Romanian audiences since the nineteenth century. The efforts of the Romanian intellectual elite of the 1830s to arouse interest in the work of "the greatest genius of the English theatre", as Cezar Bolliac put it (qtd. in Gavriliu 2006: 86), circumscribed to the process of Shakespeare's Europeanisation, led to establishing, through literary debates, translations (starting from the 1840s) and theatrical performances, Shakespeare's status as a cultural icon and an influential literary model in the Romanian context. Of major impact on the forging of new patterns in the Romanian literature and culture of the second half of the nineteenth century, which is confirmed, among other things, by the assimilation of Shakespearean influences in the works of Mihai Eminescu, Bogdan Petriceicu-Hașdeu or Barbu Delavrancea (Gavriliu 2006: 85-90),

---

\* Associate Professor, PhD. "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati.  
gabriela.colipca@ugal.ro

Shakespeare's iconic profile was shaped as an epitome of artistic maturity, sophistication and authority, accessible, above all, to the educated milieus.

The more and more explicit coding of Shakespeare as high culture (Lanier 2012: 506) that characterised the Anglo-American cultural space in the first half of the twentieth century seems to have affected his Romanian reception too. Not only did translations into Romanian of Shakespeare's plays increase significantly in number, but they also improved in quality as a result of the translators turning to the original English texts (rather than to indirect French and German sources as it happened in the previous century). That academic studies and Shakespearean translations came to be strongly interconnected is perhaps proven by the fact that the best (and the most prolific) Romanian translator of Shakespeare in the 1940s was Professor Dragoș Protopopescu, the founder of the English Department of the University of Bucharest (Volceanov 2006: 207)<sup>1</sup>. Critical studies focusing both on the English original and the Romanian translated texts, theatre reviews that praised or censured theatrical productions staging Shakespearean plays, the intersections with Shakespearean texts traceable in the literary works of writers like Mihail Sebastian and Ion Luca Caragiale, all reflect the same orientation, in the first half of the twentieth century, towards the appropriation of Shakespeare primarily for the benefit of "the cultured classes of society" (Stern in Matei-Chesnoiu 2007: 83).

Later on, in the second half of the twentieth century, while Romania was under Communist rule, the 'popularization' of the Bard's work still relied extensively on translations. That may account for the issuing of "the first Romanian 'complete' Shakespeare" between 1955 and 1960 by a highly heterogeneous (from a social-professional perspective) group of translators coordinated by Mihnea Gheorghiu (Volceanov 2006: 206-208), which bears enough marks of the refashioning of Shakespeare's image along the lines of Communist ideology, as well as of at least some of the translators' striving for philological orthodoxy (which made these translations hardly actable on stage - see Volceanov 2010: 8, Colipcă and Stan 2011: 86). Even when a revised version of Shakespeare's *Complete Works* in Romanian was issued between 1982 and 1995, coordinated by the great Romanian scholar and translator Leon Levițchi, the translations, though improved, remained mainly philologically-oriented, fit for academic study (especially since this particular edition was provided with an introductory study and comments by Professor Levițchi, as well as explanatory notes by Virgil Ștefănescu-Drăgănești). As for the theatrical performances of Shakespeare's plays, attempts were made to somewhat render more 'popular' these artistic

manifestations still implicitly considered as emblematic for high culture by producing Shakespearean plays for the National Radio Theatre and broadcasting them on Radio Romania, having live theatrical performances of Shakespearean plays filmed and broadcast on the national television channel, or putting on Shakespearean plays as part of the Romanian television drama shows.

In the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution, throughout the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century, however, Shakespeare's reception and appropriation in Romania has undergone significant changes against the background of the transformation of the Romanian society into a capitalist, consumerist one, in which social and cultural dynamics are heavily influenced by globalization. The tendency towards the harmonization with current trends in the global reception of Shakespeare as a cultural icon seems to have characterised, more and more explicitly, all forms of appropriation of the Bard's work in the Romanian cultural space since the beginning of the new millennium, in some cases, being closely entwined with the desire to continue pre-existing Romanian 'traditions' in 'interacting' with the Shakespearean heritage. A good case in point is that of the new attempt at translating Shakespeare's complete works into Romanian. Initiated in 2010, coordinated by George Volceanov, this series undeniably connects back, in many ways, to the previous endeavours of producing complete Shakespeare editions and to translation models they relied on, yet, tributary to postmodern attitudes, it also seeks solutions to 'dilemmas' that the predecessors left unsolved. For one thing, George Volceanov and his collaborators' translations are intended for reading, addressing particularly students and academics, 'traditionally' perceived as the target audience for the Shakespearean text (which accounts for the rich critical apparatus that accompanies the translated texts, consisting of "comprehensive prefaces by Romanian Shakespeare scholars" and "numerous, well-documented notes", Colipcă and Stan 2011: 87), as well as for performance on the Romanian stage. In addition, the translators' adopting the strategy of "liberalisation" (Delabastita 2004: 113), i.e., using a "somewhat 'rougher' language" (slang, bawdy terms, neologisms, idiomatic constructions) in rendering the Shakespearean text, hints at their hoping to efface thus "the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture" (Jameson 1992: 165), to "naturally fill the 'gap' that separates the text from the readers and/or spectators" (Colipcă and Stan 2011: 88). Whether this series will succeed in attaining its goals of overcoming highbrow/lowbrow boundaries and reviving Romanian audiences' interest in

Shakespeare's works on page and on stage is difficult to say at the moment as the series is still in the making.

Yet, in this age in which reading printed books has been losing ground to digital media and in which "theatre suffers from being seen as an increasingly irrelevant art-form" (Burnett 2007: 9), Shakespeare's popularization at the global level has been largely relying on film, television, advertising and other media. It is worth mentioning, in this context, that, after previously successful forms of 'popularizing' Shakespeare in Romania, like radio drama or television drama shows, have considerably lost their appeal, there have been attempts, even if for now not very numerous, within the frame of the contemporary Romanian culture, to follow the general trend and to transcend the highbrow/lowbrow dichotomy by incorporating Shakespeare in mass-cultural products like TV series and commercials, while simultaneously adapting the representation of Shakespeare's image to the expectations and particularities of the present-day Romanian public. This study focuses on the few Shakespeare-related television commercials that have been aired on Romanian TV channels since 2000 and aims at identifying the forms of intertextuality that advertisers have resorted to in integrating Shakespeare into the web of cultural patterns encoded in their productions, as well as at revealing the symbolic meanings attached, on the local - Romanian - market, to the 'Shakespeare myth' that has been widely circulated and reshaped in the globalizing process. In the "generalized game of human relations" that Baudrillard sees in advertising, given by the "simulated intimacy" created between advertisers and customers, on the one hand, and customers and advertised products, on the other (Ritzer in Baudrillard 1999: 13), the intertextual relationship with Shakespeare, which becomes part of the montage of elements from different cultural reference systems that underlies the advertisements (Odiu 2007: 13), plays an important part in "the attribution of symbolic value to commodities" (Odiu 2007: 13) and functions as a key component of the "test [...] liberating response mechanisms according to stereotypes and analytic models" (Baudrillard 1983: 120) to which Romanian customers are subject to when trying to decode the message conveyed by the media construct.

Despite the fact that one might be tempted to see in the use of Shakespeare in advertising an example of postmodern practice, its early days can be traced back to the eighteenth<sup>2</sup> and the nineteenth centuries. As a matter of fact, according to Douglas Lanier, one of the few scholars who have recently focused on this particular topic,

Shakespeare's use in advertising can be divided into three phases: the late Victorian period, a heyday for Shakespeare-oriented marketing; the modern period, from the First World War through the 1950s and early 1960s, in which Shakespeare played a relatively minor role in marketing; and the contemporary period, from the 1960s to the present day, in which Shakespeare-themed advertising has enjoyed a modest resurgence. Each of these periods' advertisements deploy Shakespeare in distinctive ways, for reasons arising not only from changes in media, advertising strategies, and the nature of mass production, but also from Shakespeare's changing ideological valence and relationship to the public. (Lanier 2012: 500)

It seems that, in the British and American cultural spaces in the late nineteenth century (1875-1900), Shakespeare's being "an established cultural touchstone, both popular and eminently respected, a status bolstered by [his] prominence in the theatre" did not make the creative use of Shakespeare for advertising heretical or controversial (Lanier 2012: 501). Continuing a pre-existent "tradition of referring to Shakespeare irreverently" and drawing on the presumably broad knowledge of and familiarity with Shakespeare of the late nineteenth-century public, advertisers tapped into the collective representation of Shakespeare as "familiar, wholesome, superlative, trustworthy" to answer the consumers' concern about the quality of the advertised goods and to persuade them to buy them (Lanier 2012: 500-501). That accounts for the use of Shakespearean names as brands and for the more or less witty exploitation of allusions to a wide range of Shakespearean plays in late nineteenth-century advertising cards (Lanier 2012: 502).

Nevertheless, with the deepening of the highbrow/lowbrow cultural divide throughout the period 1900-1960, Shakespeare came to be commonly "cast as the very epitome of traditionalism, elitism, and specialist knowledge", a symbol of high culture (related, above all, to theatrical performance and academic study), hence he "could no longer be deployed as a voice of popular authority in advertising" (Lanier 2012: 506). In the context of the shift in advertising from "product-information" to "product-image", i.e., from the stress on the product's uses and quality to its "symbolic significance for the consumer", advertisers chose, more often than not, to resort to "a bundle of connotations with which to identify or contrast their products" (Lanier 2012: 506). Only in advertising luxury products was Shakespeare valued as a symbol of "elitism and exclusivity", otherwise he was perceived as being at odds with the advertisers' (and the customers') preference for "modernity, urban life, convenience, speed,

accessibility, fun, democratization”, hence being used “as a connotative foil” (Lanier 2012: 506-507). The list of strategies used in 1900-1960 to integrate familiar Shakespearean phrases and Shakespearean references in advertisements was completed by treating Shakespeare as “a comic intensifier”, refashioning the Shakespearean material to make the references more oblique, and transforming Shakespeare into “a vehicle for corporate image-laundering” (Lanier 2012: 508-509).

Such an overview of strategies used to incorporate Shakespeare in the advertising discourse on the British and American markets proves necessary when one seeks to understand the representation of Shakespeare in the second half of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the new millennium because, as Douglas Lanier points out, “contemporary Shakespeare-themed marketing certainly exhibits many continuities with earlier history” (2012: 510). Most often playing on well-known Shakespearean phrases (chief among which “to be or not to be”), on commonplaces of a handful of Shakespearean plays (including the ‘skull routine’<sup>3</sup> in *Hamlet*, the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* or Julius Caesar in his toga in *Julius Caesar*), or on the famous Droeshout portrait, post-1960 ads produced in English-speaking societies seem to favour the same “irreverent treatment of Shakespeare and use of Shakespeare as a high-cultural foil”, while simultaneously “work[ing] to place the target consumer among a knowing elite, though the bar for ‘knowing’ is set low” (Lanier 2012: 510-511). Particularly in television advertising, Lanier notices the scarcity of Shakespeare-related commercials mainly accountable for by television addressing “the widest possible audience and thus [being] antithetical to the kind of specialist knowledge supposed necessary for understanding Shakespeare” (2012: 511). Yet, as a novelty in Shakespeare’s use in advertising from the 1960s to the present, Lanier also remarks the tremendous influence on Shakespeare-themed advertising of recent film adaptations, with special stress on the groundbreaking *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) directed by Baz Luhrmann (and not only). The film-mediated strengthening of the link between Shakespeare and youth culture has obviously encouraged, in Lanier’s opinion, both the reconsideration of Shakespeare “as a positive connotative resource” for advertisers and the increasing appeal of Shakespearean advertising on various cultural markets around the world, in brief, its globalization (2012: 513).

It is precisely against the background of the aforementioned tendencies in contemporary Shakespeare-themed advertising that the TV commercials making up the corpus for analysis of the present study should

be considered. When remarking that “Shakespeare has made few substantial inroads into radio and television advertising” (2012: 511) Douglas Lanier most likely had in mind the British and American cultural spaces; yet, his statement turns out to be an equally valid description of the relationship between Shakespeare and advertising on the Romanian market. In other words, the number of advertisements that capitalize on the Shakespearean heritage and that have been aired in Romania is actually very small. Hence, the corpus of the present study is reduced to five Shakespeare-related TV commercials produced on/for the Romanian advertising market since the beginning of the new millennium. Dated to the first decade of the twenty-first century (about 2000? and 2008, respectively), three of them lend themselves easily to discussion within the framework of adaptation studies as they playfully adapt the Shakespearean hypotext (to use Genette’s term, 1997) to arouse the Romanian viewers’ interest in pay-as-you-go offers launched by two mobile phone network operators on the Romanian market, namely Connex and Cosmote. More recent (2015 and 2016), the other two develop an intertextual relationship with Shakespeare that is based on allusion and citation to advertise products that belong to different fields of consumption, i.e., food, in the case of the Univer ketchup ad, and drink, in that of the Neumarkt beer ad. In these media texts in focus, not only is Shakespeare used to seduce Romanian consumers into purchasing various products (prepaid mobile phone cards, ketchup and beer), but the approach to him as a cultural icon and the connotations attached by advertisers to characters, images and phrases in his work are illustrative for different meaning-construction strategies which, as the subsequent analysis endeavours to demonstrate, signal glocalization, being both reminiscent of the pre-established Shakespeare advertising practices gradually embraced at the global level and relevant for particularities of the Romanian cultural space and of the reception within its framework of the ‘Shakespeare myth’.

About the turn of the new millennium (in 2000?), when the mobile telecommunications market had barely started to develop in Romania and the competition between the two mobile phone network operators, MobiFon/Connex<sup>4</sup> and MobilRom/Dialog, was very tight, the Romanian viewers’ attention was drawn by a couple of commercials that used the historical figures of Julius Caesar and his opponent, Brutus, to promote a newly introduced pay-as-you-go service provided by one of the two competitors on the Romanian market, namely Connex. These commercials had been commissioned to D’Arcy, an advertising company that had been

founded in 1992 by the American Joe and Alana Perez and which would come to be seen as the first of the great 'schools' for Romanian advertisers, functioning at a time when advertising was an industry in becoming in Romania<sup>5</sup>. The conception of these media texts betrays the advertisers' awareness of an "aesthetics of reception" (Jauss 1982 qtd. in Ahuvia 1998: 153) that builds on repetition and on the television viewers' expectations that the advertisement should take the form of "a short drama featuring the product" (Ahuvia 1998: 153). That accounts for the moulding of the 'old' conflict between Julius Caesar and Brutus in the form of 'a drama in two acts' that implicitly makes one establish intertextual links with the history of the Roman empire and the Shakespearean play that turned a key moment in the fight for power in ancient Rome into a pretext for reflection on the nature of the ruler, conflicting value systems and the mechanisms of political manipulation, *Julius Caesar*. Starting probably from the assumption that the reference back to the Roman past would appeal to the Romanian audiences as Romanian national identity was in full reshaping process in the aftermath of major societal changes (much like the representatives of the Romanian intellectual elites of the nineteenth century, scholars and translators who took particular interest in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*<sup>6</sup>), D'Arcy advertisers seem to have equally taken into account the 'tradition', long established on the British and American advertising markets, of humorously, even irreverently, treating Shakespeare, hence their approach to the characters of Julius Caesar and Brutus. In the "enchanted simulation" (Odiş 2007: 200) put forth in "Caesar vs. Brutus. Part 1" and "Caesar vs. Brutus. Part 2", as the two now 'legendary' commercials have come to be referred to in Romanian advertisement archives still available on the internet, a postmodern rewriting of a story from the (historical and literary) past seen "through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past" (Jameson 1992: 171) takes a parodic twist in the attempt to seduce the audiences and to endow the advertised object, i.e., the Connex Go! bundle, with symbolic meanings "mapped onto [their] desires, motives and experiences" (Odiş 2007: 126).

Both parts of the advertisers' defamiliarizing representation of the tense situation opposing Brutus to Julius Caesar follow the same structural pattern, hence the effect of repeating narrative in Part 2, and favour shifts in perspective by their mixture of subjective and objective filming. To be more specific, both ads begin by making the viewers see through Julius Caesar's eye as the introductory extreme close-ups reveal the reflection on Caesar's blue iris of images of entertainers – a female lyre player in Part 1 and a young man eating grapes in Part 2 – that remind of the lascivious

lifestyle of the Roman ruling classes. Yet, in neither of the two parts, as the objective long shots suggest, would the self-absorbed, pensive Caesar, dressed up in his red toga and wearing a golden laurel wreath, be deterred from his scrutinizing the horizon and, one might guess, his meditating on state affairs. He appears to be unaware of the fact that Brutus, here wearing a Roman general's costume, sneaks along the wall of the triclinium, which provides the setting of the advertisement, to stab him in the back. The oversimplification of the plot is obvious, since the 'bloody deed' is not to take place in the Senate and Brutus is not supported by Cassius or any of the senators. The alteration of character structure is most evident in the case of Brutus who is far from the noble, though inflexible, idealist in Shakespeare's play, whose actions, though motivated by 'honourable' intentions and political principles, ultimately lead to civil war. Last but not least, the parodic reinvention of the past irremediably alters character relationships by condemning Brutus's attempts at murdering Caesar to failure. The close-ups which the advertisers' visual portrayal of Brutus is supported by reveal a spiteful character, with a face almost deformed by hideous grins, and embittered by rage and the desire to take revenge especially after the first failed attempt at murdering Caesar (in Part 1), which brought about the attacker's severely injuring himself in his plunging over the balustrade. (In Part 2, the viewers are given access to Brutus's mind by means of a blurred flashback of the moment of the fall from Part 1, which serves as an incentive for Brutus's second, equally failed, attack on Caesar.) It is precisely in this frame that the advertised product finds its place in the narrative structure of the media texts. In both parts Caesar's life is saved by the ringing of the phone. In Part 1, ignorant of Brutus's intentions and attempt to stab him to death, Caesar bends down to pick up the mobile, answers it ("Brutus? Brutus is not here. No." - my translation) and, when he spots Brutus fallen under his window, he feels sorry for not having put him through before ending the call. The dramatic situation is thus "debased for comic effect" (Dobson and Wells 2001: 4) and without the advertisement establishing an explicit connection with the Shakespearean tragedy. The non-diegetic voice-over just introduces the object of the advertisement by a witty choice of words ("A legendary service providing instant mobile connection" - my translation) that is meant to pay homage to the great Roman past and, obliquely, to Shakespeare, as well as to urge the viewers to take interest in the qualitative Connex services which are most likely to keep customers coming back (see The Ken Blanchard Companies 2016), and ends by

drawing attention to the slogan of the Connex Go campaign: "Connex Go! What's yours is all yours!" (my translation). In the absence of an explicit reference to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, "Caesar vs. Brutus. Part 1" appears as an appropriation based on embedded intertextuality that "depends crucially upon the [viewer's] recognition of the subtexts and intertexts involved" (Sanders 2006: 2, 77). In Part 2, however, the ringing of the mobile phone causes Caesar to turn unexpectedly towards Brutus, who cowardly hides the dagger behind his back, and to exclaim "Et tu, Brute?/You too, Brutus?", as he is pleasantly surprised to discover that Brutus is using the same pay-as-you-go service. The character's line renders the intertextual engagement with the Shakespearean tragedy explicit, hence the possibility of labelling "Caesar vs. Brutus. Part 2" an adaptation that creatively transposes a now more easily identifiable source (Sanders 2006: 2 and Hutcheon 2006: 8). Of course, the pleasure of recognizing in the advertising discourse an adaptation of the Shakespearean text remains unavoidably dependent upon the receivers'/ viewers' being acquainted with the adapted source (Hutcheon 2006: 21). Anyway, whether more obliquely or more explicitly pointing back to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the two hypertexts highlight the advertisers' endeavours to hail technological progress (i.e., the introduction of pay-as-you-go services by a major player on the Romanian mobile telecommunications market) by capitalizing on Shakespeare as a 'legendary' cultural icon. The implicature here appears to be that, just as the historical Julius Caesar and Brutus left their mark on the evolution of the ancient Roman state and Shakespeare, who rewrote their story into a dramatic meditation on power and politics, changed his contemporaries' and the subsequent generations' reception and understanding of history, art and human nature, the Connex Go! pay-as-you-go service, given its high quality, could make a major difference in the lives of those individual consumers who would buy it, bringing them 'life-saving' benefits, like freedom of movement and fast communication. If one might look for a polemical dimension (that Dentith finds defining 2000: 9, 16-17) in these postmodern parodies, it might be related to the so-called fixity of historical truth, as history may be rewritten, and to the highbrow/lowbrow hierarchies which they seek to overcome. Yet, Shakespeare's association with high quality and elitism is useful in their case to suggest that, by purchasing the advertised pay-as-you-go service that is made available to mass consumption (at the end of Part 2, Caesar triumphantly shows the mobile phone to the cheering crowds), Romanian

customers could become part of that privileged group of individuals who know how to appreciate innovation and technological advance.

Several years later, in 2008, another mobile phone network operator on the Romanian market, rebranded as Cosmote in 2005 (after having functioned since 1998 under the name Cosmorom), resorted to Shakespeare to advertise one of its pay-as-you-go bundles. The TV commercial, which played on one of the most popular commonplaces of Shakespeare advertising, *Romeo and Juliet*, was produced by Ogilvy & Mather Group Romania, a subsidiary of the famous international Ogilvy advertising network (itself part of WPP, one of the largest multinational advertising and public relations companies in the world) (SMARTpromo 2008). Taking this aspect into account, there is no wonder then that the advertisers' choice of story and strategies employed to render it in the Cosmote commercial is significantly influenced by global practices in Shakespeare-themed advertising. One might suspect that awareness of the low value attached to literature, in general, and to Shakespeare, in particular, especially in youth culture, at both the global and the local levels, may have determined the advertisers to avoid openly acknowledging their indebtedness to the source text, i.e., Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Identifying their target audience as consisting of young mobile phone users to whom the (then new) All Inclusive Cosmote pay-as-you-go bundle could grant the freedom to make more in-network calls, to send more text messages in the Cosmote network, and, above all, to make more calls to any other national network, the advertisers claimed that they conceived the commercial as a comic/parodic reinterpretation of the 'old' boy-loves-girl-but-the-girl's-father-is-against-the-relationship cliché, making the mobile phone network which they used the 'bone of contention', in order to highlight the absurdity of the situation and to generate humour (SMARTpromo 2008). But, though not explicitly indicated as a reference point, the Shakespearean hypotext is at least in the back of the advertisers' mind and that is hinted at by certain elements of the visual text. For instance, the beginning of the commercial shows the blond, blue-eyed Juliet, who wears a pink T-shirt that singles her out as the romantic heroine of the story, walking across a park accompanied by a dark-haired girlfriend, wearing a green T-shirt. The image of the two girls might make one think of Shakespeare's Juliet and her cousin Rosaline, as depicted in Romeo's famous speech in the balcony scene: "Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,/ Who is already sick and pale with grief,/ That thou her maid art far more fair than she:/ Be not her maid, since she is

envious;/Her vestal livery is but sick and green/And none but fools do wear it..." (II.2.4-9).

Since "[t]elevision permits the advertising of commodities to be woven into vignettes of everyday life" (Odih 2007: 13), the Cosmote commercial incorporates the advertised pay-as-you-go bundle into the story of a couple of "star-crossed lovers" that belong to an easily recognizable contemporary urban society. That is part of the advertisers' strategy of making the Shakespearean source "easily comprehensible to new audiences (...) via the processes of proximation and updating" (Sanders 2006: 18). Brought closer to the audiences' temporal and social frames of reference, the advertisement replaces the Capulet's ball with socializing and game-playing in a town park, and the rivalry between the Montagues and the Capulets with the competition between mobile phone network operators seeking to gain as many loyal customers as possible. For more verisimilitude, the floor is given, from the beginning, to Juliet, whose voice guides the viewers through the narrative: "That day I fell in love with him! I was simply struck. I instantly fell in love with him. But then my father found out he was the customer of a different mobile network" (my translation). The visual text sustains the verbal one when punning on 'strike': Juliet is accidentally struck on the head by Romeo's ball and she falls in love with him at once as, gentleman-like, he lifts her up. The Shakespearean balcony scene is relocated in the park where, without much talk or hesitation, Romeo steals a kiss from Juliet. But later, the couple's harmony and happiness is spoiled by the violent intervention of Juliet's father who tears to pieces the cute plushy Romeo has offered Juliet and who warns his daughter against changing the mobile network operator ("No one in our family has ever changed the mobile network operator!" - my translation). Still, no one can stop Romeo from being reunited with his Juliet: on a rainy night, he returns to Juliet's place and, as she joins him, he dispels her worries (Juliet: "And what shall we do about my father?" - my translation) letting her know about the new All Inclusive Cosmote pay-as-you-go bundle: "You may call him any time. With the Cosmote pay-as-you-go, you get enough minutes to make calls to any mobile network!" (my translation). It is obvious that, in the process of creatively transposing the myth of romantic, yet cursed love into the contemporary context, the advertisers considerably altered the original Shakespearean plot, character structure and character relationships. Even if the story is told from Juliet's perspective, her character loses much of the passion, strength, determination and maturity of the Shakespearean character, being reduced

to a weak 'lady-in-distress' figure oppressed by an authoritarian father and waiting to be rescued by her 'knight in a shiny armour', Romeo. The latter is equally transformed: like the Shakespearean lover, he is bold, passionate, ready to defy parental authority and to take any risk just to be with his Juliet; yet, he lacks the immoderation characterising the Shakespearean Romeo that contributes to the Shakespearean play's tragic outcome, and turns out to be capable of self-control as well as resourceful, seeking the best solution to reconcile his and Juliet's private desires with the oppressing social forces here represented by Juliet's father. In addition, the advertisers' re-vision of the Shakespearean hypotext allows for a direct confrontation between Romeo and Juliet's father and, most importantly, provides a different ending, a happy one, to the initial dramatic situation. Hence, one may describe this Cosmote commercial as an appropriation (Sanders 2006: 26 and Hutcheon 2006: 18) of the Shakespearean play that, as previously stated, does not explicitly acknowledge its source, but takes up its story, rethinks and filters it through the interests and expectations of the postmodern youth culture to ultimately create a new cultural product meant to serve commercial purposes.

It is also worth mentioning that the encoding of Shakespeare as a cultural icon in the Cosmote TV commercial may be regarded as the result of a complex intertextual game involving more than just the Shakespearean text. At the end of the commercial, a green curtain drops on the image of Romeo and Juliet kissing, happy that, owing to the Cosmote pay-as-you-go bundle, all communication problems have been solved. This may, naturally, be perceived as another visual element which contributes to reinforcing the idea that the advertisers turned primarily to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in creating their hypertext. But, at the same time, it may remind one of the movie theatre curtains that used to cover the screen in the 'old days' of cinema. And this is but one of the signs indicating that the advertisers might be tributary to the new, globally spreading style in Shakespeare-themed advertising that has founded the attribution of positive connotations to Shakespeare on "the power of recent Shakespeare films to reinvigorate Shakespearean cultural capital for a new generation" (Lanier 2012: 513). The image of Romeo and Juliet in the commercial, all wet and passionately kissing in front of Juliet's house, echoes perhaps that of Baz Luhrmann's protagonists in *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) as they come out of the swimming pool making love vows, or as Romeo, wet with rain, joins Juliet for the consummation of their wedding night. Water imagery in the commercial carries the same symbolism as that in Luhrmann's film,

pointing to baptism and new beginnings, as well as to escape, for, as Luhrmann explained, his *Romeo and Juliet* “escape into water” and “use water for silence, for peace, and their ‘there’s a place for us’ moments” (qtd. in Lehmann 2010: 191-192). Along these lines, the advertisers’ strategy in the Cosmote commercial may be looked upon as illustrative for what Richard Burt calls “glo-cali-zation”, implying “both the collapse of the local and the global into the ‘glocal’ and the retention of ‘Cali’ (or Hollywood) as the center of the film industry” (2003: 15). Altogether, the analysed TV commercial, advertising improvements in the services provided by the mobile phone network operator Cosmote, seeks to seduce its young would-be customers by putting forth a story about love, conflict and technology which is actually an oblique appropriation of the Shakespearean *Romeo and Juliet*. However, reimagining a storyline of the Shakespearean source text in the contemporary context, looking at it through a humorous lens and complicating the intertextual relationships at the heart of the resulting hypertext by subtly hinting at “Shakespeare’s cinematic repopularization” (Lanier 2012: 512) are the strategies by means of which the advertisers hoped to counter the reception of their creation in terms of the ‘traditional’ understanding of Shakespeare as “a symbol of oppressive high culture” (Lanier 2012: 512) and to tune it to the target audiences’ values and expectations related to modern urban life, fun and technological progress.

Over the years following the coming out of the previously discussed Shakespeare-themed Cosmote TV commercial, the interest in Shakespeare on the Romanian advertising market seriously declined and was somewhat revived only at the moment when the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare’s death was nearing and, in various cultural spaces around the world, preparations were being made to mark it. In 2015, for instance, the Univer Group, “a prominent player in Hungary’s food industry and trade field” (Univer Plc 2015), issued a new TV commercial for its ketchup, which draws attention, among other things, by its playing on references to Shakespeare. Since, as Pamela Odih puts it, “[s]pace, it seems, is no longer an obstacle to global capitalism” (2007: 16), this particular advertisement was aired in Hungary but also dubbed for broadcasting on various TV channels on the most significant foreign market of the company, i.e., in Romania, where the Univer Group has a subsidiary known as Univer Product S.R.L. (Univer Plc 2015).

The media text is constructed in a rather conventional form as a “dramatized commercial vignette” (Odih 2007: 13) meant to provide a demonstration of the product, in this case ketchup, set within the

framework of a domestic environment. From the very first shots and verbal exchanges between the characters one may detect marks of the social and cultural patterns – family relations, gender issues, and... Shakespeare – that underlie the process of meaning construction. Thus, wife – husband interaction becomes the perfect opportunity for the introduction in the advertising discourse of an allusion to Shakespeare's *Othello*: while cooking, rather deep in thought, a young woman is taken by surprise by her husband who, putting on an oven glove, jocularly poses as an Othello ready to strangle his Desdemona. The threatening nature of his gesture is humorously undercut by the husband's using the oven glove and saying: "Have you laid the table, Desdemona?" (my translation). Leaving aside the comic twist given to the Shakespearean hypotext, the implicit oversimplification of the complexity of the original plot does away with Desdemona's independence of spirit and power of speech and reduces her image to that of a submissive, faithful wife. It is precisely that image that the advertisement projects on its female character: confined to the domestic sphere, this woman is shown cooking, laying the table, silently and patiently putting up with her husband. The stereotypical picture of womanhood in patriarchal terms is soon completed by the introduction of a third character in the advertisement, namely the couple's daughter, which adds motherhood to the list of traits of the young adult woman that the advertisement features. Next, the father – daughter interaction provides further hints at the major lines along which the male character of the commercial is conceived. Suddenly emerging from under the table, the father tries to convince the daughter to take a bite ("Just one bite, my princess!" – my translation), but his large, exaggerate gestures and his theatrically dropping his head on the table do not impress the child who looks bored, leaning her cheek upon her hand. Though so far he has failed to get his 'audience's' attention, the father continues his show, fooling with a French fry in his hand and uttering with a serious mien: "To eat of not to eat, that is the question" (my translation). The mother and the daughter are amused, yet the latter is determined to put an end to this ridiculous performance – "Dad, please, you're not on stage!" (my translation) – because she is hungry. The advertisers' play on the phrase that "has become the favourite Shakespeare reference in advertising" (Lanier 2012: 510), i.e., Hamlet's "To be, or not to be – that is the question" (III.1.55), functions here as "a comic intensifier" (Lanier 2012: 508), and their having the daughter explicitly label the father's behaviour as theatrical stresses that Shakespeare is primarily associated here with the high-culture art of the theatre. If, on the one hand, the mapping of meaning in the Univer TV

commercial relies on such dichotomies as man/woman and private/public, the explicit association of the father figure with the public sphere completing the picture of the typical patriarchal family in a masculine society in which gender roles are clearly delineated, on the other hand, it stresses the opposition nature/ (high) culture. Once the father has dropped the actor's mask, the family may finally enjoy their meal which, as the (female) non-diegetic voice-over explains, "tastes better when it's all natural" (my translation). The keyword is obviously "natural": at the denotative level, it emphasises what differentiates the advertised ketchup from other similar products ("That's why the Univer ketchup is E-free. It's natural, i. E. ketchup Univer!" - my translation); at the connotative level, nevertheless, it implies that Shakespeare as a cultural model stands for artificiality and sophistication, hence it functions as "a connotative foil" (Lanier 2012: 507) for the product.

Relatively similar strategies for the integration of Shakespeare in the advertising discourse are adopted by the producers of another advertisement aired on Romanian television channels in early 2016 to inform the consumers of Neumarkt beer that the product is available in a new form of presentation, i.e., in glass bottles. Confirming that repetition is a basic mechanism in advertising in more than one sense, the new Neumarkt ad addresses the target consumers, i.e., exclusively men (as part of the slogan indicates: "For real men/ Rightfully male" - my translation), having a middle income and mid-level education, to remind them what individualises Neumarkt beer and why they like it so much ("the strong, bitter taste" - my translation), as well as to add one more 'episode' to the relatively long series of Neumarkt advertisements that are centred on the same male protagonists. In this case, the picture of the lifestyle the consumers may identify with is enriched with the image of a casual party held in a log house/ chalet, where the cheerfully conversing guests drink Neumarkt beer. A young man leaves his group of friends to get some beer from the fridge, but his access to it is made difficult by three 'guardian'-like figures (two of them at least easily recognizable from previous Neumarkt 'episodes'). The verbal exchange they engage in deviates from an ordinary issue like beer consumption to evolve into an awkward, verging on the absurd, metaphysical debate on the problem of existence:

*Speaker 1:* Can I have a beer?

*Speaker 2:* Of course! How would you like your Neumarkt: in a plastic or glass bottle?

*Speaker 1:* Why, does such a thing as glass-bottled Neumarkt exist?

*Speaker 3:* Do we exist?

*Speaker 2:* Life exists in the true sense of its existence.

*Speaker 4:* That is the question.

*Speaker 2:* What question? (my translation)

The characters' mock-philosophical discourse is constructed upon a rhetorical question, a tautology and a quotation from the famous opening of Hamlet's soliloquy in III.2. Less popular than the first part of the same line ("to be or not to be"), this quotation from Shakespeare puts the viewers' memory to the test, but only by recognizing its source and linking it with the visual text, could they fully grasp the meanings underlying an apparently entirely ridicule association of words. As he refers to "the true sense of existence", the second speaker hands a glass bottle of Neumarkt to his young interlocutor (speaker 1), thus seemingly suggesting that, for men like them, there can be no doubt about Neumarkt beer being an essential ingredient of their lifestyle. This same speaker's reaction to the fourth speaker's quotation from Shakespeare, which voices Hamlet's existential dilemma as he is plagued by doubt regarding the course of action he should take, lends then itself to double interpretation. On the one hand, one might see it as evidence of the second speaker's actual ignorance hidden behind a veneer of sophistication, of his being unfamiliar with the source of the quotation and, therefore, incapable of understanding the link the fourth speaker tried to establish between the previous statements on existence and the Shakespearean text. On the other hand, if one assumes that the second speaker has indeed the background necessary to get the point of his friend's quoting from *Hamlet*, his question is just an ironic expression of his definite rejection of any doubt about the importance of Neumarkt beer in his and his friends' life. As for the young man who started the conversation and unwillingly triggered the burlesque 'show' referred to above, after a few moments of puzzlement, his expression lightens up, whether he has finally understood the 'subtle' meaning of the exchange or he is just happy to have got his beer bottle. In any case, it is clear that Shakespeare's association with sophisticated, philosophically-oriented thinking, erudition and specialist knowledge has been used by the advertisers who produced this Neumarkt commercial to emphasise the contrast between these values and those that would be attached to the advertised product, namely simplicity, popularity and fun.

Even if for almost two hundred years Shakespeare's reception in the Romanian cultural space has been mainly mediated by translations and theatrical performances, the late decades that have witnessed the rise of a

postmodern, capitalist, consumerist society in Romania have brought about the emergence on the Romanian cultural market of other forms of appropriation of the Shakespearean heritage, deeply anchored in the contemporary popular culture, like television advertisements, for instance. As one can hardly speak of a tradition in Shakespeare advertising in Romania, naturally, the advertisers who created Shakespeare-themed commercials in these early years of the new millennium have been largely influenced by the main trends in the well-established practice of drawing on the Shakespeare 'myth' for commercial purposes that developed first in the British and American cultural spaces but then started to spread worldwide in the "postmodern age of cultural recycling" (Hutcheon 2006: 3). That explains their engaging, in their advertisements, in the construction of various forms of intertextual relationships with Shakespeare's work, ranging from adaptation and appropriation, which involve a more complex process of interaction with the source text and transposition into a new cultural construct, but differ in "how explicitly they state their intertextual purpose" (Sanders 2006: 2), to "the more glancing act of allusion or quotation, even citation" (Sanders 2006: 4). In addition, that accounts for the penetration on the Romanian advertising market of specific strategies of integrating Shakespeare into the frame of cultural references sustaining meaning-construction in the advertising discourse, including parody and even irreverent treatment of Shakespearean characters, themes and famous phrases, the updating of Shakespearean storylines so that they could be more easily understood by the new generations of viewers/customers, as well as the dialogue with both the Shakespearean texts and their recent filmic adaptations which have revived (at least to a certain extent) the interest in Shakespeare in the contemporary youth culture. As Douglas Lanier remarks, "advertising typically is not a source of new ideas about Shakespeare" (2012: 499). So, in dealing with Shakespeare as a cultural icon, advertisers have been working on the symbolism attached to it in the long-lasting process of its appropriation and assimilation in the Romanian culture, which actually happens to display values that are akin to those determining Shakespeare's reception on a larger, global, scale. Shakespeare seems to be irremediably coded as a paragon of high culture, associated with the world of the theatre and the academic environment, hence connoting elitism, sophistication and specialist knowledge. The TV commercials produced on/for the Romanian customers after 2000 range next to other similar postmodern attempts, made at the global level, to efface the highbrow/lowbrow divide by projecting a high-culture model

like Shakespeare against a low-culture background provided by the advertising discourse. What distinguishes them is the Romanian advertisers' choosing the subject of their intertextual games with Shakespeare taking into account not only the globally-acknowledged Shakespearean commonplaces (like Romeo and Juliet or Hamlet's "to be or not to be") but also the popularity of certain Shakespearean plays (like *Julius Caesar*) with the Romanian audiences, as well as their using Shakespeare to create the image of a lifestyle that the Romanian consumers appreciate and to communicate values and hierarchies (high/low, old/new, culture/nature, "agelessness/innovation"-Lanier 2012: 507) that they may identify with. Even so, one cannot but agree with Douglas Lanier when he states that "despite post-modernism's supposed levelling of high/low distinctions, Shakespeare remains a signifier of residual highbrow tradition" (2012: 510) and the statement aptly applies to Romanian TV commercials too, as Shakespeare tends to be rather presented as a foil (sometimes not even identified as a reference point) and positively perceived only when elitism associates with technological advance or when, owing to the impact of film adaptations, Shakespeare's image is re-fashioned more to the taste of the young generation. Therefore, one must wonder why Shakespeare-related advertisements, few as they are in the Romanian cultural space, matter. Such intertextuality-marked media texts may not, indeed, change ideas about Shakespeare among the Romanian audiences but they do contribute to increasing Shakespeare's mobility across geographical and cultural borders and to keeping his memory alive in the Romanian collective consciousness. If at least some Romanian viewers' curiosity about Shakespeare's work is aroused by these TV commercials so that they may try to get acquainted with it, if only because they want to feel the pleasure of recognizing the source drawn upon and to better grasp the meanings encoded in the media discourse, then the benefits of such advertising are undeniable.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dragoș Protopopescu translated twelve Shakespearean plays, namely *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *The Winter's Tale*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Othello*, *Coriolanus*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*. His translations were published in various editions between 1938 and 1945 (Volceanov 2006: 207 and Matei-Chesnoiu 2007: 192-193).

<sup>2</sup> According to *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* (2001), the earliest record of Shakespeare being used in advertising is dated to 1710 when an image based on

the Chandos portrait of Shakespeare was adopted as the publisher Jacob Tonson's trademark (Dobson and Wells 2001: 3).

<sup>3</sup> The phrase is taken from a famous appropriation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the form of a hilarious sketch referred to as *A Small Rewrite*, performed in 1989, starring Hugh Laurie as William Shakespeare and Rowan Atkinson as the editor of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy (III.2).

<sup>4</sup> MobiFon S.A. emerged on the Romanian mobile telecommunications market in April 1997 launching the first GSM network in Romania under the brand Connex. After acquisition by the multinational telecommunications company Vodafone Group, the network operator was rebranded Connex-Vodafone until October 2005. Since April 2006, it has been simply known as Vodafone Romania (Tomck@t 2014).

<sup>5</sup> The advertising company D'Arcy dissolved in 2004, after 12 years of activity on the Romanian advertising market, as a result of its being involved in financial scandals and of the decision of some of its best employees to resign in quest for better job opportunities (either as employees of other major international advertising companies or as founders of their own private advertising agencies) (Badicioiu 2006 and Ardelean 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Statistically speaking, *Julius Caesar* seems to have been one of the most popular Shakespearean plays with Romanian translators from the 1840s to the end of the nineteenth century. Reference should be made, in this respect, to the translation, by Gheorghe Bariț, of a fragment from *Julius Caesar*, published in *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură* in 1840, as well as to the four translations of the whole play published until the end of the century by S. Stoica (1844), Adolph Stern (1879), Barbu Lazureanu (1892) and Scarlat Ion Ghica (1895-1896). See Matei-Chesnoiu 2006: 197-199.

### Corpus

D'Arcy (2000?). *Connex Go! Caesar vs. Brutus. Part 1* [online] available from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vw6ql9MkPY>> [15 May 2016]

D'Arcy (2000?). *Connex Go! Caesar vs. Brutus. Part 2* [online] available from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=risZUvBxiHE>> [15 May 2016]

Neumarkt (2016). *Reclama Bere Neumarkt la sticlă* [online] available from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPuVqJzyt08>> [15 May 2016]

Ogilvy & Mather (2008). *Cosmote Romeo și Julieta* [online] available from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRod0PfQ478>> [15 May 2016]

Romania UniverProduct (2015). *E Natural? – E Ketchup Univer!* [online] available from <<http://www.univer.ro/> and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hs8Y6LouX1w>> [15 May 2016]

## References

- Ahuvia, A. C. (1998). 'Social Criticism of Advertising: On the Role of Literary Theory and the Use of Data'. *Journal of Advertising*. Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (Spring), 143-162
- Ardelean, S. (2012). 'D'Arcy în România – amintiri de la Zorileanu 26'. *IQuads* [online] 20 November. available from <<http://www.iqads.ro/articol/24621/d-arcy-in-romania-amintiri-de-la-zorileanu-26>> [20 August 2016]
- Badicioiu, A. (2006). 'D'Arcy, PRO TV-ul publicității românești'. 9 *AM News* [online] 28 July. available from <<http://www.9am.ro/stiri-revista-presei/2006-07-28/d-arcy-pro-tv-ul-publicitatii-romanesti.html>> [16 August 2016]
- Baudrillard, J. (1983). *Simulations*, translated into English by Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman. USA: Semiotext[e]
- Baudrillard, J. (1999 [1970]). *The Consumer Society – Myths and Structures*, with an introduction by George Ritzer. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Blakemore Evans, G. (ed.) (2003) *William Shakespeare. Romeo and Juliet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Burnett, M. T. (2007). *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*. Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Colipcă, G. I. and Stan, S. (2011). 'Book Review: SHAKESPEARE, William. *OPERE*, Pitești: Paralela 45, 2010, ISBN 978-973-47-0907-6: Vol. 1. *Sonete. Furtuna*, translated by Violeta Popa and George Volceanov, prefaces by Eugenia Gavrilu and George Volceanov, afterword by Veronica Popescu, notes by George Volceanov. ISBN 978-973-47-0908-3; Vol. 2. *Hamlet*, translated by Violeta Popa and George Volceanov, preface by Nicoleta Cinpoș and George Volceanov, notes by George Volceanov, ISBN 978-973-47-0909-0; Vol. 3. *A douăsprezecea noapte. Doi veri de stirpe aleasă. Nevestele vesele din Windsor*, translated by Violeta Popa, George Volceanov and Adriana Volceanov, prefaces by Pia Brînzeu, George Volceanov and Emil Sîrbulescu, notes by George Volceanov, ISBN 978-973-47-1093-5'. *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*, Year IV, Issue 10, 85-90
- Delabastita, D. (2004). 'Notes on Shakespeare in Dutch Translation. Historical Perspectives'. In Carvalho Homem, R. and Hoenselaars, T. (eds.). *Translating Shakespeare for the Twenty-First Century*. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 99-116
- Dentith, S. (2000). *Parody*. London and New York: Routledge
- Dobson, M. and Wells, S. (eds.) (2001). *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Gavriliu, E. (2006). *Primele traduceri românești din literatura engleză (1830-1850). Texte selectate și commentate. Dosare de receptare. Tabel cronologic*. Galați: Editura Europlus
- Genette, G. (1997 [1992]). *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Trans. Newman C. and Doubinsky C. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press
- Hutcheon, L. (2006) *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York and London: Routledge
- Jameson, F. (1992). 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society'. In Brooker, P. (ed.). *Modernism/Postmodernism*. New York: Longman, 163-179
- Lanier, D. M. (2012). 'Chapter 27. Marketing'. In Kinney, A. F. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 498-514
- Lehmann, C. (2010). *Screen Adaptations. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet – the Relationship between Text and Film*. London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama
- Matei-Chesnoiu, M. (ed.) (2006). *Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Romania*. București: Humanitas
- Matei-Chesnoiu, M. (ed.) (2007). *Shakespeare in Romania 1900-1950*. București: Humanitas
- Odiș, P. (2007). *Advertising in Modern and Postmodern Times*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publications
- Sanders, J. (2006). *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London and New York: Routledge
- SMARTpromo (2008). 'Ogilvy a realizat ultimul spot Cosmote, Romeo și Julieta'. *SMARTpromo. Supliment publicitate & marketing* [online] available from <<http://www.smartpromo.ro/stire/114/Ogilvy-a-realizat-ultimul-spot-Cosmote,-Romeo-si-Julieta.html>> [5 August 2016]
- The Ken Blanchard Companies (2016). *Customer Service* [online] available from <<http://www.kenblanchard.com/Products-Services/Leadership-Challenges/Legendary-Service>> [20 August 2016]
- Thompson A. and Taylor, N. (eds.) (2006). *William Shakespeare. Hamlet*, London: Cengage Learning, The Arden Shakespeare
- Tomck@t. (2014). 'Istoria GSM în România - o retrospectivă de la Telefonica, Connex, Dialog și prima „cărămidă” ... până în zilele noastre'. *Special Arad* [online] 18 October available from <<http://specialarad.ro/istoria-gsm-in-romania-o-retrospectiva-de-la-telefonica-connex-dialog-si-prima-caramida-pana-in-zilele-noastre/>> [5 August 2016]
- Univer Plc. (2015). *Company* [online] available from <<http://www.univer.hu/en/company.html>> [5 August 2016]
- Volceanov, G. (2006). 'Appropriating through Translation: Shakespeare Translations in Communist Romania'. In Popescu, Floriana (coord.). *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*. 16-17 iunie 2006. Galați: Editura Fundației Universitare „Dunărea de Jos”, 206-218
- Volceanov, G. (2010). 'Studiu introductiv'. In Shakespeare, W. *Opere I. Sonete. Furtuna*. Pitești: Paralela 45, 5-100

# Grow, Learn, Suffer: Human Experience as a Community of Pain

Shawni DUNNE\*

## Abstract

*Over the past few decades, images of suffering have been slashed across our newspapers and TV screens and have become everyday symbols in our society. Despite feeling a desperate need to protect ourselves and those we love from experiencing pain, we have developed a fascination with watching these spectacles of horror played out across the news, and the line between fact and fiction has become blurred. By looking at the teachings of the major religions alongside early philosophical thought, it is possible to trace the foundations of ideas surrounding suffering. Whilst claiming that suffering is a terrible experience that must be overcome, many religions praise the humbling aspects of suffering as ways to cleanse the soul and become righteous, charitable and strong of faith. It is this mindset that is present in society today and encourages us to facilitate suffering as a means of character building and social control.*

**Keywords:** sociology, philosophy, religion, suffering, media

In contemporary society fear is all around us. It controls our perceptions of the world and other people, it validates our choices and decisions and it facilitates our ability to blend and adapt into our communities. Fear is the most powerful tool of the media, sensationalising suffering and foregrounding pain as a means of publicity, business strategy and social control. The idea of suffering is channelled into our homes through our TV screens and brings with it a sense of numbing towards the traumas of the world around us, as well as a protective barrier through which we allow ourselves to become engrossed in the suffering of others. The images of horror and tragedy are played out to us like the storylines of a soap opera, obscuring the boundaries between fact and fiction.

The idea of suffering is a contradictory doctrine of society; we spend our lives trying to avoid suffering and trying to protect those we love from pain, whilst also accepting and promoting suffering as an essential part of human life and personal growth. It is clear to see that the idea of necessary suffering has lived within our societies for generations

---

\* PhD Student, University of Huddersfield, England, UK. hawni.Dunne@hud.ac.uk

and is shaped and moulded by tradition. The modern family incites and provides suffering as a means of punishment, whilst also celebrating it as a means of grounding and character building in a child. This continuation of a cycle of fear and suffering brings about a 'community of pain,' a society that both adores and abhors suffering, that is governed by fear and the desire to protect themselves and those around them from pain, whilst also embracing and revelling in the very nature of it.

The roots of this psychological and sociological perspective of suffering are grounded in tradition, the passing down of shared knowledge and belief systems. We can trace the early rationale of a 'community of pain' to the philosophy of ancient Greece and onwards throughout the ages, following a common pattern of faith, endurance and reward. The major religions address the idea of suffering in different ways, although most agree that suffering is a necessary part of self-preservation and a test of the strength of faith. Indeed, many religious figures chose a path of suffering as a means of self-sacrifice, holiness and cleansing. Jesus is the ultimate figure of suffering and human endurance, the pinnacle of which is his death on the cross signifying the ultimate sacrifice for Christian people. Although God is Almighty, He made the ultimate sacrifice and he felt what it is to suffer and He suffered alongside the people. Similarly, in Islam, suffering reveals the hidden self to God, so He may see who is truly righteous. Life, for those in the Islamic faith, is the great struggle to become pure of heart and mind in order to reveal one's true self to God.

This paper aims to explore the traditions of suffering and perspectives of overcoming pain that have influenced the sociological bearing of suffering in the modern day. By firstly providing a brief historical overview of philosophical and religious ideas about suffering, I will then analyse how western society has become immune to images of suffering due to sensationalisation by the media, and how this has affected the way in which we interact, raise our children and achieve our aspirations.

## **Suffering in Religion**

One of the most important and significant concepts in Buddhism is 'dukkha' and the elimination of dukkha through meditation and clarity of mind and body. 'Dukkha' is often translated as 'suffering,' 'anxiety' or 'unsatisfactoriness' and is considered to be a great concern and hindrance for people of the Buddhist faith. Dukkha can be broken down into many

different types of suffering. The first is *jati*, the discomfort and fear of experiencing the world for the first time. Birth is the first traumatic event that we experience and prepares us for a lifetime of uncertainty and pain.

Death, or *marana*, completes the circle of pain by presenting us with the unexpected and loss. The periods between birth and death are fraught with potential anxieties including: not getting what you desire, getting what you do not desire and not being able to hold onto what you have. Similarly, in Hinduism suffering arises from *Samsara*, the circle of life and the trials and tribulations that encompass the different aspects of life.

Buddhists believe that *dukkha* can be overcome by strength of mind and human kindness. Compassion towards those less fortunate is encouraged as a way of alleviating community *dukkha*. Despite being foregrounded as a negative force which must be overcome, the Buddha claimed "what ordinary folk call happiness, the enlightened ones call *dukkha*" (*Samyutta Nikaya* #35), showing that the place of suffering is important and necessary on the journey to peace and contentment. This is a theme that seems to flow through most of the major religions, the idea that suffering is not merely something that must be overcome but something that must be embraced, celebrated, and respected. Similarly, in Christianity suffering of the common people is foregrounded as something to be relieved through faith, goodwill and charity, but is also holy and necessary in order to become a 'good Christian'. The Bible strongly emphasises the link between evil and suffering, presenting suffering as a dark force to be overcome by strength of faith and endurance. Jesus himself was "a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering" (*Isaiah* 53:3), having received repeated isolation and persecution from his peers as well as experiencing moral and political corruption all around him.

It could be argued that suffering is seen as a commendable and respectable condition within the Bible, as it is righteous people who suffer for their beliefs and strength of conviction. Suffering can easily be alleviated by sin, but those who are true to God endure pain as a sign of their commitment to Him. In return, after death, they are rewarded: "whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (*John* 3:16). God Himself sacrifices His only son in order to save the people from sin and lead them to the light. God understands suffering and has felt it Himself; in this way Jesus becomes the one answer to suffering as proof of both God's existence and love. In Islam, suffering is either the painful result of sin or it is a test of the individuals' conviction. Suffering reveals the true self to God so that He may separate those who believe and those who do

not. Those who do not believe or who fail to serve God enter a state of unbelief called 'kufr,' meaning that they have forgotten God. God is all-knowing and cannot be deceived by kufirs, according to this passage from The Koran:

And some men there are who say,  
'We believe in God and the Last Day';  
but they are not believers.  
They would trick God and the believers,  
and only themselves they deceive,  
and they are not aware.  
In their hearts is a sickness,  
and God has increased their sickness,  
and there awaits a painful chastisement  
for that they have cried lies. (II: 5 The Cow)

An overarching message of the Koran is that life is a struggle or a great jihad to perfect one's heart and live in complete submission to God. It is acknowledged that the temptations of sin can turn one's head, but the suffering of temptation can be alleviated through good works and charity. In Judaism, much focus is placed upon the pain of the existence, brought about by man and world being separate and distinct from God. This separation causes pain and suffering as we, as mortal human beings, are distanced from God. Judaism places high emphasis on extending sympathy and help towards those who are suffering. An individual should share in the suffering of a community, and cannot be content if those around them are in pain. Many members of the Jewish faith believe that, with the coming of the Messiah illness, poverty and death will be abolished, and this will be the reward for their endurance, charity and faith.

### **Suffering in Philosophy**

Writing in the heart of classical Athens, Socrates said "it is better to suffer than to do injustice" (Plato, 2008). By saying this, Socrates promotes the idea of self-sacrifice in the interest of others and in order to keep the mind and body purified of evil. To suffer on behalf of someone else is considered, by the Ancient Greeks, to be a noble and just cause. Furthering this, Socrates' contemporary Aristotle delved deeper into the uncertain world of ethics and pain by claiming "suffering becomes beautiful when anyone bears great calamities with cheerfulness, not through insensibility but through greatness of mind" (Aristotle, 2016). Aristotle's declaration goes

beyond Socrates' vision of suffering as something that should be endured and begins to lay the foundations of 'the suffering tradition'.

The idea that suffering can be 'beautiful' may at first appear to be an alien concept, but to Aristotle the strength of the mind is confirmed and defined by suffering. Suffering is a test of the strength of the mind and soul; suffering builds character and is an honourable and glorious trait. One must not only endure suffering but be cheerful about it, as it is positivity and forward thinking that is the key to unlocking happiness and contentment. To Aristotle, being humble and gallant is just as important as shouldering the burden. Through this, Aristotle formed the foundations of the modern ethics of suffering that we still abide by today. Much later, in 19th century Sweden, Søren Kierkegaard, who would later be named the 'Father of Existentialism,' searched for a common 'truth' about humanity that would not contradict his faith or make assumptions about man and the essence of the soul. Gordon D. Marino (1998) claimed in "Anxiety in the Concept of Anxiety": "One of Kierkegaard's central insights, an insight inscribed in various forms throughout this text and, I believe, the entire authorship is that the struggle to lead a good and true life is a struggle against, or if not against then with, anxiety" (Marino 1998: 309). To Kierkegaard, anxiety, or suffering, is an unavoidable part of existence, linked to the quest to be a good, righteous and holy individual. Indeed, in his own life, Kierkegaard experienced the pain of existence and the pain of attempting to become an idealised follower of Christianity. "Kierkegaard confessed that he loved his melancholy, truly loved it. Religiously speaking, he took his love to be a fatal flaw. While the cure for his melancholy was there, Kierkegaard would not let himself be cured of it so indented was he with his sorrow that he could not imagine himself without it" (Marino 1998: 323).

Some years later in Germany, Friedrich Nietzsche concerned himself with the idea that alleviating suffering is absurd. Drawing on the philosophy of Aristotle, Nietzsche believed that suffering was the only thing that bestows value on the world and makes us human. He claimed:

In man creature and creator are united: in man there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but there is also the creator, the sculptor, the hardness of the hammer, the divinity of the spectator, and the seventh day - do you not understand this contrast? The body must be fashioned, bruised, forged, stretched, roasted and refined - it is meant to suffer. (Nietzsche, 2013)

Nietzsche believed that it is enduring suffering that allows us to unlock our potential. It is pain that facilitates creativity, achievement and success. It not only spurs us onwards but challenges us, provokes us and inspires us to continue. In Nietzsche's opinion, darkness and light have equal place in the soul of the individual. In this way, suffering is not only a burden to be endured and overcome but it is the force of nature behind the formation of the soul, the element that separates humans from other animals. Suffering unlocks empathy, creativity, inspiration and drive. It changes the way that we experience the world, other people and everything around us. The Spanish Philosopher Miguel De Unamuno believed that it is suffering that makes us human, and suffering is entangled in love and being. In his most famous work *The Tragic Sense of Life*, (2005) he claimed

Suffering is the path of consciousness, and by it living beings arrive at the possession of self-consciousness. For to possess consciousness of oneself, to possess personality, is to know oneself and to feel oneself distinct from other beings, and this feeling of distinction is only reached through an act of collision, through suffering more or less severe, through the sense of one's own limits. (Unamuno, 2005)

For Unamuno, suffering is the key to the self and the soul. Only through suffering can we begin to learn who we are as people, to begin to empathise and to understand the world around us. "How do we know that we exist if we do not suffer, little or much?" (Unamuno, 2005). If our existence is confirmed by our rationality of mind, then the reality of pain is experience as a common truth, something that is able to ground us and confirm that we are living, breathing animals linked through emotion and feeling.

### **Suffering in the Media**

Every day, the media presents us with a barrage of images of human suffering, warnings of future misfortunes and theories of devastation. Although the news supposedly keeps us in touch with 'real life' happenings and portrays the 'truth,' it is a twisted truth, one built upon moral panic and fear mongering as pawns of capitalism and consumerism. Although it is in the interests of all to avoid suffering at all costs, suffering is the lifeblood of the media, it is the ace card of the news. By portraying images of suffering and despair, the media provides the public with a taste of horror that is close enough to experience as true discomfort, but far enough to be insulated and protected by the plasma screen barrier that forms our

bubble of disillusion. In *The Spectatorship of Suffering*, Lilie Chouliaraki (2006) discusses how this setting minimises the effect of the viewed suffering, claiming that

The second remove from the scene of suffering has to do with the fact that spectators receive the spectacle of suffering in the safety of their own living rooms. This occurs because the image of suffering, already fictionalized, is further contained within the material frame of a television (Chouliaraki 2006: 25)

The audience watches the news report in an area they associate with comfort, safety and happiness. They are at the centre of their social hub, the family home, and all outside influences are filtered through this medium. The television, a device used almost entirely for entertainment purposes, is the same device that will bring pleasure, laughter and contentment after the broadcast has ended and the following film, show or documentary will contain no trace of the previous flash of 'reality'. This flash of 'reality' that we have been willingly or unwillingly exposed to is such a tiny fragment in our television consumption that it barely holds any element of truth or reality, instead blending into the images from other TV shows that we know to be fictional. How can we differentiate the scenes of warfare in a film that we watch for pleasure, that we enjoy as part of escapism from the humdrum of everyday life from 'real' images of pain, suffering and death?

To digress slightly, the images that we recognise as 'real' on TV become so absorbed in 'fiction' that we no longer are able to provide the same emotional response as if we were to see a catastrophic event happen in the street right in front of our eyes. Slavoj Žižek explored the idea of 'the real' as losing its 'reality' in his renowned *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2007), claiming that:

Virtual Reality is experienced as reality without being so. What happens at the end of this process of virtualization, however, is that we begin to experience 'real reality' itself as a virtual entity. For the great majority of the public, the WTC explosions were events on the TV screen, and when we watched the oft-repeated shot of frightened people running towards the camera ahead of the giant cloud of dust from the collapsing tower, was not the framing of the shot itself reminiscent of spectacular shots in catastrophe movies, a special effect which outdid all others, since as Jeremy Bentham knew - reality is the best appearance of itself? (Žižek 2007: 11)

As Žižek discusses, it is almost impossible to assimilate the scale of atrocities when we see them every day in a fictional context. The films

about war, violence, abuse, rape, and other horrendous events that we watch for entertainment and escapism become more real than reality itself, as Baudrillard claimed some years earlier: "the territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth it is the map that precedes the territory" (Baudrillard 1996: 203).

The images of real life suffering are merely replications of scenes from popular films and TV shows, and it is this conditioning towards images of horror that leads us to focus more on the spectacle of the event rather than provide an emotional response. As Chouliaraki suggests, "the overexposure to human suffering has unaestheticizing, numbing effects. Rather than cultivating a sensibility, the spectacle of suffering becomes domesticated by the experience of watching it on television" (Chouliaraki 2006: 18).

It almost seems that in recent years, tragic incidents of human suffering have become more frequent, and although this may be true to some extent, it is the media's part in portraying these events that has brought trauma into our homes. Iain Wilkinson explores the role of the media in his book *Suffering: A Sociological Introduction* (2005), claiming that "the daily routine of watching television brings us into contact with more violence, war, famine, death and destruction than would have ever been known to previous generations" (2005: 136).

Human suffering is now unavoidable, it is plastered over our television screens, newspapers and computers. Unlike in previous generations, where the horrors of poverty in developing countries were accessible to the general public merely through hearsay and misinformed newspaper reports, the face of the malnourished child has become a symbol of the struggles of African communities and is a symbol that is instantly recognisable through repeated TV broadcast and foregrounding. Note how the media contrasts the face of innocence with the horrors around them for maximum effect, the image becoming part of the media's brand, moving away from a figure of truth, and becomes yet another marketing tool to use for their own gains. Wilkinson claims that: "Arguably, the overall effect is to amplify and accentuate some of the most horrific aspects of human experience, so that these always maintain a significant power of influence over our collective outlook on life" (2005: 136).

Indeed, our view of impoverished communities is formed by and filtered through the media in order to present us with specific images and specific messages. Everything we see is carefully selected and controlled. This is sent out to millions of people across the planet and creates a

universal image of suffering that we are unable to contest, unless we go experience it for ourselves. This tool is used by the media to facilitate their own needs as a business, as well as providing us with information. Wilkinson claims that "In this context, critics maintain that news media corporations are not so much interested in providing us with in-depth accounts of the social contexts in which suffering takes place as in visually portraying suffering in sensational terms" (2005: 138).

The mediated perception of suffering is made up of two key parts. The first level response, which is to empathise. We see an image of a starving child and our hearts go out to them, in the same way as we cried and felt pain for the victims of the Boxing Day tsunami, 9/11 and 7/7 and countless other horrors experienced in the past decades. The media selects the images that will evoke the greatest emotional response in order to engage its audience and draw us in. The chances are the more emotionally pained we feel by an event, the more likely we are to follow the progress of the story; buying the newspapers, following the reports on television or webpages, unwittingly promoting the corporations on social media by sharing links and videos. We are a captive audience, desperate to learn more from the snippets of information and falsehoods we are fed. The second level response is more complex. The empathy that we experience when watching a violent horror film is genuine but is limited as we know that what we are watching is fictional. When presented with a real life horror, we empathise in the same way, but this empathy does not just appeal to the victims exclusively but also to ourselves. We interpret the level of response to events through our own and mediated perceptions of 'risk'. Watching a news report about a terrorist attack provokes a strong emotional response, not only because we sympathise with the victims but because of the potential risk to ourselves and the fear of suffering ourselves. Wilkinson claims that "more often than not, 'risk' is communicated for public attention in graphic portrayals of bodies in pain and harrowing images of people in distress" (2005: vii).

Through these horror images we are able to imagine ourselves all too clearly in similar situations. Suddenly we are able to see ourselves mutilated, our own families mourning and we can almost feel the pain of suffering as physical pain ourselves. Terrorism in particular would provoke such a response, with the threat of irrational and unprejudiced violence becoming a significant fear worldwide. Arguably, natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes will not affect those in European countries as

much as other areas of the world as the risk of this happening is perceived as very low.

### **Suffering in Family Life**

Regardless of whether they come from families that are religious or non-religious, that keep abreast of the media, that are well read in philosophy or that are isolated from society, every child undergoes a form of social conditioning that teaches them how to experience suffering. Most parents will claim that it is their duty in life to protect their child from suffering, whether this is by teaching them not to speak to strangers, telling them not to touch the hot stove or showing them how to cross the road safely. As human beings we want to keep those we love safe from harm, as a way of both cherishing and protecting the wellbeing of the individuals and also as a means of protecting ourselves from heartbreak. Alas, do we really mourn for a dead friend's loss of life or do we truly mourn our own loss of friendship?

Despite wanting to protect our children from experiencing suffering at a young age, in Western society suffering is used as a means of punishment. Whether this is physical suffering such as a smack on the leg, or emotional suffering such as forbidding a child from playing with its favourite toy or going out with its friends, suffering is seen as negative reinforcement that will encourage a child to grow into a good, rounded individual. Without delving into the realms of ethical debates about child rearing, it is argued that a child who does not experience discipline in its childhood may grow up to be disobedient towards the laws of society. How can a child who is allowed to swear and shout at their mother be expected to be respectful towards a teacher or a police officer? It is this train of thought that leads to a fear within parental circles and within society, a fear of allowing a child to fulfil their own potential and a desire to mould them into an idealised figure of righteousness.

In his book *The Death of the Family*, David Cooper (1974) describes the family as an "ideological conditioning device" (1974:5), and later goes on to explain this in greater detail. He claims that "The vital point here is the family's role in inducing the base of conformism - normality through the primary socialization of the child. 'Bringing up' a child in practice is more like bringing down a person. Education similarly is leading a person out of himself and away from himself" (Cooper 1974: 13).

In this passage, Cooper criticises the structures put in place by both the family and other institutions that restrict a child from becoming an

individual. Arguably, the parent or institution wants to raise a child to be a carbon copy of their own ideals, perfect in its morals and judgements, effortlessly polite and ultimately good. In order to do this, the parent or institution must first break away all that remains of a child's personality and confidence by showing them that their desires are wrong. This denial of free will and freedom of speech is experienced as real pain by the child, as they are just learning the possibilities of the world and mimicking the adults around them. Instead the child's interests and activities will be governed by the parent, preparing them for the adult world of work, law-abidance and repression.

## **Conclusion**

It is curious that a society that is so repelled by the idea of suffering is also so engrossed and fascinated by it. Suffering has now become so bound up in our culture that we are unable to distinguish between happiness and sadness, and more alarmingly between reality and fiction. As explored above, the foundations of the modern world have been built upon the pillars of religion and philosophical thought, and the teachings of both of these have had great influence upon modern thought today. Although all of the major religions condemn suffering as either the result of sin, the temptation of sin, a challenge to be overcome or a cause to feel pity for, they all are quick to endorse the positive aspects of suffering as a way to cleanse the soul.

Suffering is a base emotion, something that can be experienced by all living things, something that unites us as animals. Unamuno would claim that it is one of the few things that make us human, the ability to feel pain and experience misfortune as a shocking and humbling event, something that grounds us and makes us realise, or remember, who we truly are.

In recent years the media has begun to use images of suffering as a business strategy in order to create a mask of illusion that turns fact into fiction. Employing the same devices, camera angles and special effects as Hollywood, the news corporations are able to engage their audience through the spectacle of horror, through presenting déjà vu repeated scenes from disaster films as reality. The viewer is unable to separate these two images in their mind, leading to two reactions: firstly, numbing and distancing from the event and an inability to truly empathise with the images behind the screen. And secondly, engrossment and addiction, the need to see the same images constantly, the small guilty sense of

fascination when experiencing the spectacle of horror, in the same way one does when waiting for the next episode of their favourite TV drama. It is clear to see how both the traditions of suffering and mediated perceptions of it have fed into our everyday lives and affected how we choose to act in society. In Western society, we recognise that suffering has a place in the community and that discipline is necessary in order to become what society deems 'good' people. If we do not experience pain then we cannot feel empathy for others, and it is empathy that allows us to build relationships, love and be loved. We love and loathe suffering, we hate to feel pain and to experience loss, but we need it to keep us human. We embrace it as a means of social control and as a source of twisted pleasure in the community of pain.

## References

- Aristotle (2016). *Aristotle Quotes*. Quotation as retrieved from [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)
- Baudrillard, J (1996) *Simulations*. In A. Easthope and K. McGowan (Eds.), *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (pp.203-208). Buckingham: Open University Press
- Bodhi. (2000). *The connected discourses of the Buddha: a new translation of the Samyutta Nikāya*. Oxford: Pali Text Society in association with Wisdom Publications
- Chouliaraki, L (2006). *The Spectatorship of Suffering*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Cooper, D (1974). *The Death of the Family*. Aylesbury: Hazell Watson & Viney LTD
- Marino, G.D (1998). Anxiety in the Concept of Anxiety. In A. Hannay and G.D. Marino (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* (p308-328.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Nietzsche, F (2013). *Beyond Good and Evil*. Retrieved from [www.globalgreybooks.com](http://www.globalgreybooks.com)
- Plato (2008). *Gorgias*. Retrieved from [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)
- The Koran Interpreted* (1964). Oxford: Oxford University Press
- The New Testament in Hebrew and English* (2000). Suffolk: Richard Clay LTD
- Unamuno, M (2005). *Tragic Sense of Life*. Retrieved from [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)
- Wilkinson, I (2005). *Suffering: A Sociological Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Zizek, S (2007). *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. Verso: London

# The 'Politics' of Gender and the Manipulation of Meaning in Sarah Ruhl's *Orlando*

Mihaela-Alina IFRIM\*

## **Abstract**

*Sarah Ruhl's adaptation of the Woolfian text inscribes itself, as well as its predecessor (Sally Potter's screen adaptation of the same novel, Orlando: A Biography), in a very important historical context for the modern woman, i.e. the Women's Liberation Movement and the empowerment of women characteristic to the 1990s. Woolf, herself a feminist, provides the perfect text for the manipulation of her feminist views into even more powerful feminist messages widely displayed, in this particular case, by means of cinema and theatre. Thus, in an attempt to identify the hidden politics involved in the process of transformation, the present paper sets forth to investigate how and to what extent the manipulation of meaning takes place.*

**Key words:** gender politics, meaning manipulation, intertext, feminist views, theatre

## **From page to stage: Ruhl's *Orlando***

The world premiere of *Orlando*, the adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando: A Biography*, took place at Piven Theatre Workshop in Evanston, Illinois, in 1998. It was then followed by representations at The Actors' Gang in Los Angeles in March 2003, it received a developmental reading at New Dramatists in New York on July 1, 2010 and its New York premiere at Classic Stage Company on September 23, 2010 and finally it opened at the Court Theatre in Chicago on March 10, 2011. Right from the beginning in the list of characters is mentioned *The Chorus* with the following note: "may be cast without regard to gender; may be double-cast; may be played by as few as three actors and as many as eight, but the author suggests a chorus of three gifted men to play all the roles" (Ruhl 2013: 120). In the case of Sarah Ruhl's stage adaptation the role of Orlando is envisioned to be played by a woman as in the case of Sally Potter's screen adaptation<sup>1</sup>. In order to emphasize the main theme of the source text, that is androgyny and gender shifting, Sarah Ruhl presents some strategies via which they can be easily suggested:

[...] my favourite way to do this play is to have two women (one playing Orlando and one playing Sasha), surrounded by a chorus of three very

---

\* Dr, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, mihaela.ifrim@ugal.ro

gifted men, who play all the other roles. [...] However I can imagine all sorts of other configurations, and all sorts of large ensembles creating new structures for the play. I have always wanted to do the play on alternating nights; on Mondays, have a man play Orlando (and a woman play Marmaduke), on Tuesdays, have a woman play Orlando (and a man Marmaduke) (122).

With a hint of irony, Virginia Woolf entitled her novel *Orlando: A Biography*. When it comes to the written text, this type of title provides the reader with the false feeling of trust in the narrator's stating of the facts. However when it comes to screenings and theatrical productions the trust of the viewer/ audience must be gained by other means. It is perhaps for this reason why Sally Potter and Sarah Ruhl choose to introduce Orlando in the same manner, i.e., by creating the impression of a conspiracy between the character(s) and the viewer/ audience which undoubtedly can also be translated as a cunning plan to give the public the impression of involvement in the events unfolding before their eyes. Thus, conspiracy is established from the very first line of the play:

ORLANDO: He -

CHORUS: He!

ORLANDO: (To the audience - a conspiracy) He - For there could be no doubt of his sex... (125).

The difference between the two adaptations of the Woolfian text resides in the manner they use to substitute the witty biographer/ narrator in the novel. Thus, in order to remind of the narrator who changes tone in the original, Sally Potter very inventively and extremely subtly chooses to reflect throughout the film various stances in the life of the hero/ heroine by providing him/ her with different colours of the eyes. But the advantage of the close caption in the film does not represent an option for the stage. Therefore, Sarah Ruhl manages to find a solution as inventive as Potter's when she decides to have a chorus able to fill in pieces of narration. The chorus only fills in pieces of narration because Orlando seems to have a double function, that of character and narrator and so does the Queen. The same goes with Sasha and Orlando. They also seem to have a dialogue in the third person which might determine one to think about what a telepathic conversation between two persons would sound like. In fact, what Sarah Ruhl does by having the characters narrate about themselves in the third person is to emphasize a characteristic of Woolf's novel where

frequently the voice/ thoughts of the characters overlap with the voice of the biographer:

ORLANDO: I am alone.	ORLANDO: Tomorrow. I	ORLANDO: Hot with
CHORUS: He sighed	will write a great	skating...
profoundly.	poem about the oak	SASHA: And with
<i>Orlando sighs profoundly.</i>	tree tomorrow.	love...
CHORUS: And flung	<i>More trumpets. Orlando</i>	ORLANDO: They
himself on the earth at	<i>leaps to his feet.</i>	would take her in
the foot of the oak tree	ORLANDO: Orlando saw	his arms and
<i>Orlando flings himself</i>	that his great house –	know...
<i>down in front of an oak tree.</i>	in the valley – was	SASHA: For the first
ORLANDO: And in his	pierced with lights	time...
mind, image followed	[...]	ORLANDO: The
image:	THE QUEEN: A thin	delights of love.
CHORUS: The oak tree	hand with long	<i>They Kiss, wrapped in a</i>
was the back of a	fingers always as if	<i>great fur cloak (149).</i>
great horse that he	'round orb or sceptre;	
was riding on the deck	ORLANDO: a nervous,	
of a tumbling ship it	crabbed, sickly hand;	
was anything indeed	THE QUEEN: a	
so long as it was hard	commanding hand, a	
ORLANDO: for he felt	hand that had only to	
the need of something	raise itself for a head	
which he could attach	to fall; yes, the Queen	
his floating heart to	had a hand – (128-	
(127).	131).	

Unlike Sally Potter, who finds herself constrained by the cinematographic environment up to the point she feels the need to make the story believable, Sarah Ruhl remains extremely faithful to Woolf's novel as she herself declares: "[t]he reason I used a great deal of narration in this piece is that Woolf's language is so much better than any of her imitators could ever be; and all the narration in the piece is hers and hers alone" (123). Therefore she preserves the same story: the story of Orlando, a man, who falls in love with a Russian princess, Sasha, who is then pursued by an Archduchess

(who in reality is an Archduke), who becomes a woman who finally marries Marmaduke.

However, Sarah Ruhl's faithfulness to Virginia Woolf is not identifiable only at the level of the text (in terms of its alteration) but she also remains true to the idea of extending Orlando's adventurous life to the present day and to the use of the mystical number seven. Much like Sally Potter, Ruhl provides us with a contemporary Orlando and indicates in a subtle manner the mystical number<sup>2</sup>. If the cinematographic environment provided Sally Potter with the possibility of partitioning the filmic text into seven chapters, thus remaining true to the Woolfian number, for Sarah Ruhl this was not an option. Perhaps this is why she made use of the present context where she envisioned Orlando using an elevator which takes her to the seven floor:

CHORUS: Orlando jumped out of her car, rushed into a large department store, and got into the lift.

*Everyone crowds into the lift. The sound of an elevator ding.*

ORLANDO: This must be middle-age.

ELEVATOR MAN: Four...

ORLANDO: Time has passed over me.

ELEVATOR MAN: Six -

ORLANDO: how strange it is! Nothing is anylonger one thing. I take up a handbag and think of a porpoise frozen beneath the sea. Someone lights a pink candle and I see a girl in Russian trousers.

ELEVATOR MAN: Seven - (Ruhl 2013).

Albeit the text recommends itself in terms of fidelity to the original, Sarah Ruhl opted for the omission of the element of motherhood. Virginia Woolf provided her Orlando with an heir perhaps in an attempt to truly convince the public that Orlando is indeed a metaphor for her beloved Vita Sackville-West who in real life was the mother of a boy. Sally Potter keeps the element of motherhood but she uses it to emphasise different ideas. In an attempt to restore to Vita Sackville-West the estates which she longed for, Virginia Woolf provides Orlando with all her titles and possessions. Sally Potter's Orlando loses everything unless she has a son which she fails having; therefore she returns to the great house not like its mistress, as Woolf envisioned, but like a tourist. Sarah Ruhl loses this element completely substituting it with the act of writing:

ORLANDO: She looked at the ring. She looked at the inkpot –

CHORUS: Did she dare?

ORLANDO: Hang it all! Here goes!

CHORUS: And she plunged her pen neck deep in ink. To her enormous surprise, she wrote. The words were a little long in coming, but come they did.

*She writes*

CHORUS: And all the time she was writing, the world continued... through wars... and other calamities...

ORLANDO: She listened for the sound of gunfire at sea –

CHORUS: No, only the wind blew.

ORLANDO: There is no war today.

CHORUS: And so – she wrote.

*She looks up.*

ORLANDO: What's life? She asked a bird!

CHORUS: Life, life, life, cried the bird!

*Orlando keeps writing. The chorus looks on.*

CHORUS: Finally, Orlando dropped her pen and stretched her arms.

ORLANDO: Done! Done! It's done! (219 - 220).

The act of writing Ruhl chooses to emphasise incorporates deep Woolfian issues such as the war and the fact that its presence interferes with the writing process, the birds as the key element present in all Woolfian writings, and most importantly Orlando's desire, much like Woolf's, to capture life in an attempt to discover its secret.

Although the two adaptations of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* are individual works (i.e. they most certainly were written without reference to one another) it is almost impossible not to read or perceive Sarah Ruhl's without constantly relating it to Sally Potter's prior adaptation. It is for this reason that, despite the fact that the play is an intertextual manifestation of the Woolfian text, many of the points made in the analysis are in reference with the cinematographic adaptation of the text.

Nevertheless, Ruhl's choice to remain faithful to the original proves ingenious. As she suggests in her notes on the play (previously quoted at

the beginning of this paper), the text is flexible enough as to permit the manipulation of its meaning through casting and choreography, or in other words, the queerness of the text can be extended or enhanced by the queerness of the casting<sup>3</sup>. Although it might seem redundant, in this case the extended ambiguity of gender is necessary.

Various stagings of the play have been produced with as many variations in casting choices. One of the most visible and easily accessible stagings is the one produced at the Classic Stage Company which premiered in 2010. The cast was an interesting one. The role of Orlando was casted to Francesca Faridany who much like Tilda Swinton represents an inspired choice for an androgynous character. But the real interesting cast choice of the play is represented by David Greenspan “the quirky Off Broadway regular” who “portrays both Queen Elizabeth, who takes a shine to the melancholy young Orlando when visiting his country home, and a Romanian archduchess who eventually turns out to be an archduke” (Charles Isherwood, *The New York Times*). An account of such a production is given by Meghan Brodie in her article *Casting as Queer Dramaturgy: A case Study of Sarah Ruhl’s Adaptation of Virginia Woolf’s Orlando*. She points out, in terms of at least the cast of the main characters, that there is a feminist philosophy involved in the process. Thus, Orlando, the character, has a two-fold manifestation: it is both a man and a woman. Hence the struggling rationalization behind the casting process for the role: who should play Orlando, a man or a woman actor? The question being formulated then the pros and cons for each choice begin to emerge up to the point of the obvious outcome (Orlando has always been played by a woman).

While the possibility of casting a male actor in the role exists, one needs to point out the implications of such a cast. Of course it has the additional potential of queering further the delivered text but it certainly brings other serious implications. Symbolically, masculinity indicates the acquisition of power while femininity indicates its absence. As a result, it would be absurd to have a male actor pretend to have lost (through the gender transformation of the character) that which he has never lost. The casting of a woman is not risk free either, but it has to do with the feminist message/ philosophy detaching from the text. Therefore, the role being played by a woman is a clear indication of an attempt of assuming, and why not, of usurping that power which for centuries was not afforded to her sex.

When it comes to the casting for the role of Queen Elizabeth I, it seems that the general tendency is to have a male actor playing it. This is best explained by Meghan Brodie who notes that the “portrayal of the character was not sex-driven [...] but position-driven” (2014: 170). Two of the most famous portrayals of Queen Elizabeth in Orlando are attributed to Quentin Crisp (Sally Potter’s 1992 *Orlando*) and to David Greenspan (in the Classic Stage Company’s 2010 production). Beyond the symbols of such a cast (the power associated with masculinity or the juxtaposition of a male-bodied Queen Elizabeth with the fragility of a female-bodied Orlando) the choice can also be explained through historical facts accessed in relation with the character. History immortalises Queen Elizabeth I as the first woman to have achieved and fully assumed male power<sup>4</sup>. And it is with this idea in mind that Laurence Senelick notes that in the “presentation of her person as sovereign, Queen Elizabeth preferred to be addressed as a man” and “was the only woman licensed by status, in her case God-anointed, to appear in public as a man-at-arms” (in Brodie, 170). In the light of these arguments one might infer that it is no accident that Virginia Woolf chose to begin her debate in *A Room of One’s Own*, alluding to writers, male and female, from the Elizabethan age onwards, or, that she began envisioning the fantastic journey of Orlando as marked by his/ her encounter with the Queen. Clearly it has something to do with a fascination of the writer for the meaning and imposing historical figure.

As Charles Isherwood notes in his review of the play in *The New York Times*, Sarah Ruhl’s play, as is often the case with adaptations of books to stage, becomes at times awkward and hard to follow. Of course this is the result of Ruhl’s attempt to preserve as much as possible from the Woolfian text. It is true that this type of an endeavour might leave the sensation of a brief summary of the novel. However, it compensates in terms of visual aids achieved by means of interesting choices of cast, through setting and choreography.

## Final Remarks

In addition to paying a tribute to a canonical writer such as Virginia Woolf, Sarah Ruhl’s *Orlando* brings a new perspective in a fresh intellectual context defined by the need of transformation. Thus, the rewriting of a text is also a personal perception shaped by the cultural pool in which it emerges, and its reading must not be restricted to problems of faithfulness or truthfulness to the original. Ruhl remains faithful to strong feminist

beliefs which are made visible via the (re)working of the meaning through theatrical instruments and particularly through gender-distribution.

## Notes

1. Of the two adaptations of the Woolfian text, Sally Potter's is the focus of many scholarly investigations mainly as the result of it being a filmic text and therefore more accessible.

2. *Orlando: A Biography* is a novel full of references to the number seven and derivatives containing it of which the most notable are: the trance Orlando undergoes for "seven whole days" (Woolf 2002: 40) following Sasha's leaving him, the trance followed by the gender transformation which happened "on the seventh day of his trance" (80) and the number of editions of *The Oak Tree* manuscript which translates into "Fame! Seven Editions. A prize" (185). The number can be understood as holding an important significance for the writer since its echoes can be found in other of her works such as *Mrs Dalloway* (Septimus meaning "the seventh") and *The Waves* (Percival being the seventh silent character haunting the novel).

3. This is also valid in Sally Potter's screening of the novel where, as Michael Whitworth notes, "[t]he casting of the film also disrupts its realism. Several members of the cast are better known for work outside theatre and film: Quentin Crisp had achieved notoriety for his book *The Naked Civil Servant* (1968), an autobiographical account of growing up effeminate and homosexual; Jimmy Somerville had come to prominence as pop singer who took sexual identity as a serious political issue; Ned Sherrin was best known as a raconteur and as the presenter of a radio chat show; and Heathcote Williams was in 1993 best known for *Whale Nation* (1988), an illustrated volume of eco-conscious poems. Ideally, the audience recognizes these actors as contemporary public figures, and so the relation of actor to character is not transparent" (2005: 208).

4. Queen Elizabeth I still exerts a powerful magnetism and studies keep emerging around her great achievement: in full awareness of the symbols governing the world she assumed maleness through a clever manipulation of literal facts into metaphorical. Such a case in point is her assuming the suggestive name the "Virgin Queen" (in fact an assuming of her being a woman) which reminds of the religious symbol of the "Virgin Mary" governing and subduing men through her virtue. But despite her assuming completely her femaleness, she states: "I know I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too" (available at [bl.uk/learning/timeline/item102878.html](http://bl.uk/learning/timeline/item102878.html)). This is one of Elizabeth's inspired choices to exploit the incapacity of his father (to produce male heirs) and to ensure her domination over the English nation. In support for this come her words which state that she was "already bound unto a Husband, which is the Kingdome of England". Therefore, "reproach no more, that

I have no children; for every one of you, and as many are English, are children” and by this reasoning “I cannot without injury be accounted Barren” (Camden quoted in Susan Bordo, *The Tudor Society*).

### References:

- Bordo, Susan (2015) Elizabeth I's Challenge to the Masculinity of the Royal Body, *The Tudor Society* (available at <http://www.tudorsociety.com/elizabeth-is-challenge-to-the-masculinity-of-the-royal-body-by-susan-bordo/>)
- Broadie, Meghan (2014) *Casting as Queer Dramaturgy: A Case Study of Sarah Ruhl's Adaptation of Virginia Woolf's Orlando*, in **Theatre Topics**, Volume 24, Issue 3, pg. 167-174, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press
- Isherwood, Charles (2010) *Who's Afraid of Fluid Gender and Time?* in *Theatre Reviews*, The New York Times (available at [nytimes.com/2010/09/24/theater/reviews/24orlando.html?\\_r=0](http://nytimes.com/2010/09/24/theater/reviews/24orlando.html?_r=0))
- Potter, Sally (director) (1992) *Orlando* (film), released by Sony Pictures Classics
- Ruhl, Sarah (2013) *Chekhov's Three Sisters and Woolf's Orlando – Two Renderings for the Stage*, New York: Theatre Communications Group
- Whitworth, Michael (2005) *Authors in Context: Virginia Woolf*, New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Woolf, Virginia (2002) *Orlando: A Biography*, New York: RosettaBooks LLC  
<http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item102878.html>

# Shakesploitation and Shlockspeare in Film Adaptations

Andreea IONESCU\*

## Abstract

*The paper brings forth the issue of the relevance and/ or contemporaneusness of Shakespeare's plays for the twenty-first century audiences. It scrutinises the impact that the globalized contemporary means of mass communication have had on the Bard's work by considering phenomena that Richard Burt calls Shakesploitation or Shlockspeare, which have been introduced on the film market by the Hollywood film industry. In addition, it looks into the problems related to the authorship of all these adaptations, given the numerous (ab)uses that the Shakespearean texts have been subject to lately.*

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, globalisation, authorship, translation, glo-cali-sation

Nowadays everyone seems to know everything about everyone anywhere in the world as a result of the swiftly growing industry of the media environments and of the expanding online milieu, which have boomed alongside the development of modern means of transportation which currently offer one unprecedented ease of movement around the globe. There are treaties which enable the free passage of merchandise and people virtually everywhere, international alliances which promote peace or offer support in case of war, and all this is done in order to bring everything closer still to oneself. This is part of the globalization process, a widely debated phenomenon through which there is a perpetual exchange between the peoples of the world, arguably, to the point where they might merge into one single unit. Everyone is online in a world of cloud back-ups and information at the tip of the fingers. The contemporary man is spoilt by technology which allows a high degree of personalisation – control appliances with the app on your smartphone, take a nap in traffic while the Tesla car drives you to work, say “Okay Google” and it will tell you where you parked your car, when to pay your bills, how to get to work faster, or how soon you need to do the shopping... People nowadays feel entitled to know everything about everyone with the click of a link; they are in a

---

\*PhD candidate, “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, andreea.ionescu@ugal.ro

perpetual and insatiable hunger for knowledge. But it is not scientific breakthroughs that the human race is interested in to the point of mania, it is the private life of the others, especially of superstars, that arouses curiosity more often than not. There is a need for celebrity worldwide television channels or magazines, paparazzi with ultra-high definition cameras which can shoot someone from a considerably large distance, or reality TV shows because people want to know more about their favourite VIPs. The more information one has or can acquire, the better.

### **Shlockspeare and Dislocation**

In such a world, one may wonder whether there is still any interest in high culture, and if so, how it might be integrated in the network of popular culture. Maybe there still is some interest in great classics like Shakespeare, Molière or Dostoyevsky, but they seem to be in a tight competition with pop-idols who have to flaunt their assets or create scandals in order to attract any kind of attention.

At a first glance, one might be tempted to say that a writer like William Shakespeare cannot find a place in the twenty-first century culture, that the language used in his texts is outdated and difficult, almost impossible to understand for a teenager nowadays, that the themes of his work are old-fashioned, and so on and so forth. Despite this, Shakespeare could not be more popular. The only difference is that the way in which he is understood has changed.

Perhaps good evidence in this respect is that the romantic comedy *Shakespeare in Love* won the Academy Award in 1998. The film introduces the young playwright, Will Shakespeare, who has lost his creative muse and struggles to finish his latest play, *Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter*. Viola, the daughter of a newly enriched nobleman, passionately loves poetry and the theatre and, she auditions for a part in William Shakespeare's play, although women are not allowed to perform on stage in sixteenth-century England. Will falls in love with Viola, who becomes his muse. Infused with newfound inspiration, he rewrites his play into *Romeo and Juliet*. At the premiere of *Romeo and Juliet*, Queen Elizabeth, who is in attendance, forgives Viola for having performed in the play and orders Master Shakespeare a play for the approaching Twelfth Night celebration. Thus Shakespeare writes one of his renowned comedies, which bears the same name. The interesting aspect of this film is, of course, the plot itself. People are not tired of Shakespeare, but they expect from him the same as

from any other star. Film-goers want to see the *real* Shakespeare, not his plays. Or, as Annalisa Castaldo, a Shakespearean film critic, puts it:

I found that everyone I knew wanted my opinion of the film, and I discovered that a surprising number of people (including with undergraduate degrees in English) wanted to know if that was how Shakespeare “really” wrote *Romeo and Juliet*. Historically, scholars know that Shakespeare, in fact, based his play on a popular poem by Arthur Brooke, called *Romeus and Juliet*, which, despite important differences, tells essentially the same story of young love tragically lost. (Castaldo, 2002: 187)

As Queen Elizabeth, Judi Dench won an Oscar, despite the fact that her appearance in the film measures up to almost eight minutes. “This award might appear to confirm the Anglophilia of Hollywood and Britain’s neocolonial status in relation with the US. After all, Dench won for her role as arguably England’s foremost imperial Queen” (Burt, 2003: 23). Considering the award and the questionable appearance of the ‘Queen herself’ in the film (who seems to be there just as a supreme authority that helps the two lovers conceal their misdoings) Richard Burt writes in his essay “Shakespeare, ‘Glo-calization’, Race, and the Small Screens of Post-Popular Culture”: “Queen Elizabeth, yes; Shakespeare, no (unless Hollywoodized as a romantic comedy)” (2003: 24). What Burt is actually hinting at is, in fact, an opinion that is widespread among contemporary literary critics, namely that Shakespeare is being decanonized, dislocated, everywhere in the world, through popular culture or else through the mass-media. While some critics accept this shift of values, others tend to see this phenomenon with reticence. The one thing everyone agrees with is that there has been an alteration of values and that Shakespeare is not seen as he used to be.

This dislocation of Shakespeare appears in either what one might call highbrow pop culture, as illustrated by films like Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo+Juliet* or Michael Almereyda’s *Hamlet*, which offer a new artistic view of Shakespeare’s work, or in other forms of pop culture such as porn films, romance novels or ads, for example.

[...] few academics will have heard of romance novels such as Malia Martin’s *Much Ado about Love* (Shakespeare turns out to be Queen Elizabeth’s daughter) or hardcore porn adaptations such as *A Midsummer Night’s Cream* (dir. Stuart Canterbury, 2000), and the even more obscure Hungarian gay porn *Midsummer’s Night Dream* (dir. Steve Cadro, 2000), the futuristic *Macbeth* porno spin-off *In the Flesh* (dir. Stuart Canterbury, 1999),

or porn adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* such as *West Side* (dir. Ren Savant, 2000) and *Shakespeare Revealed* (dir. Ren Savant, 2000). [...] And doubtless few viewers of Michael Almereyda's mainstream film *Hamlet* (2000) will recognize clips taken from the classic porn film *Deep Throat* (dir. Gerard Damiano, 1972) in Hamlet's deep inside Denmark film within a film, "The Mousetrap: A Movie". Surely, there are many similar examples no one has ever archived or ever will. (Burt 2002a: 7)

Richard Burt uses the term *Schlockspeare* to refer to any decontextualized, commercial appropriation of Shakespeare. The examples of the expropriation of Shakespeare presented above are but a few of the instances in which the Schlockspeare phenomenon appears. A more common illustration of this phenomenon is that the younger generation tends to associate, more often than not to even identify, a particular actor/actress with the character (s)he played in a certain film. This tendency is highly criticized by Richard Burt. The critic gives the example of a film (*Orange County*, dir. Jake Kasdan, 2002) in which the teacher asks the class whether they have ever been acquainted with the names "Romeo" and "Juliet". At this question one of the students hurriedly answers "Claire Danes" and another one adds "Leonardo DiCaprio". The teacher wittily points out that there is another person involved in that film, one almost as famous as the ones mentioned by the students, namely William Shakespeare, and holds up a Folger edition of *Romeo and Juliet*. Contrary to the first impression, what the teacher in *Orange County* does through his further comments is to value film over literature, as ironically this film presents the modern day adults and youth as having very little consideration for literature (Burt 2003: 14).

An equally interesting example to consider here is an episode of *Blackadder* (1999) in which the protagonist, who gives the name of the show, travels back to the early 1600s in a time machine gone out of control and meets Shakespeare.

[Blackadder] asks Shakespeare to autograph the frontispiece of a script of *Macbeth*, and Shakespeare graciously obliges. As he leaves, Blackadder pauses, however, adding "just one more thing" and he then floors Shakespeare with a punch, explaining "this is for every schoolboy and schoolgirl for the next four hundred years. Have you any idea how much suffering you are going to cause? Hours spent at school desks trying to find one joke in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Years wearing stupid tights in school plays and saying things like 'What ho, my lord', and 'Oh look, here comes Othello, talking total crap as usual'. (Burt 2003: 24)

This is the usual way in which Shakespeare is received by modern day students. His work is thought of as boring, old-fashioned, outdated, difficult to follow and to understand. So, in order to keep Shakespeare's memory alive, the Schlockspeare phenomenon has emerged.

### **Transnationalizing Shakespeare**

The Shlockspeare phenomenon is actually a small part of a larger current which has been spreading across the world: transnationalism. "In its simplest guise, the transnational can be understood as the global forces that link people or institutions across nations. Key to transnationalism is the recognition of the decline of national sovereignty as a regulatory force in global coexistence" (Ezra, Rowden 2006: 1).

The best example of transnational exchange is provided by the film industry. Since its beginning, films have never been restricted access across borders; for instance, those made in Hollywood were known around the world, regardless of distance. In time, though, this freedom of movement which films had in reaching different countries on different continents became a necessity. "The impossibility of assigning a fixed national identity to much cinema reflects the dissolution of any stable connection between a film's place of production and/or setting and the nationality of its makers and performers" (Ezra, Rowden 2006: 1). As Hollywood started growing, imposing itself as the leading power in the film industry, there was a need for European filmmakers to start international collaborations with companies across the ocean in order to be able to keep up with a more and more demanding public. Thus, alliances across the ocean were made in order to create films, despite the fact that, originally, the French or the British were mostly the authority in making films. Since British-American collaborations in film production became common, in the twenty-first century co-productions involving European or American and Asian producers have emerged.

The transnational comprises both globalization - in cinematic terms, Hollywood's domination of world film markets - and the counterhegemonic responses of filmmakers from former colonial and Third World countries. The concept of transnationalism enables us to better understand the changing ways in which the contemporary world is being imagined by an increasing number of filmmakers across genres as a global system rather than as a collection of more or less autonomous nations. (Ezra, Rowden 2006: 1)

In this context, the Schlockspeare phenomenon merges with another new current involved in transnational exchanges that Richard Burt calls “glo-cali-zation” (2003: 16). What Schlockspeare and glo-cali-zation share is the attempt to introduce Shakespeare to the twenty-first century world of digital and multi-mediatized film industry. As far as Schlockspeare is concerned, the attempt is materialized by adapting Shakespeare to the modern day world, making his work the matter of romantic comedies or even porn films, for instance, or making it the pretext for reflection on issues that the twenty-first century audience might be interested in. As for glo-cali-zation, no one could explain how it functions better than the critic who first introduced the term, Richard Burt:

By “glo-cali-zation”, I mean both the collapse of the local and the global into the “glocal” and the retention of “Cali” (or Hollywood) as the center of the film industry. Shakespeare film adaptations significantly blur if not fully deconstruct distinctions between local and global, original and copy, pure and hybrid, indigenous and foreign, high and low, authentic and inauthentic, hermeneutic and post-hermeneutic, English and other languages. (Burt 2003: 15-16)

But as Hollywood’s authority over the film market increases, there is a new debate on whether Shakespeare truly belongs in a cinema. As it has been mentioned before, in order to get Shakespeare into a Hollywood film, some changes have to be made, as in the case of *Shakespeare in Love*, for example. Usually, in order to do so, the first thing that needs adapting is the text itself, so that the so-called computer-generation can understand the language without any problem. The actual difficulty is figuring out what happens to Shakespeare when one adapts his work for the big screen, when one takes away the very thing that mattered in the first place, namely the actual language of the plays. Perhaps this is a mere “dumbing down” (Burt 2002b: 205) of the text for the benefit of an audience accustomed to foolproofing, or it may be truly the necessary, natural next step for the plays to ‘survive’ in the twenty-first century.

### **Shakesploitation in Teenage Film**

There are critics who argue that Shakespeare belongs in theatres, cinemas and so on and so forth, as Shakespeare created his plays for people to enjoy them. Some even maintain that this endless copying of Shakespeare’s work is only for the best. They accept all adaptations of Shakespeare, regardless of how unconventional they might be. They stress the fact that all

adaptations of Shakespeare can only bring about the reinforcement of the sense of universality of Shakespeare's genius. Along these lines, some critics accept that the Schlockspeare phenomenon is anything but new; in fact, they claim that it has been there since Shakespeare's times:

While many accounts of the decontextualized commercial appropriation of Shakespeare (what Richard Burt has dubbed Shlockspeare) presume it to be a modern phenomenon and bastard kin to a "legitimate" tradition in text and performance, one might just as well argue that their origin is unitary: Schlockspeare was there "in the beginning", in the texts performed and pirated in seventeenth-century London. [...] Schlockspeare is the spectre and Shakespeare is the author who polices or indulges him. In other words, it was ever thus, with purists and crowd-pleasers as Siamese twins, the strange stage-fellows unable to survive alone. (Henderson 2002: 109)

On the other hand, there are critics in whose opinion Shakespeare, as a world symbol of high culture, cannot belong in what they call second-rate films and adaptations of Shakespeare are, in some way, almost an insult to what the genius of Shakespeare represents for the history of literature. To represent their position, Richard Burt, who also came up with the terms "glo-cali-zation" and "Schlockspeare", has coined the term "Shakesploitation" (2002b). He argues that many of the films which were produced in the 1990s are quite similar in plot to some of Shakespeare's works. He insists that, after the hit success of *The Titanic*, ingeniously enough named "Romeo and Juliet on a boat" by film critics in the reviews of that time, the film industry started being monopolized by the so-called "teensploitation" films (2002b: 205). These are films which have as a background the love story of a teenage couple. Usually, a girl looked on as a social dropout, the so-called 'figure of the loser', meets the really popular boy whom she considers, at first, to be unreachable and rude, ill-intended, and even quite slow. This type of girl is usually very smart, always gets good grades, reads Shakespeare and is almost always a virgin. She is the very opposite of the popular, beautiful, not-so-smart ex-girlfriend of the boy. As the action unfolds, the boy starts gaining the trust of the unpopular girl who falls in love with him. Toward the end of the film, the boy's love and honesty are put to the test and the female protagonist gets the impression that the boy was not honest, proving her instinct right. But, for the film to have a serious profit, a happy-ending is compulsory. And so, the protagonist is proven wrong in a public display of affection almost always

accompanied by a public humiliation of the boy, whose reputation is cleared and they both live happily until...graduation.

The flicks project a cinematic fantasy wherein the ugly duckling, intelligent Cinderella-like heroine will triumph over her (usually) hotter but dumber rivals, not only winning the hunky guy but ending up with a far better relationship than the superficial rival would ever be able to manage. "Girls," these films call out, "you can stay a sober virgin, and he'll still be into you!" (Burt 2002b: 206)

As it has been stated above, many such teen films have the work of Shakespeare as a source of inspiration, but critics like Richard Burt argue that, because of their leaving behind the original language, the only thing these adaptations do is to "dumb down Shakespeare in fulfilling manufactured preteen fantasies about being popular" (Burt 2002b: 207). This argument could go on endlessly, though, considering that none of the above presented sides has no evidence to support their theories other than their own views.

### **Authorship in Adaptations**

Another controversy related to adaptations of Shakespeare's plays concerns the authorial status. Given that adaptations have various "amounts" of Shakespeare left in them, a new question arises, more than naturally, namely whose work these adaptations really are - whether they can still be considered Shakespeare's or should be credited to someone else such as the director, or maybe the script writer. This, in turn, is a result of the constant deliberating over whether a play performed at any given time is put on as Shakespeare had *intended*. The matter could also be regarded as one of bias. Everyone makes presumptions about how Shakespeare *should* be performed, be the staging a so-called classical one, or an innovative one, not to even mention that there are innumerable translations across languages, genres or time. Yukio Ninagawa's London production of the *Twelfth Night* introduces the British audience to a kabuki performance of the famous play, and it is indeed debatable how much of the Bard survives and how much gets lost in translation.

A very good example of a translation over time may be the 2001 Shakespeare adaptation of *Othello*, *O*, which uses a twenty-first century setting for the screening of the Shakespearean tragedy. In this modern version of Shakespeare's *Othello*, Odin James is the African-American star of the basketball team at a predominantly white boarding school. He is expected to become a big basketball star and is in love with Desi, the most

popular girl in the school. Hugo, the coach's son, is outshone on court by Odin, and has a difficult relationship with his father who treats Odin like a son. Ultimately, Hugo's feelings of envy and neglect lead him to plot against Odin, to make him doubt Desi's love for him, so that he would be overwhelmed by jealousy, just like Othello. Although the script is based on William Shakespeare's great tragedy, the only thing that has remained from the original play is the plot outline. Thus, the director presents to his audience an *Othello* without any of the things traditionally expected from a screening of this play: there is no Venice, no Ottoman threat, no sixteenth century setting, and, foremost, there is nothing left of the thing which best characterizes Shakespeare's work, i.e., the language. As such, audience and critics alike may be left puzzling over the obvious question of authorship of such an adaptation, or translation, for in all honesty, the work of the adaptor, in this case where so much has been changed, may be considered just as original as the play adapted had once been.

A possible way out of this seemingly never-ending authorial debate has been offered by W.B. Worthen in his book, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*. He starts from Peter Shillingsburg's theory about "the relationship between the immaterial work and its manifestations" that Shillingsburg terms "*version, text, document*" in the attempt "to clarify the complex relationship between works, texts and performances" (Worthen 1997: 11). As Shillingsburg puts it, the text is:

the actual order of words and punctuation as contained in any one physical form, such as manuscript, proof, or book. A text is the product of the author's, or the author-and others', physical activity in the attempt to store in tangible form the version the author currently intends. And yet a text (the *order* of words and punctuation) has no substantial or material existence, since it is not restricted by time and space. That is, the same text can exist simultaneously in the memory, in more than one copy or in more than one form. The text is contained and stabilized by the physical form, but is not the physical form itself. Each text represents more or less well a version of the work. (qtd. in Worthen 1997: 11)

Along these lines, the concept of *work* is blurred and almost acquires the air of an old legend that nobody knows exactly what it refers to, but everybody believes in. Nevertheless, Worthen argues that "the work at any time consists in the multiplicity of its versions, the history of its transmission, reception, consumption" (1997: 14).

Taking this into account, there is no need to legitimate the various adaptations of Shakespeare, be they Trevor Nunn's or those of the Japanese

kabuki director Yukio Ninagawa, because, as Worthen describes the phenomenon, they are all performances:

Editorial theory elaborates the sense that what Barthes means by a *text* is more like what we usually mean by a *performance*: a production of a specific version of the work in which a variety of intertextual possibilities are materialized, and which produces a variety of ways of understanding the work. Editorial critics frequently invoke “performance” to characterize the relationship between works and texts, how texts appear to assume an authentic relation to works, or become the vehicles of authorized meanings. (Worthen 1997: 16)

By regarding every adaptation as performance, such matters as authority are partly avoided. This does not mean, though, that the dispute on this matter is considered closed.

Another explanation for this need to ‘translate’ Shakespeare in various ways and for its impact on the issue of authorship is provided by Elsie Walker:

... these films demonstrate the “positives” of postmodernism [Hutcheon] identifies: the recognition of cultural and temporal differences, the freedom that comes with realizing there is no “final” text, the democratization of art (mixing “high” and “low” elements), the use of parody and playfulness to challenge the “authority” and “authenticity” of a “revered” text in the process of reclaiming that text for a wide, contemporary audience. (Walker 2006: 27)

All in all, as far as Shakespeare is concerned, it appears that he is here to endure in the collective consciousness. As far as Hollywood is concerned, as long as people pay to see ‘teensploi’ adaptations, there will be someone willing to produce them. Whether one chooses to accept or reject all these ‘translations’ as part of the story that Shakespeare has been telling for centuries, there is one simple truth that remains: this is the evolution that Shakespeare has had to go through in order to ‘survive’ the twenty-first century; whether one likes it or not, it is the stepping stone to whatever the future holds for the Bard and his audience.

## References

- Burt, R. (2002a). ‘To e- or not to e-? Disposing of Schlockspeare in the Age of Digital Media’. In Burt, R. (ed.). *Shakespeare after Mass Media*. New York, Hampshire: Palgrave, 1-32
- Burt, R. (2002b). ‘T(e)en Things I Hate about Girlene Shakesploitation Flicks in the Late 1990s, or Not-So-Fast Times at Shakespeare High’. In Lehman, C. and

- Starks, L. S. (eds.). *Spectacular Shakespeare: Critical Theory and Popular Cinema*. Madison, Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, London: Associated University Presses, 205-232
- Burt, R. (2003). 'Shakespeare, 'Glo-cali-zation', Race, and the Small Screens of Post-popular Culture'. In Burt, R. and Boose, L. E. (eds.). *Shakespeare, the Movie 2. Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, Video, and DVD*. London and New York: Routledge, 14-36
- Castaldo, A. (2002). 'The Film's the Thing: Using Shakespearean Film in the Classroom'. In Lehman, C. and Starks, L. S. (eds.). *Spectacular Shakespeare: Critical Theory and Popular Cinema*. Madison, Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, London: Associated University Presses, 187-204
- Ezra, E. and Rowden, T. (2006). 'What is Transnational Cinema?'. In Ezra, E. and Rowden, T. (eds.). *Transnational Cinema, the Film Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1-12
- Henderson, D. E. (2002). 'Shakespeare: The Theme Park'. In Burt, R. (ed.). *Shakespeare after Mass Media*. New York, Hampshire: Palgrave, 107-126
- Walker, E. (2006). 'Getting Back to Shakespeare: Whose Film is it Anyway?'. In Henderson, D. E. (ed.). *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 8-30
- Worthen, W.B. (1997). *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press

# Wounds Sustained, Wounds Nurtured: Rituals of Violence at Wagah

Monirul ISLAM\*

*"I found it impossible to decide  
which of the two countries  
was now my homeland  
– India or Pakistan?"*  
Saadat Hasan Manto

## Abstract

*The Radcliffe Line at Wagah is now a world famous tourist spot where each evening thousands of tourists gather to witness the ritual of lowering the flags of India and Pakistan. Visiting the place is kind of pilgrimage for the Indians, (and must be for the Pakistanis as well), and the Wagah has gradually evolved into a shrine of patriotism. The ceremony of lowering the flag lasts about an hour when on both sides of the border there remain a kind of celebratory atmosphere – and the thing celebrated is nationalism. The patriotic frenzy, however, leads to a menacing display virtual violence as the cry varat mata ki jai (victory to mother India) on the one side and Pakisthan jindabad(long live Pakistan) on the other bangs upon the ear and fills the air around. Each side tries to supersede the other; the cry gets louder and louder and the tension rises as if there will be an instant war. It leads the sensitive mind into troubled history of partition of India and to the indelible trauma of communal violence – the wound that the people of the subcontinent sustained during and in the aftermath of the partition in 1947. The paper will attempt to analyse the nationalistic ceremony at Wagah and will explore the problematic nature Indian nationalism and national identity. The objective is to examine the paradoxical nature of the Wagah rituals which though aimed at consolidating national identity ends up disrupting it. In the course of discussion, three cultural texts, namely, the ceremony at Wagah, the memoir of Sadat Hassan Manto's last days in Mumbai, and Shabnam Virmani's documentary film Had Anhad (Bounded Boundless) will act as intertexts of the article.*

**Key words:** partition; identity; nation; ritual; religion

Sadat Hassan Manto, in his memoir of his last days in Bombay, recounts his experience of the chaos, confusion and violence of 1947. He notes that the declaration of India and Pakistan as two separate countries was greeted

---

\* Assistant Professor, MD, PhD, Asannagar Madan Mohan Tarkalankar College, and Guest Faculty, Department of English, University of Kalyani, Nadia, West Bengal, India, mi.moni23@gmail.com

with much fanfare, but is more concerned with the unprecedented show of hatred, violence and killing after the declaration of independence. The slogans 'Pakistan Zindabad' (long live Pakistan) and 'India Zindbad' (long live India) filled the streets of Bombay, as did the blood spilled in the communal violence. In the ambience of violence and hatred Manto finds himself in no man's land; in the city of Bombay he is suddenly reduced to a position of marginality because of his religious identity: He is Muslim and in India even though a separate Pakistan is created for the Muslims. This sudden change bewilders him like Toba Tek Singh<sup>1</sup>; numerous questions pop up in his mind:

I found it impossible to decide which of the two countries was now my homeland—India or Pakistan? Who was responsible for the blood which was being so mercilessly shed every day? Where were they going to inter the bones which had been stripped off the flesh of religion by vultures and birds of prey? (Manto 1989: 6)

The deeply disturbed author recounts: "India was free. Pakistan was free from the moment of its birth. But man was slave in both countries, of prejudice of religious fanaticism, of bestiality, of cruelty" (Hasan 1989:6). Manto's experience of crisis of identity and his anguish cannot be dismissed as being personal and temporal. The bewilderment and pain of Manto is symptomatic of the post-partition Indian or Pakistani, or later Bangladeshi identity. The questions raised by Manto remain valid for a large group of people on either side of the borders, even after some sixty years of independence. The partition of India on the basis of religion has left indelible marks on the lives of the people of the partitioned nations and has left the nations internally fractured. The post-colonial nations in their discursive and ritualistic practices have directed their endeavours to heal this wound. The paradox of the situation in the post-independence India, Pakistan is that the attempts to heal the wounds end up in sustaining and aggravating the wound, mainly because the partition was on religious lines. Religious minorities on either side of the border who could not or did not leave their homes as dictated by the national/religious borders find themselves in the borderland<sup>2</sup>, marginalised by the nationalistic rituals and discursive practices. One of the issues that makes formation national identity problematic for the post-colonial nations India and Pakistan is conflation of nationality with religion<sup>3</sup>. An analysis of the ceremony at the Wagah border reveals the paradox of the nationalistic desires of the post-colonial India and Pakistan.

The Radcliffe Line at Wagah is now a world famous tourist spot where each evening thousands of tourists gather on both sides of the border to witness the spectacular ceremony of lowering the flag at evening. The ceremony dates back to 1969 and was designed to show the good relations between Indian and Pakistani. Visiting the place nowadays is a kind of pilgrimage for many Indians (and Pakistani) and Wagah has gradually evolved into a shrine of patriotism<sup>4</sup>. The ceremony of lowering the flag lasts about an hour, where on both sides of the border there remain a kind of celebratory atmosphere—and the thing celebrated is nationality or national identity. The patriotic frenzy, however, leads to a menacing orchestra of metaphoric violence as the cry '*varat mata ki jai*' on the one side and '*Pakistan jindabad*' on the other bangs upon the ear and fills the air around. Each side tries to surpass the other; the cry getting louder and louder with the tension rising as if there will be an instant war. The baring of the teeth on either side of the border leads the sensitive mind into the troubled history of partition and to the indelible trauma of communal violence—the wound that the people of the subcontinent sustained during and in the aftermath of the partition. The ritual is, therefore, a sad reminder not only of the partition but also of the conflict of religious identities, since it was a partition on religious line. The communal border created between the Hindus and the Muslims was turned into an international border, and consequently, the religious identities of the people came to be seen as interchangeable with their national identities. Pakistan is a self-proclaimed Islamic country. India is constitutionally a secular democratic republic. Even though Hinduism is not the adopted religion of India, social scientist and historians have shown that history of Indian nationalism has been constructed and conceived chiefly, in terms of Hinduism<sup>5</sup>. The ceremony at Wagah as an event does not remain confined within the performed time and space; its legacy goes back to the pre-independence days of divisive politics and post-partition communal violence. The national/communal border at Wagah is itself a sad reminder of the trauma of displacement and suffering that the people of the Indian subcontinent and the ceremony at Wagah perpetuates the traumatic experience, since its menacing choreography of violence<sup>6</sup> brings back the feelings of enmity thwarting any possibility of amity between two nations. The sad fruit it bears is not only the enmity between India and Pakistan but between two religious communities and this communitarian border, needless to say, is not only international but also intra-national. Thus, the aims of the Wagah rituals go futile since its attempt to create a singular identity in exclusion of all other

identities gets entangled in the valence of partition and perpetuates the intra-national communitarian divide. An example of how the national and religious identities are often conflated by the Indians is seen in Shabnam Virmani's documentary film *Had Anhad* (2008) Virmani documents the reactions of the people coming back after watching the ceremony at Wagah and shows how Pakistanis with Muslims are confused by the Indian spectators and how easy is the transition from the national to the religious<sup>7</sup>.

The ceremony at Wagah has two different aspects: the ritualistic and the spectacular. The ceremony in its present format has become an elaborate ritualistic spectacle. A ritual is normally defined as a formal action that follows a set and respectable pattern and which is expressive of communal values, meanings and beliefs. It has some association with the 'sacred' and according to Durkheim the distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'profane' is fundamental to ritual, which entails crossing the usual boundary between the two. For Durkheim the sacred is expressive of the community within which individual lives. In other words, rituals serve the function of integrating the individual more closely into the social whole (Edgar and Sedgwick 2004: 340). But it does so by creating a dualistic framework. Ritualization orders ambiguities and indeterminacies of experience into distinctions between good and evil, light and dark, spirit and flesh, above and below, inside and outside. This dualistic framework according to Catherine Bell evokes a "redemptive hegemony", "an understanding of ultimate power and order in the world" (Bell 1992: 93; Faber 2002: 87). Moreover, the ritual-space is not a closed space. As Alyada Faber observes: "The framework for understanding the world through ritualization is ... used by individuals to interpret experiences beyond the ritual space" (Faber 2002: 87). It is needless to point out that the nation as a community needs certain rituals to strengthen the communal bond of nationality and the rituals at the Wagah-border is purportedly designed to serve this function. The ceremony at Wagah which involves the performers, the ritual agents as well as a large crowd of spectators creates dualistic framework through its celebration of the sacredness of one own nationality. The dualistic framework of that the Wagah ceremony attempts to imprint upon the mind of the spectators creates a distinction between the 'good' and 'evil', between the 'sacred and the profane' and the definition of the 'sacred' and the 'profane' depends upon the 'positionality' of the individual subject—on which side of the border one stands—and this standing may not always conform to their physical positioning. Seen from this perspective, the rituals at Wagah have a larger spatial dimension, but

there is a kind of temporal fixity; no temporal movement is possible as the very nature of the rituals confine us into the historical past. The rituals at Wagah due to its residual content of religion based partition, ends up making an enemy of the people within the border. The religious minorities on both sides of the border get the status of the enemy within.

Apart from its ritualistic aspect, the ceremony has its element of the spectacular—violence as a spectacle. Amartya Sen in *Identity and Violence* argues that “violence is fomented by imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people . . .” (2007: 2). However, violence creates identity as much as identity creates violence and the spectacle of violence at Wagah is a case in point. Violence as a spectacle can be used as means for propaganda, as a means for imprinting ideas. How violence as a spectacle can be used for propaganda is exemplified by the works Saint Orlan, the French performance artist. She uses cosmetic surgery as a medium of artistic expression amplifying the social pressures on women to conform to the narrowly defined patriarchal standards of beauty. According to Faber, “Orlan uses a medium of violence against her own body to create incontestable images of the open body that force attention of the spectators and to establish the authority of her political protest” (Faber 2002: 89). Orlan’s art develops a transgressive form of ‘prediscursive’ communication by creating “a spectacle of violence” (Faber 2002: 88). At Wagah, the spectacle of violence aims at a form of communication but the idea communicated to the spectators is not transgressive in any sense, but nationalistic—the idea of a singular imagined community—of one border ignoring the multiple other borders we live by. An observation made by the German bio-philosopher Helmuth Plessner is relevant in the context. The ideal of *Gemeinschaft* or community, represents, according to Plessner, an assault on the anthropological reality of human life by demanding the individual’s indifference to his or her own unique nature, above all when it demands complete self-disclosure (1999: 104). The Wagah spectacle with its aim of forming a singular identity attempts at such an assault—it enacts violence upon the self, since the demand is to conform to the nation as a community at the cost of relegating the self. However, this attempt to form a singular national identity remains unsubstantiated. As it is already noted the case of the Wagah ritual and the Indian nationality is complexly fraught with the question of religious identities.

Taking a cue from Plessner’s philosophical view of ‘eccentric positionality’ of man, the particular case of the Wagah can be seen as reflecting general condition of man’s desire for a border to live by and the

simultaneous failure to find one. According to Plessner, the human being exhibits an ontological ambiguity that arises from two fundamental forces of psychological life: the impetus to disclosure – the need for validity; and yet the impetus to restraint – the need for modesty. Thus, human beings want to be seen for what they are; and yet they want just as much to veil themselves and remain unknown (1999: 109–10). Thus any attempt at fixing a singular identity may not be successful because of the typical human situation: the self wants to be a part of the shared world, but simultaneously it wants to preserve its uniqueness. Plessner defines this as ‘eccentric positionality’ of man. He defines human being as that kind of living being that is directly positioned in its direct embodied and unreflected relationship with the environment, and at the same time, as that kind of living being that is located outside of this boundary and is, thus open to the world. From such an eccentric position humans must establish artificial boundaries and embody them. Because of this ‘eccentric positionality’ human beings are artificial by nature. This natural artificiality of man makes him homeless as he has no natural place in the world<sup>8</sup>. The boundary of nationality, thus, clashes with the boundary of individuality and with many other boundaries/identities, and this is a perennial human situation.

The rituals at Wagah and the attempt to control identity through acts of ritualistic violence is the political ambition of the nation but its failure also illustrates the eccentric nature of the human situation that Plessner speaks of. Once having looked through the philosophical model of Plessner, we reach at a new understanding of the situation recounted by Manto in his memoir. Manto laments for being rendered homeless; it mourns the loss of his own unique identity, and the loss is due to the formation of a new collective/national identity that intersects his other identities. Manto’s lament, therefore, is a nostalgic cry for the loss of the border he lived by. The ceremony at Wagah similarly aims at the preservation of a border, and also a form of identity. At the root of both lies the human feeling of ‘rootlessness’ and search for a border/identity to live by. Paradoxically enough, one border unsettles the other.

## Notes

1. Toba Tek Singh is the eponymous hero in one of Manto’s short stories. His original name is Bishen Singh but he is referred to as Toba Tek Singh following the name of his village. He is an inmate of an asylum in Pakistan. At independence he is to be transferred to an Indian asylum as

he is a Sikh. He does not understand the meaning of this partition and wants to know whether his small village is in India or Pakistan. When taken to the border, Bishen Singh refuses to cross the border and dies in no man's land. Apparently meaningless question of the madman are but echoes of the questions raised by Manto in his memoir. See Sadat Hasan Manto's *Kingdom's End and Other Stories* (1989) Trans. Khalid Hasan, 11-18.

2. The term borderland is used in the sense used by Gloria Anzaldua who defines the borderland both as physical and metaphorical, as "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (1987: 3).
3. Amartya Sen in his essay "The Smallness Thrust upon Us" argues that the propagation of a singular identity, on nationality, or religion, or race, or caste has been responsible for a great deal of violence in different parts of the world, including massive bloodshed. He argues in favour of a free play of different identities and each identity can be more or less important depending upon the circumstance, and none of the identities can be privileged one all the time. Sadly, however, nationalism demands privileging of the nation over other identities.
4. For the Wagah ceremony and the patriotic frenzy surrounding it one may see the documentary directed by Shabnam Virmani titled *Had Anhad: Journeys with Ram and Kabir (Bounded-Boundless)*, 2008.
5. Partha Chatterjee, for example, in his article, "History and the Nationalization of Hinduism" argues that that constructed past of India was a Hindu past: "Hindu-extremist political rhetoric today were fashioned from the very birth of nationalist historiography" (1992: 130). Perry Anderson in *The Indian ideology* (2012) argues that Indian National Movement failed bring into its fold the Muslim population of India and draws our attention to the inequalities between Hindus and Muslims in contemporary India. Sudhir Kakar's *The Colors of Violence* (1996) analyses the contemporary social psyche of the Indians. Kakar proffers the argument that values of Indian society are values that have their origins in Hinduism. The Muslims, according to Kakar, feel culturally apart from "India." He concludes that being Indian in effect, amounts, according to popular perception, to being a Hindu.
6. Michael Edward Palin called this ritual at Wagah a "carefully choreographed contempt". Palin is best known for being one of the members of the comedy group Monty Python and for his travel documentaries. Although Palin basically focuses on the comic aspect of the ritual, he did not miss the element of menace and hatred underlying the ritual: the Wagah border ceremony's comic-aggressive strutting has been compared to the courtship displays of peacocks, or to the antics of the Ministry of Silly Walks, as performed by Mr. Palin's fellow Python, John

- Cleese. See Frank Jacob's article, "Peacocks at Sunset." *Opinionator*. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/03/peacocks-at-sunset/>.
7. See 57 to 60 minutes of the 102 minutes film by Virmani.
  8. For the philosophical concepts of Plessner I have used a number of articles and reviews apart from his books: Stephen Grosby's "Helmuth Plessner and the philosophical Anthropology of Civility" published in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* Vol.28 no.5, pp.605-608 ; Concept note to the conference entitled "Artificial by Nature: Philosophy of Life and Life Sciences and Helmuth Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology", IV International Plessner Conference, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, held in 2009; 'Thoughts of Helmuth Plessner' in the official website of Plessner Society <http://www.helmuthplessner.de/seiten/seite.php?layout=bildhome&inhalt=engl> ; and "Positionality in the Philosophy of Helmuth Plessner," an essay by Marjorie Grene, published in the *The Review of Metaphysics* , Vol. 20 No. 2 (Dec., 1966) pp. 250-277. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20124229>

## References

- Anderson, Perry (2012) *The Indian Ideology*. Three Essays Collective.
- Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, eds. (2004) *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*. London and New York: Routledge Reprint.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera*. New edition edition. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Bell, Catherine (1992) *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. (2015) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. First edition. New York: Nine Books.
- Faber, Alyda (2002) "Ritual as a Violent Spectacle and Cultural Criticism." *The Drama Review* 46(1): 85-92.
- Grene, Marjorie (1966) "Positionality in the Philosophy of Helmuth Plessner," *The Review of Metaphysics*. 20 (2): 250 - 277.
- Kakar, Sudhir (1996) *The Colors of Violence - Cultural Identities, Religion, & Conflict*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Manto, Sadat Hasan (1989) *Kingdom's End and Other Stories*. Translated from Urdu by Khalid Hasan, Delhi: Penguin Books India.
- Plessner, Helmuth. (1999) *The Limits of Community: A Critique of Social Radicalism* trans. Andrew Wallace, New York: Humanity Books.
- Sen, Amartya (2007) *Identity and Violence - The Illusion of Destiny*. Reprint edition. W. W. Norton & Co.
- Shabnam Virmani. (2008) *Had Anhad: Journeys with Ram and Kabir (Bounded-Boundless)*. India: Srishti.

- Jacobs, Frank (2012) "Peacocks at Sunset." *Opinionator*.  
<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/03/peacocks-at-sunset/>.
- Grosby, Stephen. (2002) "Helmuth Plessner and the philosophical Anthropology of Civility." *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. 28 (5): 605-608.
- Greene, Marjorie (1996) "Positionality in the Philosophy of Helmuth Plessner." *The Review of Metaphysics*. 20 (2):250-277. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20124229>

# Representations of Indigenous Feminism and Social Change

Melissa MOUCHREF\*

## Abstract

*Indigenous feminism is important to understand in that it completely revolutionizes our notion of contemporary western feminism. It also proves quite controversial in that it represents the voice of the oppressed in a patriarchal society. This essay seeks to analyse the union of Indigenous artistic representation and the proliferation of Indigenous feminism through that medium. It is crucial to recognize the necessity of alternative forms of feminism, considering the historically exclusive nature of a feminism that primarily serves the white middle class. Compositions such as acrylic art, literature, oral storytelling, political speech, and dramatic performances reinforce the primary argument of this essay that Indigenous women are here, even if no one is listening. The oppression of Indigenous women, and the necessity for the oppression to be addressed is confronted in this piece that encourages its audience to tap into an innate racism they have acquired in order to facilitate a reclamation and resurrection of previous notions of what it meant to be an Indigenous woman in a patriarchal world.*

**Key words:** Indigenous, Feminism, Patriarchy, Decolonization, Gender, Equality, Malinche, Pocahontas, Oppression, Native American Feminism.

## Introduction

Long before patriarchal societies ventured into uncertainty and this continent, there lived the feuding Oneida and Mingoe tribes. After much fighting and chaos amongst the two, the Mingoe succeeded in pillaging the Oneida. The Great Spirit had a plan in helping the Oneida find a hideout – one that was only able to be seen by their tribe. The Great Spirit offered the Oneida a refuge when the very existence of their tribe was threatened, but as time waned, they began having difficulties in securing enough nourishment for their people without being found in hiding by the Mingoe.

---

\* Secondary English Teacher, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, USA  
melissa.mouchref@gmail.com

One night, an Oneida girl named Aliquipiso awoke from a dream; good spirits spoke to her and appointed her the saviour of her tribe. She was to approach the Mingoe warriors, and lead them to the bottom of the cliff in which her people were hiding. The next day, upon drawing near to the Mingoe, Aliquipiso was captured and offered a place in the Mingoe tribe if she disclosed the location of the Oneida hideout. Not only did Aliquipiso initially (and intentionally) refuse, but she suffered greatly at the hands of the Mingoe before carrying out her plan of leading them to the bottom of the cliff where her people hid. There, Aliquipiso and the Mingoe men perished under the plunging boulders of the mountain. The Oneida people were saved, thanks to the bravery and selflessness of Aliquipiso. Following the sacrifice of Aliquipiso, The Great Mystery allowed for her hair to be transformed into woodbine, and from her essence and woodbine sprang the medicinal honeysuckle. To this day, honeysuckle is still regarded by the Oneida as the “blood of brave women” (Rendering from “The Warrior Maiden” of the anthology, *Spider Woman’s Granddaughters*). When I first read “The Warrior Maiden,” all I could think of was its age. It was a story that dates back centuries. And traditional American tales of women bravery have only really caught on in 21st century writing. Only in the past 15 years or so have authors been composing literature with strong female protagonists.

When I was a newly-wed, my husband Mark and I would set aside time each evening after a long day’s work and alternate introducing one another to our favourite television shows and films. Mark’s favourite show from the 80’s was MacGyver. It was entertaining, to say the least, but not in the way one might initially perceive. Episode, after episode, MacGyver dismantles the time-bomb, uses gum, Slinkies, and duct tape to create some innovative creation to undo his foe’s treacherous scheme. Every episode was filled with all of the things one might want from an action-series, including the useless, inept woman that consistently needs saving; and this, dear friends, is where I had to draw the line. By episode six I reached my breaking point, for it was the sixth point in which I had to witness this patriarchal fantasy unfold. I stopped the DVD as soon as the weak, inane woman was introduced to the scene. Mark was entirely bewildered during my fit of vexation, whilst I went on about how we would never play another episode of his ridiculous show again in our home. It seems funny now, but when you take a step back and really think about it, our passivity to these pop-culture phenomena play a key role in the way women perceive their own value and power. I juxtapose this event of my life with

the enlightenment I experienced when I was first introduced to Indigenous feminism and Indigenous feminist literature. Through this essay I wish to examine how Indigenous stories and artistic renditions challenge the status quo, and seek, more than just reclamation or decolonization, to correct the issue of western socialization, and the overarching patriarchal influence imposed upon the “civilized” world.

### **On Oppression of the Body and Mind**

One facet of Indigenous feminism is the necessity to make oppression within Indigenous communities visible. I’ve made this point before with colleagues – if we don’t expose the despotism against Indigenous women, then most non-Indigenous people would quickly dismiss Indigenous feminism as meritless. In “Indigenous Women and Feminism,” Kim Anderson argues that “until we seriously address the political, social, and economic inequities faced by the Indigenous women, we will never achieve full healing, decolonization, and healthy nation building.” (2011: 85) I like to parallel this notion to the idea to someone having a piece of parsley stuck in their teeth. The person with the parsley in their teeth represents the general public, and the parsley, the patriarchy. We, the observer of the poor chap, represent the enlightened. To the person with the parsley in their teeth, everything is simply splendid. To the mischievous parsley stuck in society’s teeth, the world is in their control. The parsley does well to shield the ignorant from the oppressive truth in order to give them the false perception that all is well in the world, that we are governed by an egalitarian system that is progressive. And finally, to the observer of this person with parsley in their teeth, we’re obviously trying to find a way to let this individual know that something’s not right without being too brash or offensive. We are trying to point out the unseen to the society who perceives systemic racial or cultural injustice as something that we’ve moved past; that we have somehow overcome these crimes against humanity because we’ve accomplished such feats as electing a black president, or outlawing sexual discrimination in some of our states. Unfortunately, even when the parsley is exposed, it can be hard to remove until one takes a good, hard look in the mirror and really analyses the extent to which they’ve been spoon-fed heaps of Anglicized, tasteless, mass-produced ideas.

For the past 30 years, the Indigenous women of Canada have contributed greatly to the mass disappearances and murders of as many as 4,000 women. This event has only recently received (very little) media

attention, but it has been a continual phenomenon in Canada for over three decades. Unfortunately, one of the bigger issues concerning this circumstance that is directly impacting the families of these victims are the ways in which the Canadian government is choosing to deal with the issue. Many of the cases of disappearances and murders are being written off as accidental or self-inflicted. And many Indigenous societies are so plagued by other difficulties such as poverty, over-incarceration of Indigenous males, and lack of education on systemic oppression, that it becomes increasingly more difficult for activist groups to band together and adequately address issues such as the mass disappearance of these women (Canadian Government to Investigate Thousands of Missing Indigenous Women).

In addition to understanding the necessity of Indigenous feminism out of circumstance, I believe it is important to understand one thing: Native American feminism's fundamental similarity with contemporary western feminism is the word 'feminism.' The establishment of western feminism in America during the 1800s had a way of serving one particular member of society, which was the middle-class white woman. The exclusionary nature of feminism at that time did not grant women of colour, or Indigenous women, the right to voice their deprivation and oppression. For instance, a regular occurrence during the suffrage movement involved the segregation of marches. When Black feminists entered the scene, white feminists were positioned on the front lines, their male counterparts following them, and black feminists at the tail end of the march. In reading "Segregated Sisterhood: Racism and the Politics of American Feminism" (Caraway 1991), I found a plethora of black female intellectual voices exposing the nativist racism inherent in western feminism. Anna Julia Cooper, in her excerpted essay entitled "Woman versus the Indian" (1892) exposes the tendency of western feminists to forsake "alliances with Blacks, the poor, and other disenfranchised classes of Americans to gain the support of racist southern states for suffrage." (152) Because of the exclusionary nature of white feminism, Cooper deemed black and Indigenous feminism as having radically different objectives. Cooper argues, that rather than feed into a system that demands white feminists to disengage with feminists of colour, they should recognize that their feminist counterparts have suffered at the hands of Anglo-Saxon power as well, and "If the Indian has been wronged or cheated by the puissance of this American government, it is woman's mission to plead with her country to cease to do evil and to pay its honest

debts" (152). And this is where the stark difference between Indigenous feminism and western feminism lies: one seeks reclamation and decolonization, and the other seeks equality and freedom; one culture possessed innate feminism, the other has developed their notion of feminism because of the circumstantial gender deprivation and inequity of their patriarchal, western world.

There were many erroneous conclusions made about Indigenous women by Europeans upon their arrival that ought to be addressed. Because the *only* standard for defining inequity amongst the sexes during times of colonization was via the "civilized" world, Europeans viewed such norms as Indigenous women carrying heavy loads, or doing farm work as oppressive, when in reality, these norms simply represented the division of labour amongst males and females in various tribes (Garbarino 1976: 404). It is important to question how such false perceptions of reality have the capability to impact the general notion of what it means to be an Indigenous woman. Even today, hundreds of years after these faulty ideas were perpetuated via imperialist governments, society still proliferates false notions about what it means to be a contemporary Indigenous woman.

When analysing my previous viewpoints of what it meant to be a Native woman, I have to say that it is rather embarrassing to admit that I once viewed Indigenous women as the inverse of feminism; they were submissive, mute, and obedient because subliminally that was what I was told they were. But it wasn't like someone published some faulty documentary or text that directly told me that Indigenous women were disempowered –the impression was made through years of subliminal exposure via media and pop culture. My exposure to Native American anything seemed to possess this innate racist impression that even my own wisdom could not tap into –and isn't that just *scary*? This returns to the notion of what makes Indigenous feminism fundamentally different from western feminism, which is the necessity for decolonization, both of the physical world and of the mind. This encompasses who gets to define what about whom. Decolonization in Indigenous feminism seeks to reclaim sovereignty. Because of the extent to which Indigenous societies were historically vilified, sensationalized, and falsely advertised, there came a point in time where almost every piece of information the western world believed and disseminated about Indigenous societies was pretty much a load of garbage. Not to mention, in lacking sovereignty, these societies (or what was left of them after an imperialist rule) were essentially rendered

voiceless, without the least bit of say in how they and their people were to be governed. And that's where Indigenous feminism comes into play. Because of the suppression of the Indigenous voice in the public eye, many Indigenous women resorted to communicating their plight through artistic representations; whether through physical art, theatre, literature, or poetry, Indigenous women are relating their realities to the world in front of them. In refusing to be silenced, and in indicating through art that they have been, these women challenge authority and elicit *real* social change through penetration of the mind.

### **The Woman Who Fell from the Sky: The Trickster Unaware**

In the Iroquois creation story of "The Woman Who Fell from the Sky," a powerful young woman is directed by her deceased father to marry a strange sorcerer who tests her worth through physical torment. Nevertheless, she endures the tests with a calm face and demeanour. Upon passing his tests, the two marry. They never consummate their marriage, "sleeping opposite each other with the soles of their feet touching." (Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women) Outside of the sorcerer's lodge, there is a blossoming tree which emits light and allows the young woman to converse with the spirits and her father. She loves the tree, and opens her legs to it. The tree drops a blossom onto her vagina and soon after she is impregnated. The sorcerer falls ill and attributes his sickness to his wife's presence. His advisors recommend he uproot the tree of light. Following the tree's uprooting, the sorcerer was to allow his wife to sit next to him so she would fall into the chasm, upon which he would replant the tree and regain his health. Only there was one thing the sorcerer could not comprehend; to him, the hole was simply a chasm, but to his wife, it was so much more. As she gazed down into the abyss, she saw a bright, blue something glowing in the darkness. She willingly jumped into the abyss, and with great joy, as her marriage to the sorcerer was anything but delightful. Soon after, the sorcerer replanted the tree. In jumping, the young woman escapes her enemy. In jumping, she turns the sorcerer's deceit into planet Earth, the sun, and the moon. She follows the rules of respect for her deceased father, while retaining her dignity and bravery as a sacred woman of her nation (Rendering from "The Woman Who Fell from the Sky" of the anthology, *Spider Woman's Granddaughters* 1989: 65-68).

## **Chief Mark on Polygamy**

I told myself, upon undertaking this project, that I would attempt to utilize mostly female Indigenous authors to prove my point, but there was a speech given by Chief Mark in 1871 in Warm Springs, Oregon that really captured my attention. It addressed the belief of polygamy in Indigenous societies, and the conflicts of colonial interests in juxtaposition to Chief Mark's convictions. The speech was reported by A.B. Meacham, superintendent of Indian Affairs in Oregon, who was pursuing the abolishment of polygamy. Meacham was working alongside Captain Smith, superintendent of Warm Springs to accomplish a quashing of polygamous marriage in Warm Springs. Ultimately, both Meacham and Smith won their case, and the settlement involved the outlawing of polygamous marriage and relations in Warm Springs. Chief Mark's speech reads:

"My heart is warm like fire, but there are cold spots in it; I don't know how to talk. I want to be a white man. My father did not tell me it was wrong to have so many wives. I love all my women. My old wife is a mother to the others, I can't do without her; but she is old, she cannot work very much; I can't send her away to die. This woman cost me ten horses; she is a good woman; I can't do without her. That woman cost me eight horses; she is young; she will take care of me when I am old. I don't know how to do; I want to do right. I am not a bad man. I know your new law is good; the old law is bad. We must be like the white man. I am a man; I will put away the old law. I want you to tell me how to do right. I love my women and children. I can't send any of them away; what must I do?" (Hymes 1981: 202).

It is critical that one reads Chief Mark's words with respect to the times and the culture. Polygamy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been assailed to such a degree by the media that as soon as most Americans hear the word, they have the tendency to instantly dismiss polygamy as backwards or immoral. In contrast, monogamy was seen by various tribes as unnatural and constraining. One thing we have to understand here is that both sexes in Indigenous cultures were seen as equals. So when a woman would marry, she would not lose any of her rights or be vanquished by her male counterpart. Here, we have to recognize that certain colonial ideas have been imposed upon our consciousness – ideas that are no different or better than Indigenous peoples' beliefs on interpersonal relationships. In the speech previously excerpted, Chief Mark is simply communicating the incongruity of the colonial white man's imposed laws and ways to that of

his tribe. This speech addresses the issue of colonization, as well as the issue of western socialization and the overarching patriarchal influence imposed upon Chief Mark's people. Unfortunately, Chief Mark's speech was made during a time where Indigenous societies were not granted the least bit of sovereignty, representation, or say in United States policy-making. His words were ultimately used against him in order to check off yet another win for the United States colonial agenda. It was unfathomable for imperialist America to perceive polygamy as just or equal. The United States failed to recognize that in Indigenous polygamous marriage, there is no ownership or territory; marriage was very casual and could commonly result in divorce, even when initiated by Indigenous women, and *how dare they?* Moreover, polygamous marriage served more than a means for sexual gratification or affections of either association. Women were commonly wed to their sister's husband if they were widowed, as a means of protection and security. In the western world, we tend to find this an anomaly. 'How could her sister possibly consent to this?', one might ask. Or, 'surely this must have been carried out against the will of women in their societies', another might say. Au contraire, because of the western construct of the submissive wife, non-Indigenous peoples have the tendency to believe that this would be the only possible elucidation. You wouldn't find the territorial husband, or the jealous girlfriend in those parts of the Indigenous world because everyone belongs to everyone. Indigenous societies function as one large family. Therefore, if you were an Indigenous child being raised in almost any given tribe, you had many mothers, many fathers, many siblings, and many potential husbands or wives).

### **Yellow Woman and the Abolition of Gender Norms**

In Leslie Marmon Silko's "Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit," I received my first introduction to gender norms (or the lack thereof) within Indigenous societies through storytelling. Silko introduces her audience to the Laguna tribe, and the plastering, home-owning Laguna women of her time by relating the following:

"At Laguna, men did the basket making and the weaving of fine textiles; men helped a great deal with the child care too. Because the Creator is female, there is no stigma on being female; gender is not used to control behavior. No job was a man's job or a woman's job; the most able person did the work" (1974: 66).

When I first read this, all I could think was just how damn logical it all sounded. Silko relates a time in her childhood where Laguna women had a place in society that didn't involve sexualized images, submission, or patriarchy. She goes on to examine the dichotomy of the perception of beauty in the western world versus perceived beauty in Pueblo societies. Silko states that the idea of beauty was simply a manifestation of one's comportment and interactions with others in their society; "The whole person had to be beautiful, not just the face or the body; faces and bodies could not be separated from hearts and souls" (65). In relating this aspect of her culture, Silko clearly juxtaposes what beauty we perceive in our contemporary world to the definition of beauty in her Indigenous world. We recognize through her story that social markers such as gender, age, physical differences, or sexual differences do not inhibit her society in recognizing the individual and the potential for strengthening and contributing to one's society.

Silko makes several salient points on the manifestation of colonialism in her text that addresses the necessity of decolonization in order to return to the egalitarian state her people were once in. She recognizes that much of the cultural shifting in Indigenous societies was a direct result of imperialism, by remarking that prior to the influx of Christian missionaries, "a man could dress as a woman and work with the women and even marry a man without any fanfare. Likewise, a woman was free to dress like a man, to hunt and go to war with the men, and to marry a woman" (67). She later regards the duality in one's sexuality by inadvertently referencing each person's Two-Spirit. In doing so, Silko states that the disregard for this way of life of the Pueblo people, is what ultimately lead to laws of sexual inhibition that were imposed upon Indigenous societies via colonialism and Christianization.

Although many Indigenous feminists attempt to express their political views through their art for the sake of undermining the political system, there are some who try to make political statements that represent balance between the two worlds in which they live. Some may see these types of artists as being adulterated, yet others may see them simply working within the system in place in order to be more inclusive and identify with a larger audience. In being inclusive, Indigenous artists create avenues for substantial enlightenment. Also, in recognizing that Indigenous women can identify with multiple cultures and ideas, Indigenous art has the potential to bridge the gap between white and non-white -yielding a more unified influence in eliciting *real* change. As a non-

Indigenous woman, I can identify with this, in that I was drawn to the field of contemporary Indigenous feminist composition *because* it was inclusive; these artistic representations did not seek to alienate or vilify me as a white person (although in being of Middle Eastern descent, and being considered “white” according to the western world, I refuse to identify with the notion of race). Okay, so I’m slightly biased. I lied. Even if these compositions *were* exclusionist, I would probably still love them. But I can at least imagine how turned off most non-Indigenous people would be when being vilified by Indigenous people in their political compositions, regardless of how disempowered and historically degraded Indigenous societies are.

A very good artistic representation of balance in the world of Indigenous feminism can be found in “Contemporary Native American Women Artists: Visual Expressions of Feminism, the Environment, and Identity,” as Indigenous artist Nadema Agard’s piece titled *The Virgin of Guadalupe is the Corn Mother* is featured, and demonstrates “the power of tribal art as a ‘vehicle for cultural and political resistance and a spiritual grounding for a world that has become unbalanced’”(106).



Many Indigenous feminists align themselves with Agard’s way of including “the other (i.e. non-Indigenous peoples),” because it is widely recognized that “the other” represents more than the audience –it represents the problem. While attempting to explain to the masses that do not see how problematic their views and their ancestral presence are in this nation, we must recognize the necessity of conveying to them their role in the poor conditions of reservations. It is exceptionally important to communicate to others that they have a responsibility to do their part in working for equity and in recognizing the struggles Indigenous women and men face today because of the historical privilege of certain races. In “Native American Sovereignty, and Social Change” Andrea Smith writes:

“When I worked as a rape crisis counselor, every Native client I saw said to me at one point, ‘I wish I wasn’t Indian.’ My training in the mainstream antiviolence movement did not prepare me to address what I was seeing –

that sexual violence in Native communities was inextricably linked to processes of genocide and colonization" (2005: 116).

In writing this, Smith contends that in making analyses like these, she elicits a level of moral culpability to her audience. She seeks to change the way in which Native activism is perceived because according to her, the way in which Indigenous feminism is theorized, it "straightjackets Native women from articulating political projects that both address sexism and promote Indigenous sovereignty simultaneously" (118). This is important to note in that one of the major tenants of Indigenous feminism involve the exposure and emphasis of the oppression Indigenous women face today in the 21st century that isn't being addressed, heard, disseminated, or analysed by the general public.

### **Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots**

Drawing on the Indigenous play *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, by Monique Mojica, one may find various instances where Mojica directly addresses the historical and contemporary injustices towards the Indigenous female population through satire. She directly quotes a famous Cheyenne saying that "A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground." (1990: 12) In using this particular quote, Mojica expresses the pain and resilience necessary for the survival of the Indigenous woman after living under colonial rule for so long. She also uses an exceptional amount of farce through the trickster character, Princess Buttered-on-Both-Sides, to undermine that same colonial rule by exposing the absurdism behind the colonizer's distorted images of Indigenous women. Her primary role, for those who can perceive, is to reclaim what it means to be an Indigenous woman, before it was defined by the white man, and before the white man defiled the Indigenous woman through his assertive and vigorous introduction to patriarchy.

In her play, Mojica does more than challenge the patriarchal influence over the world – she utilizes what critic Maria Lyytinen describes in *Native American Performance and Representation* (2009) as "Trickster 'deconstruction'" in order to challenge the status quo, and correct the issue of western socialization – that same socialization that contributed to the stereotypes and disempowerment of Native women. The play opens with Princess Buttered-on-Both-Sides adorning the popular image of Native women during the 498th annual Miss North American Indian Beauty Pageant. She satirizes the image of Disney's rendition of the story of Pocahontas during her talent segment by proclaiming she will dance in

“savage splendor” and throw herself “over the precipice, all for the loss of my one true love, Captain John Whiteman” (19). In reference to Princess Buttered-on-Both-Sides’ survived leap over the Niagara, it is clear that Mojica intentionally permits the survival of her trickster coyote in order to make a statement about the resilience of Indigenous women. By design, what she infers is that, regardless of the false stigmatization of her women, they have always fought and continue to in order to overcome those stereotypes and patriarchal fantasies of cultural submissiveness.

In Transformation 3, Mojica employs a different kind of voice – one that highlights the impact of colonization on the unity of the Indigenous. This scene relays the story of Malinche from the western viewpoint, but also allows for the Native perspective on her position. Malinche was known as the interpreter and lover of Hernan Cortes. Prior to her introduction to the Spanish conquistador, Malinche was part of a noble family, but upon the death of her father, and the re-marriage of her mother, Malinche was sold into a Mayan slave trade, which eventually led her to work for Hernan Cortes. She was discovered to be an excellent interpreter, so she was utilized for her skill by the conquistadors, and even helped them evade an Aztec attack by informing Cortes of the plot. Naturally, as years went on, Malinche and Cortes formed a close relationship, and Malinche even bore Cortes a son (La Malinche). In Mojica’s play, when the story of Malinche is mentioned, we are offered the perspective of her Indigenous counterparts as they curse her for her desertion and betrayal of her people. But then Mojica allows for Malinche to be given the opportunity to voice her side of the story. She begins: “They say it was me betrayed my people. It was they betrayed me.” (22) She then continues by making an exclamation towards her child as “La Chingada! The fucked one!” (22), regarding his Indigenous features as a curse from her blood. Mojica expresses the suffering and struggle that Malinche endures as the mistress of the married Hernan Cortes. She is within and without because of her blood and because of her abandonment. Throughout Mojica’s play, Malinche is constantly engaged in a dance with molten lava. The overtaking of the lava at the end of the scene represents her struggle for survival – one that ultimately leads to her demise. The colonial force overtakes her through possession, disempowerment, and yet another dereliction.

## Concluding Lines

Whether addressing artistic renditions of Mojica, Agard, or Silko, or delving into the anthology of the numerous Indigenous stories of "Spider Woman's Granddaughters," one thing becomes evident: for so many Indigenous works to maintain the same theme of oppression and disempowerment, something serious that is afflicting contemporary Indigenous nations isn't being addressed. There have been several waves in Native writing and artistic works, and the subject of the marginalization of Indigenous women recurs over and over again. Native artists are constantly attempting to challenge the status quo, are constantly seeking more than just reclamation or decolonization, they are seeking to correct the issue of western socialization, and the overarching patriarchal influence imposed upon their nations. This leads to the question of *who* is responsible for ensuring that measures are taken to guarantee the rights and protection that Indigenous women are seeking through their works. The answer to that question is us. I suppose the bigger question is whose side one chooses to be on, as it certainly *is* a choice, considering we are all bred to function as components of the patriarchal machine. I guess it would be easier for one to remain on the side of the oppressor, to inadvertently defend the established racist patriarchy. Note that I utilize the term 'remain.'

## References

- Allen, P. G (ed.) (1989) *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*. New York: Fawcett Books
- Caraway, N. (1991) *Segregated Sisterhood: Racism and the Politics of American Feminism*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press
- Farris, P. (2005) "Contemporary Native American Women Artists: Visual Expressions of Feminism, the Environment, and Identity". In *Feminist Studies* 31.1 (2005): 106.
- Garbarino, M. S. (1976) *Native American Heritage*. Toronto: Little Brown and Company
- Hundork, S. M. and C. Suzack (2011) *Indigenous Feminism: Theorizing the Issues*. Vancouver: UBC Press
- Hymes, D. (1981) *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You."* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press
- "La Malinche." *Don Quijote* (1996-2016) Available at <http://www.donquijote.org/culture/mexico/history/la-malinche> [Accessed 1.05.2016]
- Lyytinen, M. (2009) *The Pocahontas Myth and Its Deconstruction in Monique Mojica's Play*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press

- Martin, R. (host) (2016) "Canadian Government to Investigate Thousands of Missing Indigenous Women." In *Weekend Edition Sunday*. NPR. WHYY, Philadelphia, 20 Mar. 2016. Radio
- "Native American Marriage.". In *Native American Netroots*. Wordpress, Available at <<http://nativeamericannetroots.net/diary/1084>> [Accessed 27.11.2011]
- Silko, Leslie M. (1996) *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks

## Envisaging a Post-Colonial Theatre: W. B. Yeats and the Cuchulain Cycle of Plays

Ioana MOHOR-IVAN\*

### Abstract:

*Starting from Edward Said's claim that W.B. Yeats's work should be seen as seminal in the process of Ireland's decolonisation, despite the artist's Ascendancy roots and Protestant sympathies, the paper focuses on the Yeatsian theatre as exemplified by the five plays which cluster around the figure of the Celtic hero Cuchulain (On Baile's Strand, The Golden Helmet, At The Hawk's Well, The Only Jealousy of Emer, and The Death of Cuchulain) in order to prove that the hybrid dramatic forms adopted by Yeats, which rework the Celtic myth within Greek and Japanese theatrical models, may be seen as a move away from "the regional nativism" characteristic of much of the Revival writings towards a "radically liberating" (Deane 1990: 5) vision on a "contaminated" culture, characterised by plurality and dialogism. As such, the Cuchulain cycle of plays may be read not only as a reflection of the Yeatsian decolonising project, but also as an early instance of a post-colonial drama, whose hybrid paradigm subverts and reevaluates both imperialist and nationalist assumptions on essentialist notions of identity.*

**Key words:** postcolonial studies, cultural nationalism, Irish theatre, Celtic myth, Noh drama, identity (re)construction

Though most critical accounts of W. B. Yeats's multifaceted work (including not only poetry, but also drama, criticism, essays, journalism, novels and occult writings) acknowledge its link to the Irish cultural nationalism emerging in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, "the nature and extent of Yeats's nationalism are still frequently overlooked or misunderstood in discussions of his work" (Regan 2006: 88). As Seamus Deane remarks in one of his Field Day pamphlets, there seems to be a compulsion to read Yeats's poetry, for example, as mythical and thus disconnected from the wider political and historical context related to Ireland's colonial experience (1984). Similarly, the image of Yeats as an anti-colonial writer who translated political nationalism into the artistic ambition of creating a new cultural identity for his people through the Irish Literary Revival and the founding of the Abbey Theatre, which was to become Ireland's national

---

\* Professor, PhD, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania  
ioana.mohor@ugal.ro

theatre, is often at odds with that of Yeats as a member of the Protestant Ascendancy (a group whose roots are to be found in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries English colonisation of Ireland, and who had since controlled the economic, political, social and cultural life of their adoptive country), openly embracing its elitism in his disdain for an upstart native Catholic order as represented by the emerging Irish middle-class.

In the field of postcolonial studies, the problem of reconciling the contradictions and complexities characterizing both the artist's life as well as his work has often "led to some confusion and uncertainty about whether Yeats can be justifiably labelled an anti-colonialist or anti-imperialist writer" ((Regan 2006: 88). Nevertheless, Edward Said's essay, "Yeats and Decolonisation" (initially published in 1988 in the Field Day collection of pamphlets entitled *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* and incorporated in 1993 in his seminal *Culture and Imperialism*) strongly qualifies Yeats as a decolonizing, resistance writer:

Yeats has now been almost completely assimilated to the canon as well as the discourses of modern English literature, in addition to those of European high modernism. [...] Nevertheless, and despite Yeats's obvious and, I would say, settled presence in Ireland, in British culture and literature, and in European modernism, he does present another fascinating aspect: that of the indisputably great national poet who articulates the experiences, the aspirations, and the vision of a people suffering under the dominion of an offshore power. From this perspective Yeats is a poet who belongs to a tradition not usually considered his, that of the colonial world ruled by European imperialism now – that is, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries bringing to a climactic insurrectionary stage, the massive upheaval of anti-imperialist resistance in the colonies, and of metropolitan anti-imperialist opposition that has been called the age of decolonization. (Said 1990: 69-70)

Yet, in order to reconcile the incongruities evinced by Yeats's cultural nationalism, Said makes an important distinction between two major phases in the artist's life and career: an early one, dominated by his commitment to Irish nationalism, and a late (apolitical) period, characterised solely by aesthetic concerns:

There is, I think, a fairly logical progression then from Yeats's early Gaelicism, with its Celtic preoccupations and themes, to his later systematic mythologies .... For Yeats the overlappings he knew existed between his Irish nationalism and the English cultural heritage that both dominated and empowered him as a writer were bound to cause an overheated tension, and it is the pressure of this urgently political and

secular tension that one may speculate caused him to try to resolve it on a "higher," that is, nonpolitical level. (Said 1990: 80)

However, as Sean M. Donnell makes the case, "describing Yeats as a 'national' poet early in his career and/or as merely an 'aesthetic' poet in his later works risks oversimplifying the relationship between the poet's nationalist commitments and his aesthetic predilections" (2009). Yeats's cultural nationalism is intertwined with his aesthetic ideology, because the two "do not exist in mutually exclusive spheres; rather, they represent commingling spheres of influence within the poet's work" (Donnell 2009).

One artistic corpus where such antithetical elements are conjoined is represented by Yeats's series of five plays that cluster around the figure of the Celtic hero Cuchulain. *On Baile's Strand*, the first of these, was worked and reworked over several years until being published in the 1903 collection *In the Seven Woods: Being Poems Chiefly of the Irish Heroic Age*. The following year it was first produced, being included in the opening bill of the newly-established Abbey Theatre, an enterprise behind which Yeats was a major artisan in keeping with his conscious efforts at building an Irish national drama. The other four plays span the years of revolution which resulted in the establishment of the Irish Free State until shortly before the poet's death in 1939, namely *The Green Helmet* (1910), *At the Hawk's Well* (1916), *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1916) and *The Death of Cuchulain* (1938).

All the plays draw their subject-matter from the various translations of the Ulster or Red Branch cycle of Celtic stories (see Mathelin 1972), of which Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, published in 1902 as a continuous narrative of the tales, ranks as the most important source. As such, they inform what Said considers to be characteristic for Yeats's (as well as other postcolonial writers') "search for authenticity, for a more congenial national origin than that provided by colonial history, for a new pantheon of heroes and (occasionally) heroines, myths and religions" (1990: 79).

In the light of the above, it can be stated that Celtic myth enabled Yeats to forge a new emblem for the nation in the figure of Cuchulain, the principal hero of the Ulster Cycle and the epitome of the Celtic hero, ideally embodying the qualities of a whole people. In addition to this, by resorting to Celtic myth, Yeats also found the means of developing a successful form of theatre in keeping with his often stated principle advocating poetry before the actor, the actor before the scene, and the decorative scene before the realist one, due to his consideration that "the theatre began in ritual and cannot come to its greatness again without recalling words to their ancient

sovereignty" (Yeats quoted in Maxwell 1984: 33). Last but not least important, Yeats's recourse to Celtic material as an origin-inspiring myth through which his nationalist-aesthetic project could be advanced also provided him with the source onto which to sublimate his own personal conflicts and to translate his philosophical system of opposites, exploring contrasts between the physical and spiritual dimensions of life, between sensuality and rationalism, between turbulence and calm, the progression which can result from reconciling them, as well as his belief in the essentially cyclic nature of life and history [1].

For example, in the first play, which follows quite faithfully the original tale, *Aided Oenfhir Aife* (The Violent Death of Aoife's Only Son) in which the hero is led to kill a young man from the rival country of Scotland where Aoife, the warrior queen reigns, and learns too late that the youth was his own son, the age of Cuchulain is specifically changed to that of the forty-year old Yeats, and the hero's unspoken sensitivity to his childlessness may bear comparison to the dramatist's own circumstances. In addition, the play establishes an uncomplicated set of contrasts in character and role between Cuchulain and King Conchubar and their inglorious opposites, the Fool and the Blind Man, each of whom may stand for one aspect in the fourfold division of the self which is modelled on William Blake's symbolic system. Paired off in a dynamic tension of contraries, the four characters correspondingly stand for Energy/Reason/Emotion/Material Senses. The opposing protagonists are also aspects of the conflicting drives within civilisation, freedom vs. order, and aspects of a single personality, id vs. ego (Rees 1971), with the opposition being doubled in the minor characters, who are also ironic projections of Hero and King.

In *The Green Helmet*, which borrows from two separate tales, *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley) and *Fled Bricreann* (Bricru's Feast) to show Cuchulain being awarded the green helmet, the "champion's portion" of the legend and thus becoming the first warrior of Ulster, in the quarrels of the heroes there are references to Synge and to contemporary Irish squabbles. *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, originating in *Serglige Con Chulainn* (Cuchulain's Illness) which portrays the hero torn between his earthly love for Emer and the goddess Fand from the Otherworld, is very different from its source, being influenced by the emotional crisis that Yeats was undergoing at the time, which involved the personalities of his recent bride George (Georgina) Hyde-Lees, Maud Gonne (to whom he has several times proposed marriage), and Gonne's daughter Iseult (who had rejected

his love) who are reflected in the play's female characters. Moreover, there are clear attempts to elaborate in dramatic form some of Yeats's favourite philosophic theories, by dividing the hero's part into Ghost and Figure, with the latter further exchanging personalities function of the mask worn by the actor, and having the choruses touch upon the correspondence between the twenty-eight days of the phases of the moon and the stages of human existence. *The Death of Cuchulain*, based on *Aided Chon Culainn* (The Violent Death of Cuchulain) in which the hero, contending once more alone against the enemies of Ulster, meets his death on the plain of Mag Muirthemne, fastened to a pillar stone, Cuchulain has aged with the playwright, while the aesthetic views which the Old Man expounds satirically in the prologue to the play correspond to those outlined in Yeats's essays.

In each play the original epic material is reduced to a single event, which occurs off-stage or behind a curtain: Cuchulain's fight to death with his son in *Baile's Strand*, his battle against the warrior women led by Aoife in *At the Hawk's Well*, or the cutting off of his head in *The Death of Cuchulain*. While physical action is not entirely dispensed with, the dramatic focus of the plays is internal, in keeping with Yeats's concept of tragedy as "an activity of the souls of the characters, an energy, an eddy of life purified from everything but itself" (Innes 1992: 361). Because the tragic moment is "a moment of intense life" (Styan 1992: 62), drama should achieve a simplification of character and action able to compress past and future into its brief epiphany like a lyrical poem (Maxwell 1984: 40). And the dramatic form which best accommodated Yeats's aesthetic philosophy was the Japanese Noh drama, an aristocratic and ceremonial form of theatre originating in the 14<sup>th</sup>-century, at the heart of which is the expression of intense emotion in a stylised, often repetitious manner. It is a complete art form that employs music, dance and mime to augment the poetic content; the intense emotion portrayed concentrates upon idea rather than personality (Taylor 1976: 63).

*At the Hawk's Well* is the first play which is directly influenced by the Japanese Noh, though the choral figures of *On Baile's Strand* may be seen to anticipate its formula. Here Yeats moves away from conveying meaning essentially through words, as the play enforces the elements of song, movement and ritual on a simple narrative line of Yeats's own invention. The Three Musicians whose prologue introduces the inner play ceremonially unfold a black cloth which shows the image of a golden hawk on a patterned screen which is directly related to the crouching figure of

the Guardian of the Well on the ground. The triangle formed by the trio of Musicians is paralleled by the triangle made up with the entrance of the other two characters of the play: the Old Man and the Young Man (Cuchulain in his youth.). The two are strangers and opposites: one is young, the other is old; one is brave, the other one nervous; one is dashing and confident, the other one passive and bitter, but underneath there is a deep likeness between them. Both of them wear abstracting masks and move like marionettes, both of them are seekers of the immortality that the water of the well is said to confer to those drinking it, and both are mesmerised by the Guardian's dance which starts once the dry well briefly fills. With movement set in, the second triangle disintegrates as Cuchulain is deluded into following the divine dancer off-stage, while the Old Man, lulled to sleep, is concealed by the unfolded cloth. The trio of Musicians remains to sing of heroic and mundane fates, reinforcing the meanings that the play tried to convey not solely by dialogue and songs, but through clusters of visual images and movement together with the sounds of gong, drum and zither which took up the burden when the characters were mute. The symbolic abstraction and balletic structure of the play replace action by ritual, restoring drama to its original power, able to evoke a sacred presence with all the devices of ceremony, dance, poetry and scenery (Hinchliffe 1977: 21).

The Noh offered Yeats a form for what he envisaged as the *anti-self* (Bentley 1979: 337) of the contemporary theatre dominated by realism and the objective and materialistic values of the modern world, as well as an image of nobility and impersonality which he could counterpoise to that of faction which seemed to him to characterise the contemporary scene. Nevertheless, as Seamus Deane remarks, despite its esoteric ambitions, its aristocratic gestures and its select audience, at no point did Yeats's career as a dramatist display any rupture between the sense of Irish national life and the desire to write plays (Deane 1985: 115).

If in the Noh plays one can detect his "desire to reshape Ireland through the appeal of a revived formality of stage manner which would represent a new formality of social behaviour and relationship" (Deane 1985: 117), the Cuchulain cycle of plays may be seen as Yeats's conscious attempt to supply a new self-image for the nation, predicated upon the idea of heroism and individuality, in a celebration of the wilful spirit, which, nevertheless should submit to its destined end. The Cuchulain of *On Baile's Strand* is the proud, passionate and self-assertive spirit which is being tamed by the crafty Conchubar and forced to subordinate his will to the

king's authority. But, in accepting the oath of allegiance, Cuchulain alienates himself from his heroic part to become one who fulfils a role imposed by Conchubar which will compel him fight and kill his son against his instincts. Maddened by grief at his loss, Cuchulain will then attack the waves, engaging in a battle which cannot be won, in a wild expression of self-destructive lamentation. *The Green Helmet* shows the hero offering up his life in order to save the people from the destruction threatened by the mythical Red Man. However, the motivation for this act lies solely in Cuchulain's self-gratification and expression and not in the need to suppress the individual according to the needs of his community. In *At the Hawk's Well* the choice is different from that in the previous play. Urged by the Old Man to remain by the well and accept the modest, unheroic fulfilment of settled life or else the curse of the goddess would condemn him to a ceaseless wondering combative life during which, at one time, he might be driven mad and kill his own children, Cuchulain chooses action, embracing his heroic destiny in a decision to use his life as he wills and not give in to a deceitful goddess's whim. *The Death of Cuchulain* presents an ageing Cuchulain, bound by his years and deeds to mortality, who nevertheless decides to embrace his destiny to the end, going to battle to meet the death preordained by the Morrighu at the pillar-stone. Yet the hero does not meet a glorious death in battle, nor is he killed by Aoife, who has appeared from his past as if intending to avenge the death of their son. It is ironically the contemptible Blind Man from *On Baile's Strand* who feels his way up the dying hero's body and beheads him for sordidly materialistic reasons. While Cuchulain's mode of death is an indictment of materialistic man, it also casts a mordant final eye on the heroic legacy, and whether or not this is repudiated is left in doubt. The climax of the play is represented by Emer's dance in which she moves as if in adoration and triumph before Cuchulain's severed head, as if the dancer could resurrect the hero. The scene then changes to a modern fair, where street-singers sing a song that "The harlot sang to the beggar-man" (Yeats 1964: 241), which restates the myth and thus bridges the heroic and the contemporary worlds, even if the latter one is a debased variant of the first.

Throughout the Cuchulain cycle of plays, Yeats had moulded his protagonist as an idealised model of heroic individuality, convinced that it was precisely that quality which was marginalised and threatened with extinction in the emergent nation. It is true that one reading of Yeats's mythological plays sees them as an attempt at recovering the spiritual dimension in the life of a people who had been transformed into the

materialistic middle classes of the Anglicised commercial cities, and the main battle fought through his drama becomes that between the Celtic sensitivity and imagination and the Saxon calculating materialism. The polarity is apparent throughout his work: Cuchulain and Conchubar, Blind Man and the Fool, Subjective and Objective Man. But, at the same time, Yeats's construction of Cuchulain may be read as part of his effort to counterpoise his ideal of an aristocratic order, merged with his own Protestant Ascendancy ethos, to the actuality of the "new class", represented by a nationalist bourgeois Catholic order, who had become the leaders of the "people-nation", usurping its Anglo-Irish meritocracy. This seems to do justice to Said's assertion according to which Yeats's early "liberationist and Utopian revolutionism" is "belied and even cancelled out by his later reactionary politics" (1990: 89).

Yet, rather than considering the Cuchulain plays as progressive attempts at separating the personal from the political and withdrawing from the revolutionary and anti-colonial camp ascribed by Said, Yeats's dramatic experiments in casting the Irish literary tradition in the complex staging model offered by Noh may be seen as a consciously undertaken challenge at finding new forms of cultural expression that could transcend both colonial and nationalist borders in a "contaminated" space, where the cultural interchanges between the Celtic and Japanese traditions intersect and interact with the personal, the political and the aesthetic, continuously redefining each other, ultimately creating a hybrid theatrical model through which oppositional structures become ambivalent, enabling thus a pluralistic and dialogic vision of identity.

Identity and authenticity are the two core concepts upon which the decolonisation process rests. As Tim Gauthier explains, "in response to the colonial suppression of native identity, the nationalist project seeks to discover an 'essence,' something that will define what constitutes 'being Irish.'" Yet, one should always be alert to "the tenuous nature of its construction," due to the fact that "this authenticity is itself contingent upon definitions of self, language, and history" (Gauthier 2002: 337). As such, Yeats's early engagement with the cultural nationalism of the Revival may be seen to mark the beginnings of this process, as a direct translation of the nationalist drive to construct a pristine identity by an immersion into Celtic myth and the precolonial past. Nevertheless, his subsequent treatment of the same mythic material in the polysemic and hybrid matrix of his Cuchulain cycle of plays indexes the tensions and uncertainties inherent in maintaining any essentializing view of identity, at the same

time at it records, in symbolic form, both the larger-scale historical forces and the heterogeneity of “national” forms of affiliation.

If Edward Said’s essay placed Yeats’s achievement at an early stage of the process of full decolonisation, considering that “he stopped short of imagining full political liberation he might have aspired toward” (1990: 94), his Cuchulain cycle of plays might prove the opposite. Anticipating “a later and alternative internationalism” (McAteer 2010: 195), it may be read not only as a reflection of the Yeatsian decolonising project, but also as an instance of a “radically liberating” (Deane 1990: 5) vision of a post-colonial theatre. Seen as “a form of cultural criticism and cultural critique” (Slemon 1987: 14) and as a textual/cultural expression of “resistance to colonisation”, such a theatre includes “acts performed for the continuation and/or regeneration of the colonised (and sometimes pre-contact) communities”, as well as “acts performed with the awareness of, and sometimes the incorporation of, post-contact forms”, at the same time at which it stresses the “provisionality of post-colonial identities” by situating itself “within the hybrid forms of various cultural systems” (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996: 3, 11). Such a reading may nuance the understanding of Yeats’s complex role in the history of Irish identity quests in a (post)colonial context.

#### Notes

[1] A more detailed discussion of the individual plays included in the Yeatsian Cuchulain cycle is presented in Ioana Mohor-Ivan, *The Celtic Paradigm and Modern Irish Writing*, Galați, Galați University Press, 2014, pp. 90-103.

#### References

- Bentley, Eric (ed.) (1979) *The Theory of the Modern Stage: An Introduction to Modern Theatre and Drama*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Deane, Seamus (1984) *Heroic Styles: The Tradition of an Idea*. Field Day Pamphlet no. 4. Derry: Field Day.
- Deane, Seamus (1985) “O’Casey and Yeats: Exemplary Dramatists”. In *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature, 1880-1980*. London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 108-122.
- Deane, Seamus (1990) “Introduction”. In *Nationalism, Colonialism and Culture*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 3-19.
- Donnell, Sean (2009) “‘Between the Upper and the Nether Millstone’: W.B. Yeats, Oppositional Gyres, and the Founding of the Irish Nation State”. Online. Available at: [https://www.elcamino.edu/faculty/sdonnell/yeats\\_&\\_postcolonialism.htm](https://www.elcamino.edu/faculty/sdonnell/yeats_&_postcolonialism.htm) [accessed 11.04.2016]
- Gauthier, Tim (2000) “Authenticity and Hybridity in the Post Colonial Moment: Brian Friel’s Field Day Plays”. In *A Companion to Brian Friel*. Edited by

- Richard Harp and Robert T. Evans, West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 335-368.
- Gilbert, Helen and Joanne Tompkins (1996) *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hinchliffe, Arthur P. (1977) *Modern Verse Drama*. London: Methuen.
- Innes, Christopher (1992) *Modern British Drama: 1890-1990*. Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press.
- Mathelin, Pascale (1972) "Irish Myth in the Theatre of W. B. Yeats". In *Aspects of the Irish Theatre*. Edited by Patrick Rafroidi et al., Paris: Éditions Universitaire, 163-171.
- Maxwell, D. S. (1984) *A Critical History of Modern Irish Drama: 1891-1980*. Cambridge et al: Cambridge University Press.
- McAteer, Michael (2010) *Yeats and European Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mohor-Ivan, Ioana (2014) *The Celtic Paradigm and Modern Irish Writing*. Galati: Galati University Press.
- Moore, John Rees (1971) *Masks of Love and Death: Yeats as Dramatist*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Regan, Stephen (2006) "W.B. Yeats: Irish Nationalism and Post-Colonial Theory". In *Nordic Irish Studies*, Vol. 5, 87-99.
- Said, Edward (1990) "Yeats and Decolonization". In *Nationalism, Colonialism and Culture*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 69-95.
- Slemon, Stephen (1987) "Monuments of empire: allegory/counter-discourse/postcolonial writing". In *Kunapipi: Journal of Postcolonial Writing and Culture*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1-16.
- Styan, J. L. (1992) *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*. Vol. 2. *Symbolism, Surrealism and the Absurd*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Richard (1976) *The Drama of W. B. Yeats: Irish Myth and Japanese Noh*. Yale: Yale University Press.
- Yeats, W. B. (1964) *Selected Plays*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan.

# Disempowering the Translator as Intercultural Mediator. The Age of the New Media

Alexandru PRAISLER\*

## Abstract

*Marketing quality translations in view of advertising local cultures has become increasingly difficult in the context of the omnipresent electronic means of getting the message across. Today, intercultural mediation via translation has added the machine element to the traditional actors involved in the procedure. Machine translation – whether rule based, transfer based, dictionary based, example based, interlingual or statistical – is ideally intended to assist human translators, yet it frequently seems to be the only preferred alternative in accessing texts produced in a foreign language, bypassing the services of a qualified translator, especially for time and money related reasons. Under the circumstances, the tremendous threats that machine translation poses to the quality of the translated text, especially if it is a literary one, need special consideration. Along these lines, the present paper focuses on a case study presupposing the translation of a famous poem by the Romanian nineteenth century poet Mihai Eminescu through Google Translate, comparing and contrasting it with an authorized version by a nineteen-year old translator-genius who died in the 1977 earthquake, published posthumously. It is available in print, as well as on the internet – as written text and as subtitling to poetry reading.*

**Key words:** culture, literature, communication, mediation, machine translation

## Introduction

In the third millennium, translating across cultures necessarily involves the World Wide Web, as well as intricate digital support. The internet, which now governs global communication, has the potential of allowing translators a space and a voice of their own, on condition that they adapt to and accept the norms of the new digital environment and format of hypertext interface. The pluses are mainly linked to the fact that the latter allow effective intervention and creative interaction, thus increasing the visibility of the act of translating. The minuses are obvious in the notions of ‘original text’ (undergoing a process of multiple reproductions) and of

---

\* Translator, Dr. “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Romania.  
alexandru.praisler@ugal.ro

authorship (with the translator possibly remaining anonymous) thus being deconstructed.

Word processing is now interactive (some would even say intrusive), in the sense that the built in spelling or grammar checkers readily available provide unsolicited intervention. The solicited aid may come under the form of word count, proofing language options, bilingual or explanatory dictionaries/ thesauruses, not to mention the various tools obtainable for checking and adapting the form/ layout of each document in the making (from fonts and indenting to headers and footers, bibliography styles, citation insertions etc.). Additional help is also available, on condition that the translator plans ahead and compiles databases for future reference and use, or that he employs specialized, professional software like terminology managers, indexers and/ or concordancers. Although assisted by the computer, the human translator remains central to the whole process whereby a source text, rooted in a source culture, becomes a coherent target text, meaningful within a target culture.

In machine translation, on the other hand, the human element is stereotypically backgrounded, to say the least, with negative repercussions on the translated end product and on the associated conveyance chain. Despite the myth of speedy and efficient intercultural communication by means of machine translation software, all the latter is capable of achieving is lexical substitution, grammatical appropriation (from the morphological and the syntactical, to the stylistic, semantic and pragmatic) being either partly carried forth or altogether out of the question. In short, machine translation software alone cannot generate quality linguistic and cultural equivalence. Although it is true that numerous efforts currently go into the compiling of representative corpora in view of aiding the translation process from one natural language to another, "it is quite striking that so far there remains a considerable gulf between theoretical MT research projects and commercially available practical systems." (Somers 2001: 148). Thus, the professional human translator's presence is absolutely necessary. Not only does he have to intervene as post-editor or to use the resulting rough draft as a form of pre-translation (Hutchins 1999), but his contribution is essential to designing machines and software, as well as to checking the existing, usually problematic, corpora which are freely accessible on the internet, then to providing the badly needed correct corpora, useful for future reference/ translations by non-professionals.

The machine translation system designs which have been in use along the years have been classified as: the first generation or direct

translation type (principally rule based); the second generation or indirect translation type (the interlingua, the transfer based and the corpus based systems); the third generation or hybrid type (combining the early rule based approach with the latter day corpus based one, bringing interlingual features in support of transfer systems and transfer components to interlingua approaches, adding probabilistic data and stochastic methods to rule based systems and rule based grammatical categories/ features to statistics- and example based systems, etc.). (Hutchins 1999: 432-433) Today, translators are working with linguists and computer scientists to develop

a machine that discovers the rules of translation automatically from a large corpus of translated text, by pairing the input and output of the translation process, and learning from the statistics over the data (Koehn 2010: xi).

From among the existing translation machines exploitable, the most popular seems to be Google Translate ([translate.google.com/](http://translate.google.com/)). In a subtitled promotion video inserted on one of the company's official sites, it is advertised as "a free tool that enables you to translate sentences, documents and even whole websites instantly", and its mechanism is detailed upon in simple, colloquial terms:

But how exactly does it work? While it may seem that we have a roomful of bilingual elves working for us, in fact all of our translations come from computers. These computers use a process called 'statistical machine translation' – which is just a fancy way to say that our computers generate translations based on patterns found in large amounts of text.

Catch words like 'free' and 'instantly', together with the self-ironic tone adopted in the explanatory ad above aid the marketing policy, to such an extent that they manage to convince people to employ the product (see the large numbers of users worldwide), regardless of the downsides openly admitted to by Google Incorporated which, though placed at the top of the same page, are written in grey, and are thus less attractive than the colourful link to the mini-video previously referred to: "not all translations will be perfect, and accuracy can vary across languages." ([https://support.google.com/translate/answer/2534525?hl=en&ref\\_topic=2534563](https://support.google.com/translate/answer/2534525?hl=en&ref_topic=2534563)).

Nevertheless, trust is invested in the system, whose capacities, once advertised, are taken for granted, as is the translator underneath (replaced by the derogatory 'elf'), without deeper consideration of the fact that the more natural and readily-available the translation, the more complex its

underlying mechanisms, the more highly trained the translator. It follows that, taking on intercultural tasks and multimedia features, the translation supporting the system (both as process and as product) demands that constant changes in its theory and improvements in its practice should be made to avoid obsolescence.

Moreover, the automatic translation system is conferred visibility through The Google Translate Help Center page, while the human translator remains invisible. The machine component is thus empowered, leaving the medium/ mediator disempowered, which unfavourably impacts on the translated text. Although it would make sense to say that “the better the translation, the more successful the medium and the more invisible the mediator”, practically “the medium is self-annulling and in pragmatic translation it is bad rather than good translation which makes the medium transparent.” (Venuti 2010: 27)

Transparency and invisibility in translation do not serve intercultural mediation well. Non-critical, technical service providing needs replacement by the critical, deliberate enterprise of visible translation – a vocational act sustained by intensive training (Valero-Garcés 2006) which has the potential of resisting the dominant Anglo-American tradition of reductive domestication operated by intrusive power structures and effacing cultural difference (Venuti1995). If machine translation systems were to render the backing translators visible and if the latter, in turn, were to invest their translations with a critical approach towards cultural otherness expressed in language, then users would be allowed the possibility of informed choice based on professional results, the endless replication of random questionable translation efforts available at present would be avoided, and communication across cultures would actually be facilitated.

### **Case study**

In the particular case of literary translation, intercultural mediation asks for supplementary support, which may only be provided by critical, visible involvement. Marketing local literatures and facilitating access to local cultures has been demonstrated as the most challenging mission a translator undertakes, which, naturally, cannot be matched by simple machine translation, whose end result is frequently misleading when not downright impossible to decipher. The example chosen to emphasise the widening gap between literary human translation and machine translation is that of *To the Star* signed by Corneliu Popescu and *The Star* by Google

Translate – based on *La steaua* (1886), by the Romanian romantic poet Mihai Eminescu ([romanianvoice.com/poezii/poezii/steaua.php](http://romanianvoice.com/poezii/poezii/steaua.php)).

Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889) is one of the most representative and highly regarded figures in Romanian literature. The country's national poet, Eminescu has published memorable works which capture and promote the essence and the spirit of Romanianness within the broader frames of universal aesthetic and philosophical models which define his art. His sources of inspiration are Romanian history, culture and civilisation, while his poetic diction revisits the literary language of the past and is resonant of all the Romanian dialects or regional speech patterns in practice throughout the three traditional provinces of Moldova, Wallachia and Transylvania. Although widely read, studied and acclaimed in Romania, Mihai Eminescu and his complex vision remain partly unknown to the international public. The exponent of a literature produced in a minority language, elsewhere he may only be accessed through translation. Eminescu has been and is constantly being translated into numerous languages (from English, French, German and Spanish to Urdu and Chinese). From among the translators having contributed to bringing Romanian literature (at its best with Mihai Eminescu) under the spotlight and thus to de-marginalising it, are Petre Grimm, Dimitrie Cuclin, Leon Levițchi and Andrei Bantaș – renowned philosophers, linguists and university professors who have significantly imprinted Romanian culture and education during the twentieth century.

A disciple and collaborator of Andrei Bantaș, Corneliu M. Popescu has translated a collection of sixty-nine poems by Eminescu (published in 1978, one year after his death at the age of nineteen), which has been commended by all, specialists and non-specialists alike, at home and abroad. In 1983, The Poetry Society of Great Britain has established, in his memory, The Popescu Prize, awarded biennially for a volume of poetry translated from a European language into English ([poetrysociety.org.uk/content/competitions/popescu/](http://poetrysociety.org.uk/content/competitions/popescu/)). The young translator's contribution to making Mihai Eminescu's voice heard throughout the world is exceptional, firstly considering that he operates in a foreign language – while translators are generally encouraged to translate into their native language, which is the one assumed to be mastered to perfection – and, secondly, bearing in mind that he demonstrates literary skill and cultural sensitivity. Under the circumstances, replacing a translation by Corneliu Popescu with a machine generated text is baffling, but it happens. The table below parallels the two extremes.

	<b>Original text</b>	<b>Human translation</b>	<b>Machine translation</b>
1	La steaua care-a răsărit	So far it is athwart the blue	The star that has risen
2	E-o cale-atât de lungă,	To where won star appears	E- way - so long ,
3	Că mii de ani i-au trebuit	That for its light to reach our view	That thousands of years they had
4	Luminii să ne- ajungă.	Has needed thousand years.	Light to reach us.
5	Poate de mult s-a stins în drum	Maybe those ages gone it shed	Perhaps more quenched way
6	În depărtări albastre,	Its glow, then languished in the skies,	Blue in the distance ,
7	Iar raza ei abia acum	Yet only now its rays have sped	And only now its radius
8	Luci vederii noastre.	Their journey to our eyes.	Luci our vision.
9	Icoana stelei ce-a murit	The icon of the star that died	Icon star that died
10	Încet pe cer se suie:	Slowly the vault ascended;	Slowly the sky climb :
11	Era pe când nu s-a zărit,	Time was ere it could first be spied,	It was when he saw not ,
12	Azi o vedem, și nu e.	We see now what is ended.	Today we see, and it's not.
13	Tot astfel când al nostru dor	So is it when our love's aspire	So when our longing

14	Pieri în noapte- adâncă,	Is hid beneath night's bowl,	Pieri - deep in the night ,
15	Lumina stinsului amor	The gleam of its extinguished fire	Light off amor
16	Ne urmărește încă.	Enkindles yet our soul.	We aim yet.

*La steaua*

by Mihai Eminescu

*To the Star*

Translated by  
Corneliu M. Popescu

*The Star*

By Google Translate

### ***La steaua***

A well-balanced, perfectly symmetrical metaphysical poem which juxtaposes the cosmic and the human spaces to interrogate the nature of being, *La steaua* foregrounds the relativity of perspective induced by the intricate game of distance, time, life, death, love and memory. Stanza one disclaims the apparent immediacy and proximity of a rising star by emphasising the extended duration of light travel. Stanza two reinforces the confusion by focusing on the paradox of the delayed projection of an image which is no longer there. Stanza three closes the cycle, portraying the journey back (from the earth to the heavens) and the associated metamorphosis (from the material to the spectral). Lastly, stanza four transfers the process to the inner level of feeling and thought, highlighting the correspondences.

Although published more than a hundred years ago, the poem does not make use of archaic language. Neither does it employ an extremely formal diction. On the contrary, its complex content of ideas is expressed in every day terms, so that the main notions stay with the reader just as the memory lingers on with the poetic persona. The inversions, images, symbols and metaphors employed are simple in themselves, posing no actual threat for the translator. The real difficulties in finding an appropriate English equivalent lie mostly in word order, meter and rhyme scheme.

### *To the star*

Corneliu Popescu's translation of *La steaua* has been uploaded on the internet – both as text and as subtitle frames – by various people, most of whom, interestingly, are Romanians living abroad, in English speaking countries. This in itself is symptomatic for the rising awareness of each nation's cultural potential and for the ensuing necessity of marketing quality artistic products across frontiers via translation.

In *To the Star*, Corneliu Popescu renders the content of the original faithfully, but operates changes at the level of linguistic register. His version is in formal, slightly archaic English, probably considered as better illustrating the poem's philosophical complexity: see 'athwart' = across (line 1), 'won' = dwelling (line 2), 'languished' = weaken, decline (line 6), 'ere' = before (line 11), 'aspire' = rise up, soar (line 13) and 'enkindles' = sets on fire (line 16).

The same types of figures of speech as those present in the source text are inserted, though context dependant variations are observable: inversion – 'so far it is...' (line 1), 'for its light to reach our view has needed...' (lines 3-4), 'only now its rays have sped...' (line 7), 'slowly the vault ascended...' (line 10); image – 'light' (line 3), 'glow' (line 6), 'rays' (line 7); symbol – 'star' (lines 2, 9), 'skies' (line 6), 'journey' (line 8), 'eyes' (line 8), 'icon' (line 9), 'fire' (line 15); metaphor – 'the blue' (line 1), 'vault' (line 10), 'night's bowl' (line 14), 'extinguished fire' (line 15).

Word order is disrupted by the deliberate inversions meant for emphasis (as shown above), but in translation it already poses problems due to the different grammatical norms in Romanian and English. The Romanian language allows the construction of clauses without a subject, while English does not. The original subject elliptical constructions are rendered by using the impersonal 'it' or by introducing personal/ relative pronouns and nouns ('we', 'what', 'time'): 'E-o cale-atât de lungă' (line 2) was translated as 'So far *it* is...' (line 1), inversion included; 'Poate de mult s-a stins în drum' (line 5), became 'Maybe those ages gone *it* shed/ Its glow...' (lines 5-6); 'Era pe când nu s-a zărit' (line 11) was turned into '*Time* was ere *it* could first be spied' (line 11); 'Azi o vedem, și nu e.' (line 12) has as equivalent '*We* see now *what* is ended.' (line 12).

Meter and rhyme scheme add further challenges to the translation of poetry, with faithfulness to the source text necessary in preserving the overall specificity of style and structure. Eminescu's ode follows the French prosody (with Romanian being a Romance language). It is written in syllabic verse, with rhythm based on the eight syllables per line. Its meter is

classical iambic, based on short-long syllable pairs. It has end stopped lines and an ABAB rhyming pattern.

Popescu's translation, on the other hand, abides by the rules of English (Germanic) versification. It is written in accentual-syllabic verse, with rhythm based on both the eight syllables and on the stresses in each line. Its meter, specific to languages with non-phonemic orthography, is based on stressed-unstressed syllable pairs. It has run on lines and preserves the ABAB rhyming pattern. The double jeopardy is overcome by choosing to maintain the fixed features of prosody (number of syllables and rhyming scheme), while assuming creativity resulting from the free play of replacing the Romance element with the Germanic one.

### *The star*

The Google translation of the famous Romanian poem by Mihai Eminescu – *The star* – has one quality only: on the whole, it is in contemporary English and has an informal diction, which makes it easily accessible to all. Oddly enough, however, the formal 'quenched' and the scientific 'radius' appear (lines 5 and 7 respectively), with no perfect correspondence of the former in the original and as mistranslation of the latter: 's-a stins' = went out, was extinguished; 'raza' = ray, not radius.

As regards style and prosody, all rules are broken. The only surviving tropes are two visual images – 'light' (line 4), 'blue' (line 6) – and three symbols – 'star' (lines 1, 9), 'icon' (line 9), sky (line 10). Inversion still occurs in 'Blue in the distance' (line 6), 'And only now its radius' (line 8) and 'Slowly the sky climb' (line 10), not necessarily dictated by the Romanian pattern. In terms of word order, the machine has generally identified ellipsis and has introduced surrogate subjects, but with no regard for meaning transfer – e.g. 'We aim yet' (line 16). Meter, rhythm and rhyme are totally overlooked.

The most cumbersome remains the formal component. There are instances of Romanian lexical items being taken up as such: 'E' = is, exists (line 2), 'Luci' = gleamed, glowed, shone (line 8), 'Pieri' = disappeared, vanished (line 14) and 'amor' = love (line 15). Furthermore, the editing is incorrect: dashes are wrongly introduced – 'E- way - so long,' (line 2), 'Pieri - deep in the night,' (line 14); spaces follow punctuation marks – 'long,' (line 2), 'us.' (line 4), 'distance ,' (line 6), 'vision .' (line 8), 'climb : ' (line 10), 'not ,' (line 11), 'see ,' (line 12) and 'night ,' (line 14).

Semantically empty, *The star* only has the appearance of a text and bears a slight resemblance with a four stanza poem. On a small scale, its

lexical units and its phrases serve reference and denotation purposes, yet its sentences and larger units of discourse signify nothing. For instance, if the phrase 'in the distance' (line 6) makes sense, the sentence 'Perhaps more quenched way/ Blue in the distance' (lines 5-6) does not. Language seems to have exploded, indeed for no artistic reason, and the poem has been turned into a collection of graphemes and an amalgamation of languages which discourages the reader, blocking out representation and communication.

## Conclusions

What the case study primarily shows is that the difference between machine translation and human translation lies in that the former is a clumsy single-level conversion from source language to target language, whereas the latter is a complex three-level act of intercultural mediation. This is achieved thorough knowledge of the foreign language (level one: enabling), through bringing cultural apprehension into play and adjusting the message to the target audience (level two: facilitation/ localisation) and through providing a message which is both coherent in the target language and culture, and carries the specificities of the source language/ culture (level three: adaptation) (O'Hagan and Ashworth 2002: 74-76).

In effect, disempowering the translator as intercultural mediator, the new media interferes with the reader's engagement with the cultural substratum of the source text by limiting the experience to an outsider's approximation of the inside world beneath the language. It totally disregards the fact that

Language constructs the world through naming it, and constructs the concepts through which we understand life and the world. Thus different languages represent the world in different ways, and speakers of one language will understand and experience the world in ways peculiar to that language and differently to the ways of speakers of a different language (O'Shaughnessy 1999: 32).

Additionally, the new media is incapable of capturing the combinations and permutations of linguistic elements occurring in each text and carrying traces of subjectivity and/ or intentionality.

Each particular form of linguistic expression in a text – wording, syntactic option etc. – has its reason. There are always different ways of saying the same thing, and they are not random, accidental alternatives. Differences

in expression carry ideological distinctions (and thus differences in representation) (Fowler 1991: 4).

Such difficulties in encoding and decoding representation raise even more provocations where literary texts are concerned. Literature adds artistic technique and intertextual references to the puzzle, opening it up to multiple readings, varying interpretations and possible in-depth interactions with the texture beyond the structure. Thus, the translation of a literary text is ultimately a visible rewriting, a specialized and professional enterprise for the relatively few highly trained, competent and talented people in the branch.

These demands cannot be made on machine translation systems. Even the most versatile translation software, still to be developed, will never be able to serve cultural marketing goals entirely without input from the human actor. To minimize the threat of free, instant, effortless but poor machine translations circulating on the World Wide Web and not to endanger the future of quality translation as intercultural mediation, the idea that machine translation systems are nothing but tools must be reiterated and the contribution of the human translator must be advertised. Hence, conferring visibility to and encouraging his taking part in designing software, raising awareness regarding his role in adaptation, and soliciting more critical annotations to existing or subsequent translations are the sensible strategies to be adopted.

## References

- Fowler, R. (1991) *Language in the News. Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledge
- Hutchins, W. J. (1995) "Machine Translation: A Brief History". In *Concise History of the Language Sciences: from the Sumerians to the Cognitivists*. Edited by E. F. K. Koerner and R. E. Asher. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1995, pp. 431-445
- Koehn, P. (2010) *Statistical Machine Translation*, UK: Cambridge University Press
- O'Hagan, M.; D. Ashworth (2002) *Translation-mediated Communication in a Digital World*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- O'Shaughnessy, M. (1999) *Media and Society*. Australia: Oxford University Press
- Somers, H. L. (2001) "Machine Translation, Methodology". In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. Edited by M. Baker, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 143-149
- Valero-Garcés, C. (2006) "Mediation as Translation or Translation as Mediation? Widening the Translator's Role in a new Multicultural Society". Available at <http://www.translationdirectory.com/article324.htm> [last accessed on February 15, 2016]

Venuti, L. (1995) *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London: Routledge

Venuti, L. (2010) *Translation: A Textbook*. London: Routledge

### **Sites**

[http://www.gabrielditu.com/eminescu/to\\_star.asp](http://www.gabrielditu.com/eminescu/to_star.asp) [last accessed on February 15, 2016]

<http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/competitions/popescu/> [last accessed on February 15, 2016]

<http://www.romanianvoice.com/poezii/poezii/steaua.php> [last accessed on February 15, 2016]

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw\\_jrkN5U3s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw_jrkN5U3s) [last accessed on February 15, 2016]

<https://support.google.com/translate/#topic=2534563> [last accessed on February 15, 2016]

[https://support.google.com/translate/answer/2534525?hl=en&ref\\_topic=2534563](https://support.google.com/translate/answer/2534525?hl=en&ref_topic=2534563) [last accessed on February 15, 2016]

<https://translate.google.com/> [last accessed on February 15, 2016]

[https://www.google.ro/?gws\\_rd=cr&ei=mAqBUv6RHqOE4ASZ0YCICA#q=google+translate](https://www.google.ro/?gws_rd=cr&ei=mAqBUv6RHqOE4ASZ0YCICA#q=google+translate) [last accessed on February 15, 2016]

# The Father's Image in Julia Kavanagh's *Queen Mab*

Alina PINTILII\*

## Abstract

*Recent research on the Victorian father concentrates on dismantling the "stern father" stereotype, proving that nineteenth-century men were more concerned with their children than formerly thought. The unfavourable modern views on this subject can be traced back to the image of the father as a tyrannical patriarch that was traditional during the first half of the nineteenth century; and that was gradually replaced by another negative stereotype – that of the absent father, as a result of numerous changes which undermined the paternal role. In reality, however, fathering largely depended on context, and therefore it could not be ascribed to any clichéd or prototypical image. In terms of their representations of fatherhood, nineteenth-century novels are varied; while part of them reinforce the stern Victorian father stereotype, others challenge it by providing examples of paternal absenteeism or of other, even positive, images. Of the latter category is Julia Kavanagh's *Queen Mab*, which depicts John Ford primarily as an absent father with regard to his own sons, who still retains some traits characteristic of the authoritarian parent, and, additionally, as a fond father to the adopted child. The aim of this paper is to outline the artistic means and devices employed in the novel to create such a complex and original portrait of the Victorian father. With this purpose in view, special attention is paid to the way the character under study and his relationships with his children are drawn.*

**Key words:** *Victorian father, parental absenteeism, fond fatherhood, stereotypes, prototypes*

Julia Kavanagh's *Queen Mab* is a triple-decker novel published in 1863 that tells the story of an unfortunate middle-class man, John Ford, who lives in a shabby house in London with his apathetic wife and their three sons. One day, he finds an orphan girl left at the door of his house and adopts her, discovering five hundred pounds attached to her cloak. The money is invested and he becomes rich, but not happy, because of the awareness that he is an accomplice of the men who have faked the girl's death to inherit her property as next heirs. The sense of guilt urges him to find out the truth in order to return Mabel her inheritance, but also to take special care of her. Thus, a close attachment develops between Mr Ford and the orphan child,

---

\* PhD Candidate, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, rewola66@yahoo.com

while his own children are disregarded and often treated unfairly by him. The boys grow up and immigrate to Australia for better jobs, and their father travels much to obtain sufficient proof of the foundling girl's fraudulence, but many years pass before he manages to right Mabel and restore her property. There is a great part of the novel dealing with Mabel's romantic love that is omitted in this summary, because it has nothing to do with the topic of parent-child relationships explored in this article.

From all family roles identified in this novel, the greatest focus is placed upon fatherhood, partly because one of the major characters, John Ford, is a father, special attention being paid to his relationships with his children, and partly because the maternal figure is slightly displayed in the novel. Mrs Ford's isolation from her family and her subsequent death automatically place all her responsibilities on her husband, increasing his importance as father. However, he fails to fulfil this role, and the father's image that the novel constructs departs from the Victorian standard of good fathering, representing a complex mixture of paternal prototypes existing among the mid-nineteenth-century middle-class. Among them, the prevailing pattern is that of the absent parent that was stereotypical in the period between 1850 and 1910. However, two other types of fathers suggested by John Tosh can be to some extent identified in John Ford's fathering, as he is an absent, but harsh parent to his three sons, and a fond father to the adopted girl.

John Ford's duality in his attitudes towards the children he is responsible for, even if strange and uncommon, can be explained by means of his paradoxical personality. The image of this character is constructed by the repeated use of various sets of antithetical features. Practically each time when one of his characteristics is mentioned, it is followed by its opposite: "She now saw her husband as he was – good-natured, obstinate, foolish, and intellectual" (QM 30, vol. 1); "though his *kind heart* could win him friends, his *irritable temper* would allow him to keep none" (QM 31, vol. 1, added emphasis); "his old hospitable feeling rising above his new stinginess" (QM 151, vol. 2); "He was selfish in little things, pettish, irritable, and despotic by fits. His kind heart, his sincere love could not soften a woman like Alicia" (QM 32, vol. 1). Antagonism describes every aspect of Mr Ford's identity, being easily noticeable in his physical appearance as well:

He was tall and sharp-featured, with good-natured though obstinate brown eyes, and a weak nether lip, that betrayed temper as well as weakness. His high, broad forehead had intellectual claims, but it was both

feeble and haughty. His look, his smile, offered the same contradictions. There was shrewdness in the one, and kindness in the other; but Mr Ford's look was not always intelligent, and his smile was often sarcastic, when it was not envious. He was, indeed, made up of the contrasts which are found in unsuccessful men, the result of broken aims and ever disappointed hopes, and unsuccessful was written in his whole aspect (QM 13, vol. 1).

This descriptive passage abounds in adjectives and nouns with negative and positive connotations that are embedded in the given text in opposite pairs (e.g. good-natured versus obstinate, shrewdness versus kindness). These combinations of contradictory features can be divided into two categories: those which include a positive trait and a negative one (e.g. good-natured versus obstinate) and those which include only negative traits (e.g. temper versus weakness). As it follows, the bad characteristics are here more numerous than the good ones, and, thus, the negative seems to prevail in John Ford's portrayal. However, the external narrator is sympathetic to him and offers a reasonable explanation for the character's predominance of unfavourable features that lies in Mr Ford's lack of success, which leaves its mark on his personality and outward aspect. On the one hand, his numerous failures have negatively affected his entire life, wrecking all his hopes and stiffening his character, but, on the other hand, it is because of his own controversial, flawed nature that he is such an unsuccessful man.

It is John Ford who is answerable for the miserable living conditions of his family, causal relations being able to be identified between the setting and the character. On account of his incapacity to manage his and his wife's capital, he loses all of it in some bad speculations. Without a job and money, he rapidly sinks into poverty and drags almost the whole family down with him. According to his profession of a lawyer, Mr Ford should be considered a representative of the upper middle class. However, he and his family are more likely to belong to the lower middle class, taking into consideration that he is not able to employ more than a servant, that his boys do not have better job prospects than being low-paid clerks, and that no family member pretends to gentility. Moreover, because the protagonist drinks and evades his responsibilities, their situation is not better than that of the Victorian lower classes. Despite their poverty, the Fords cannot be considered as belonging to the inferior social strata, because their middle-class status is confirmed not only by the employment of servants and by their professions, but also by their manner of speaking which is generally

void of informal or non-standard words and expressions, differing greatly from the working-class colloquial vocabulary and speech patterns used by their servant (e.g. ha'been, I ain't a-going, la!, lawk). Nevertheless, the social position does not prevent Mr Ford from getting his home into a deplorable state of neglect, which is not simply the result of a complete lack of financial resources, but also of his carelessness about its order and neatness. The shabby parlour, the room in which the character is more frequently captured, is vividly and meticulously depicted:

Captain George's first impression was, that he had never seen so comfortless, so untidy, so dirty a place; his second, that his cousin was even a poorer man than the outward appearance of his house, [...] There was everything to justify both impressions. Tobacco smoke hung in clouds in the air; the paper hangings were dark with dirt and stains, where they were not torn away in strips, leaving the white walls bare [...] The old horse-hair sofa was broken in many places, and recklessly allowed its stuffing to escape. The chairs looked rickety and insecure. The carpet on the floor was full of holes and rents – a trap to unwary feet. The dusty mantel-shelf, above which hung a dull looking-glass with a long crack, was covered with dreary attempts at ornament [...] The untidy hearth, still strewn with the ashes and cinders of a long-extinct fire, crowned this picture of domestic discomfort. Captain George saw it all, whilst he shook his cousin by the hand, [...] (QM 12-13, vol. 1).

Mr Ford's parlour is described from Captain George's focalizing perspective, signalled by such indicators as "Captain George's first impression", "his second [impression]" and "Captain George saw it all". The room is "shot" in the moment when John Ford's cousin, Captain George, enters it after an interval of many years and is appalled by the disgusting view he sees. He observes the terrible state of the objects found inside the room. Each piece of furniture (the paper hangings, the old horse-hair sofa, the chairs, the carpet, the untidy hearth) is brought to the front by functioning as the subject of the sentence that describes it, being followed either by a passive verb (were not torn, was broken, was covered), or by an intensive verb (was, looked). It is the passivization with agent-deletion and the emphasis on the relational processes through the use of intensive verbs that draw the attention to what have happened to all the things from the room and what is their actual state. The latter is characterised by numerous qualifying words that can be clustered around the notion of "dirtiness" (comfortless, dirty, dark, dirt, stains, dusty, dull, untidy, and strewn) and not that of "poverty" (even though it is also perceived through such images

as the broken sofa, the insecure chairs or the ripped carpet), emphasizing that the major reason of this deplorable situation is not the lack of money, but indifference and neglect. Despite the immediate textual silence about the person who is responsible for the awful condition of the house, which is due to Captain George's ignorance about this subject, the larger context provides plentiful evidence about the relation existing between John Ford and his residence. Being the effect of how Mr Ford is and behaves, the setting becomes like him, and the causal relation between them modulates to analogical relation, which consists in a certain similarity between the setting and the character (Toolan 2001: 92).

Although the parlour is squalid as its penniless and neglectful master, it is not valid for the entire house, because two of its rooms belong to Mrs Ford, reflecting her "capricious and exacting" nature (QM 34, vol. 1), but also showing John Ford's deep, unconditional love for his wife. After giving birth to her third boy, Mrs Ford is afflicted by apathy, becoming irritable, querulous, and demanding. Despite her mental illness and her long isolation, Mr Ford's fondness increases and his sole concern is to cater to her every little whim: "Poor fellow, he had but one thought, and that was, how he might best please his Idol" (QM 123, vol. 1). The capitalization of the word "idol" ironically emphasizes that Mrs Ford is her husband's object of admiration, which he worships with affection and self-sacrifice. This statement made by the external narrator is quite significant, because it reveals the characters' roles and the relations between them. According to the actant model suggested by Greimas (1966), John Ford is the subject, being the actor who aspires to "best please" Mrs Ford, the object and the receiver. The power that stimulates the subject to achieve this aim is his unconditional love. Because he dearly loves his wife, the needy John Ford keeps her rooms comfortable and clean, while the rest of the house is disregarded. He allows her to enjoy delicious meals, while the other members of the family have scarcely anything to eat. Just for her sake, he hides their abject poverty and untidiness, leading a dual life. However, all this turns out to be helpless, for his contradictory, weak character acts as a negative power that prevents him from attaining his object, alienating his wife and killing her love for him. It is noteworthy that among the functional actors identified above, one cannot find Mr Ford's three boys. The children are not the object towards which their father aspires, and still they do not perform any of the other actantial roles related to his aim. This important detail is a good indicator of the problematic parent-child relationship, which does not change even after Mrs Ford's death, because

the new object John Ford pursues becomes the orphan girl, whom he wants to right, devoting all his time and effort. Thus, there is no place for his own children yet.

Mr Ford's disinterest in his offspring points to the fact that he is the cause of the failed relationship between them and puts him into the category of the absent father. According to the historian John Tosh, absent fatherhood was less frequent than distant and intimate parenting among the Victorian middle-class men (1999: 93, 97). However, during the second half of the nineteenth century paternity was increasingly "discussed in terms of absence and lack" (Nelson 1995: 40). The father's image that the novel under study constructs also revolves around the characteristics of Victorian absent parenting. One of the most important of them, related to the abdication of parental responsibilities for childcare, which are given up to wife and servants (Tosh 1999: 93), perfectly describes Mr Ford who does not care about his obligations as father, even when he is the sole person who can look after his children. His wife, isolating herself from everybody, has left the raising of their sons to him. And even their only servant, who, because of her master's lack of money, has been helped by another servant only sporadically, is so busy with Mrs Ford's attendance, that she scarcely has time to do any other household chores, much less to take care of the children. Consequently, with no one to mind them, the boys grow up "wild, rude, and undisciplined" (QM 34, vol. 1). These three qualifying adjectives seem to be suggestive of the three aspects neglected in their rearing: physical needs, emotional requirements and discipline.

The children's **physical needs** are not satisfied. They "are often hungry" (QM 22, vol. 1), as their penniless father does not provide enough food for them. They are poor and dirty like the house they live in. Their clothes are ragged and soiled, and because there is no one to repair them "the boys tore and mended their clothes if they pleased" (QM 36, vol. 1). Even when Mr Ford becomes rich, he refuses "the simplest things" (QM 230, vol. 1) to his sons. Money alters him to such a degree that "[t]he once reckless and prodigal man ha[s] become sober, stingy, and mean" (QM 230, vol. 1). Despite these changes, his careless attitude towards his children's needs remains the same.

Besides basic physical requirements, John Ford disregards his sons' **education**. During the Victorian era, discipline was considered one of the major responsibilities ascribed to fathers who "were expected to concern themselves more with the upbringing of older children, primarily boys" (Nelson 2007: 51). Taking this into account, Mr Ford reinforces his status of

an absent parent, by shirking the duty to instruct his sons. John Tosh declares that this position was not a favourable one for a Victorian man, as the absent father “became entirely dependent on his wife for the upbringing of his children, and was placed in an unacceptably passive position” that threatened his masculinity (1999: 95). However, in the novel, such a threat is withdrawn by means of presenting a wife and mother who is absent through her apathy and, later, through death. In these circumstances, the character acts unconstrained and the impact of his absent parenting becomes more visible. The children grow up lawless, as Mr Ford is not interested in the discipline of his boys, neither by imposing rules of behaviour, nor by showing a good example of conduct. The only thing that he does in this sense is that he allows his sister, Miss Lavinia, to take care of their religious instruction: “Since his wife’s death he had surrendered to his sister the religious education of his children” (QM 248, vol. 1). But, in addition to upbringing and as a constituent part of it, Victorian middle-class father was responsible for formal education of his sons and their future profession. Being poor, John Ford is not always able to pay the boys’ schooling and, therefore, they stay at home, where the eldest son, Robert, teaches his younger brothers. When their financial situation changes, the children are sent to school, but nevertheless Mr Ford disregards his duty to “see to their job training and placement in some suitable line of endeavour” (Nelson 2007: 88). Consequently, their good career prospects are ruined. Robert is employed as a clerk, job that does not afford a middle-class young man sufficient money to marry and to keep his future family. Understanding that, he decides to immigrate to Australia, accusing his father for his difficult situation: “I cannot stay here to sink down into a clerk, and there is no other prospect before me. I have not been brought up to a profession” (QM 220, vol. 2). The other two unemployed boys go to Australia with their older brother in hope of getting good jobs and becoming rich, but without a profession neither of them manages to accomplish his desire.

The third aspect in the children’s rearing that John Ford neglects, proving his paternal absence, is their **emotional requirements**. The Victorian absent father spent little time with his children (Strange 2015: 4), because he enjoyed more to be outside rather than at home, and did not participate in their everyday activities (Tosh 1999: 94). Physical absence is one of the reasons that determine the cold relationship existing between John Ford and his sons. He is always out, and when he is at home, he avoids their company, retiring to his room. Few as his interactions with his

offspring are, they are not pleasant on account of his inability to keep his temper under control. Again, like in the relationship between him and his wife, Mr Ford's flawed character acts as a negative power destroying the natural affection of his children to their father. But, additionally to his shortcomings, the burden of guilt for Mab's fraudulence he carries with him, which helps him to reach the object in his aspiration towards righting the orphan girl, strains the already poor parent-child relationship. And seeing the result of his neglect, that his boys do not love or respect him, nor do they care about him, he becomes more rigid:

With the perversity of a great sorrow, he widened the breach already so deep, by exaggerated coldness and severity. He stung Robert by his injustice, he alienated William and Edward by his harsh temper, and no one suspected that tenderness and jealousy were at the root of his harshness (QM 260, vol. 1).

These two lines offer another facet of John Ford's image as father. Such qualities like coldness, severity, injustice and harsh temper, approach him to the prototype of the tyrannical father, which is the single pattern described by harshness. Nonetheless, this characteristic is not sufficient to accuse Mr Ford of being a Victorian tyrannical parent, because the latter's major concern was to support, through oppressive behaviour and repression, his familial authority, undermined by the "formidable moral prestige of motherhood" (Tosh 1999: 95). By contrast, John Ford does not inflict any kinds of punishment on his children and does not seek to control everything in his house, peculiarities which clearly demonstrate that he cannot embody the stereotyped "Victorian paterfamilias". He is just an unbalanced man, impelled to bolster his paternal authority in the eyes of his sons by his bitterness over their broken rapport and by his jealousy of Robert, his eldest son, who is a father for his younger brothers. By giving the reasons behind John Ford's behaviour, the intrusive external narrator displays a sympathetic attitude towards the character and seems to defend him by disclosing, via the word "tenderness", preceded by the negative phrase "no one suspected" that beyond the father's outward harshness there is a loving paternal heart.

There are several instances in which the external narrator-focalizer states that John Ford loves his children, but not all of them are in agreement with the character's behaviour. Even though one can presume that it is possible for him to have some sort of affection for his children and accept the narrator's statement: "He forgot that if he had loved his children, he had not always shown that love" (QM 259, vol. 1), which still betrays the

exaggerated narratorial compassion (by means of the verb “forget” that is used to make the affirmation less severe and to diminish the character’s error, for nobody can forget such things; moreover, no one can love someone without demonstrating it somehow or other), then the following pathetic assertion cannot be considered reliable, as it is clearly denied by the whole story:

But he loved his children, because they were his children – his flesh and blood, born in sorrow, reared in adversity. William, Edward, and Robert were his boys – images of himself, part of his own being; for them he had sinned and suffered all these years, for them he would have died again and again (QM 303, vol. 1).

Touchy as this description of fatherly love is, it is in contradiction with the paternal image constructed throughout the narrative on the basis of Mr Ford’s actions. If the children grow through adversity, it is his fault, his shortcomings, fact that prevents them from having a typical middle-class childhood. Additionally, he does not rear them, but neglects them and everything else (business and household) through drinking, being incapable of satisfying their basic needs. And it is not for them that he has sinned, because when the situation changes radically and as a result of his “sin” he becomes rich, John Ford does not concern himself with his children’s well-being, preserving the same attitude of indifference to them. His sufferings have nothing to do with the boys; being caused instead by his failure to obtain sufficient evidence that Mabel has been wronged. All these details undermine the credibility of the last words of the passage “for them he would have died again and again” and prove the sympathetic external narrator subjective and unreliable.

All in all, through abdicating from the above mentioned responsibilities, John Ford alienates his children and hinders the development of a warm parent-child relationship with them. As a result, the boys “ha[ve] early learned to think little of [their] father” (QM 89, vol. 1) and their indifferent attitude towards him is painful and bitter to him, especially when distance has to separate them, but he does not recognize his mistake:

As to owning me any debt of gratitude, of course they do not! I have given them what shame, the world, the law itself compel every father to give his children – the shelter of his roof – a place at his table. Besides, of late Robert has paid full board, and Edward and William half. They owe me nothing, Mab, nothing – I keep a lodging-house, and they owe me nothing (QM 307, vol. 1)

This textual passage discloses Mr Ford's inner turmoil produced by his children's coldness. Although he understands that they are independent and the connection between them is similar to that existing between a host and its lodgers, which is based on a simple deal, implying no emotional attachment, he does not realize that it is his fault, his neglect that has produced this separation and has compelled the boys to fend for themselves. The embittered father considers that he has accomplished his duty by providing his sons with things which a father is forced to give to his offspring by "shame, the world, the law". However, the Victorian ideology, which was especially powerful in the middle classes, is against him, because the standards it advocates are higher and more demanding than merely affording children a place in their parents' house. The fact that Mr Ford utterly disregards these standards proves him an absent father, and, since he does nothing to repair his error, even his great sorrow at the broken relationship with his children does not alter his negative image.

The only thing that puts John Ford in a different light is his close rapport with Mabel, the orphan girl he adopts. The novel further complicates the main character's intricate paternal portrayal by revealing him as an intimate father. Even if there is no one-to-one correspondence between the character and the prototypical Victorian fond father, there are points of similarity between the two. John Tosh maintains that the nineteenth-century middle-class intimate father "set more store by the transparency of spontaneous relations than by the disciplines of restraint [...] [and] held to the value of tenderness and familiarity" (1999: 99). Analogously, Mr Ford who does not impose restraint on his own children that are often victims of his harshness and injustice is much less concerned with Mabel's restrictions. Instead, he lavishes tenderness and affection on the girl, calling her by using various terms of endearment, like "my (little) pet", "puss(y)", "my darling", "my little Queen Mab" and caressing her: "drawing her up on his knee [...] and he gave her a kiss" (QM 186, vol. 1), "kissed her fondly" (QM 307, vol. 1), "he kissed her with a smile" (QM 115, vol. 2). This loving treatment specific to the Victorian fond father is remunerated in John Ford's case and the attachment between him and the adoptee is mutual. Mab shows the same fondling: "She sat on Mr Ford's knee, she twined her arms around Mr Ford's neck, and giving him a passionate caress, she exclaimed, in the fullness of her heart: "[...] nothing shall ever divide us - nothing - we shall live and die together, come what will!" (QM 222, vol. 2) It is noticeable from this example that Mabel's caress is demonstrative of her strong emotional connection to Mr Ford. The tender

loving care she receives from him generates in her genuine affection for him, being, thus, the only person in that house who worries about him.

Despite reciprocal friendliness, this relationship deviates from the pattern of nineteenth-century intimate fatherhood, which is characterized by joy and vitality, fathers being their children's playmates, who "praised, [...] laughed, [...] [and] romped" (Tosh 1999: 99). John Ford does not play or laugh with Mabel, nor does he praise her, and for this behaviour two reasons can be suggested. Firstly, cheerfulness is not to be found among the character's personal traits and, consequently, he is scarcely ever in high spirits. Secondly, he is inwardly troubled on account of his remorse at the grave injustice he has done to the orphan child: "The love he bore her was the love of sorrow, repentance, and atonement. It sprang from the feeling that he could never do enough for one whom he had so wronged, and with it blended genuine tenderness and affection" (QM 303, vol. 1). Through this statement the intrusive narrator discloses that Mr Ford's parental love for Mabel does not emerge from his nature and that it is not one of his characteristics, fact proved also by his cold attitude towards his own children. But, it is generated by the strong sense of guilt that haunts him, causing him a lot of suffering and unrest during his whole life. In this context, the nickname he gives the orphan child – little Queen Mab – is suggestive of his wrong through its reference to the fairy Queen Mab, the folkloric Celtic figure used for the first time in literature by William Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet* (1597). This mischievous fairy makes people dream about their greatest aspirations, which reveal, in fact, their prevailing moral flaws, and then afflicts them with blisters, because they are corrupted by these aspirations. Similar is the orphan child's appearance in Mr Ford's life. This event makes his dream of being rich come true, but it also brings him immense psychological distress over the thought that his desire for money has prevented him from immediately searching the truth about the little girl's story. And this inner torment is not alleviated up to the moment when Mab is "righted, rich and happy" (QM 239, vol. 3).

The fear not to treat Mabel unfairly through his behaviour, and, thus to add to the past wrong makes John Ford be a pushover, like a minority of Victorian fond fathers that differed from the rest who balanced their "easy familiarity [...] by respect for discipline and routine" (Tosh 1999: 99). So, the fictional father is indulgent to the adopted child, refusing her nothing and accomplishing her every wish. Even when he grows stingy, he does not change his position: "to Mab alone he [is] liberal, not extravagantly, but sufficiently" (QM 230, vol. 1). It is worth mentioning that

in this quote the object is “thematized” for special emphasis (Toolan 2001: 34). In other words, it becomes the theme of the sentence instead of the sentential subject “he” (John Ford) with the purpose to highlight who is the privileged person and to make, in this way, the contrast between her and the other children even sharper. Being in the advantageous position of having everything she wants, the girl becomes a mediator between her adoptive father and his boys: “[s]he stood between Mr Ford’s displeasure and his younger sons, and through her flowed his scanty good graces (QM, 252-253, vol. 1). Putting aside the metaphorical language of this sentence and considering the textual context, it becomes clear that Mabel is manipulated by the two younger sons in order to get money out of their father or to obtain his consent for the fulfilment of some of their simple, trivial wishes. However, she does not oppose it, but, conversely and additionally, she is ready to defend them against their father or even to bear the blame for them, knowing that she is in his favour.

There is abundant evidence in the novel, found in the characters’ actions and speech and the external narrator-focalizer’s statements, that proves Mabel’s favourable position compared to the boys and her influence on their father. Numerous are the cases when John Ford’s sad mood is lightened by the girl’s kind words or when his temper is softened just by her presence. These instances are consistent with such narratorial assertions as: “*Mab alone* was privileged to disturb him, and intrude on his privacy” (QM 252, vol. 1, emphasis added) and “*Mab alone* could venture to address him. [...] Whatever his mood might be, she was *safe from his* anger, *safe from his* sharpest speech (QM 200-201, vol. 1, emphasis added). The girl’s prominent status is reinforced by the repeated use of the phrase “Mab alone”, which in the first example is foregrounded through passivization. Repetition is also employed in the second example with the purpose to emphasize her “immunity” to Mr Ford’s annoyance.

It is significant that John Ford’s preference for a daughter, albeit adopted, and not for a son, is a reversal of the Victorian parenting conventions, which demanded fathers to be closer to their sons, on account of their duty to bring them up and to educate them for a profession, and mothers to be responsible for their young children and daughters. The latter spent more time with their mothers, because they were primarily taught to carry out domestic chores, being often confined to the private sphere. And, even though the middle-class girls could help their fathers, especially when the mother was dead, they still were viewed as having less in common with them than their brothers (Nelson 2007). In the novel under study, the

subversion of the conventional father-son relationship by a strong father-daughter attachment is made possible due to some noteworthy peculiarities. Firstly, Mrs. Ford dies shortly after the orphan girl is found at the door of their house, thus, favourable conditions for the development of a close connection between the father and the adoptee are created. Secondly, Mr. Ford is not concerned with the rearing of his sons, nor with helping them to enter his profession, similar to many Victorian men who guided and taught their sons to join their occupation, contributing, in this manner, to the establishment of a strong father-son tie (Nelson 2007: 91). Last but not least, the guilt over the wrong committed to Mabel that afflicts John Ford impels him to have a special attitude towards her.

All in all, through the protagonist's strong relationship with Mabel and his indifference and harshness towards his sons, the novel constructs an original paternal image that diverges from the stern Victorian father stereotype, representing instead a collage of prototypical fragments of such nineteenth-century patterns as absent, tyrannical and intimate fatherhood. However, special emphasis is laid on absent fatherhood, as a result of the influence the tendency of viewing fathers in terms of absence displayed during the latter half of the nineteenth century had on the contemporary fiction. The duality of John Ford's attitude towards the children he is responsible for points to his paradoxical nature and to the two essential sides of paternal love (inner feeling and deed) dwelling separately in his identity: fatherly affection without corresponding actions and actions proving parental intimacy, but that do not spring from genuine love. This dissociation highlights the complexity of fatherhood that cannot be enclosed by any patterned or stereotypical image.

## References

- Kavanagh, J. (1863) *Queen Mab* (in three volumes). London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers
- Nelson, C. (1995) *Invisible Men*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press
- Nelson, C. (2007) *Family Ties in the Victorian England*. London: Praeger
- Strange, J. M. (2015) *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Toolan, M. (2001) *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge
- Tosh, J. (1999) *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press



